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**Editorial**

**Pakistan's undeniable support to Taliban**

With Taliban's increasing violence and takeover of some districts, Afghan officials and common people blaming Pakistan for logistic and financial support to the militant groups, hoisting their leaders and treatment of their wounded fighters.

In a fresh bid, the government of Afghanistan has alleged that Pakistan has ramped up support for the Taliban militant groups. On Thursday, Amrullah Saleh, the Vice President of Afghanistan, alleged that the Pakistan Air Force was providing close air support to the Taliban.

The first Vice President tweeted on Thursday night: "Breaking: Pakistan air force has issued official warning to the Afghan Army and Air Force that any move to dislodge the Taliban from Spin Boldak area will be faced and repelled by the Pakistan Air Force. Pak air force is now providing close air support to Taliban in certain areas."

He added that Pakistan had warned Afghanistan aircraft to stay away from Spin Boldak or risk getting shot down. VP Saleh said that if anyone doubts his tweet on Pak Air Force & Pak Army warning to the Afghan side not to retake Spin Boldak, he would be ready to share evidence.

Some regional countries and Afghanistan's neighboring states, mainly Pakistan, have been monitoring the crisis and its continuation in Afghanistan for more than four decades and have no other plans, except undermining the progress made in the country.

The continuation of crisis and destruction of Afghanistan as well as lack of an authoritative government in the country are deep in Pakistan's strategic plan. Taliban are practicing what the Pakistan army and intelligence service telling them. Currently, the Taliban are involved in killing and destruction in the name of Jihad and sparing no efforts to implement Pakistani orders in the country.

Meanwhile, Taliban leaders freely walk and talk in the neighboring country, even they openly collect money from people during Friday prayers. Recently, social media videos showed that Taliban were taking their dead bodies to Pakistan and holding funeral there. Some earlier reports also showed the neighboring country were even providing medical services to Taliban leaders and fighters.

To tackle insurgency in Afghanistan and to suppress terrorists, including that of Al-Qaeda and ISIS, it is very important that the US and its allies focus on their funding resources and safe havens in Pakistan. Continued military operations against insurgents would not produce the desired result, unless Pakistan takes firm steps in war on terror and close Taliban and other terrorist centers in its territory.

The UN, US and NATO member states should do more to persuade Pakistan to give up support of terror groups. Otherwise, another 9/11 incident would happen, which would definitely have its roots in Pakistan, as it had and proved with killing of Bin Laden in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, legitimizing the Taliban as well as strengthening terrorist groups under other names can both accelerate the destructive process and prolong for years. If the Taliban, as a reactionary group, succeed in forming a dictatorial regime in Afghanistan, the crisis will certainly continue, and the region would face another economic and migration crisis.

With Pakistan's continued and underminalable support to Taliban, other terrorist groups, likely from China and Central Asia may emerge that might be much more violent than the Taliban - which would strongly hamper the development process and the regional connectivity.

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**SCO foreign ministers back peaceful, stable & prosperous Afghanistan**



Foreign ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) member countries issued a joint statement following a meeting in the format of the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group on Wednesday.

The foreign ministers stand for the development of Afghanistan as an independent, neutral, united, peaceful, democratic and prosperous state, according to the statement.

They realize that peace and stability in that country is one of the main factors in ensuring security in the SCO region. The statement said, adding that the ministers are convinced of the need to continue helping the Afghan people in their efforts to restore the country and return to the road of peace and national accord.

The foreign ministers declared in the statement the following:

"We, as all parties involved in the conflict in Afghanistan, the SCO member states are interested in its development as a peaceful, stable and prosperous country and confirm their respect for the freedom and culture of all people living in Afghanistan."

The SCO member states reaffirm their willingness to continue developing cooperation with Afghanistan on ensuring security threats in the region, in particular, all forms and manifestations of terrorism and drug trafficking, and to jointly oppose double standards in resolving these tasks.

Emphasizing the importance of long-term hospitality and effective aid for Afghan refugees, the SCO members consider it important for the international community to take active joint efforts to facilitate their proper, safe and sustainable return home.

"We believe that reaching an early settlement in Afghanistan is a major factor in maintaining and strengthening security and stability in the SCO space. In this context, we emphasize the need for the government and people of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to intensify their efforts to restore peace, promote national-economic development and counter terrorism, extremism and drug-related crime. We confirm the position of the SCO members that the conflict in Afghanistan can only be solved by political dialogue and inclusive peace process conducted and led by the Afghan themselves. We urge all interested states not to fuel the conflict and to strengthen their cooperation with the UN playing a central coordinating role, in order to stabilize and develop the country."

In this context, we note the activities of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, the Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General and the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy.

"We welcome the diplomatic support for the peace process in Afghanistan by the international public, including the intra-Afghan peace talks in Doha, the extended Tróika, the Moscow consultations format and the Tashkent venue. We note the outcome of the ministerial meeting of the Heart of Asia - Istanbul process in Dushanbe on March 28-30, 2021."

Respecting the Afghan people's independent choice of their own path of development, we are convinced that the intra-Afghan negotiations must consider the interests of all ethnic groups living in the country.

"We attach much importance to our cooperation in the SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group. We consider it necessary to consistently implement the roadmap for further action by the Contact Group, which was adopted in Bishkek on June 14, 2019, with a view to strengthening regional stability and developing relations between the SCO states and Afghanistan."

"We reaffirm the willingness of our countries to continue our cooperation with Afghanistan in the economic and humanitarian spheres, including by maximizing the potential of Afghanistan's participation as an observer state in the SCO's activities."

