

PM, Karzai discuss peace, stability in Afghanistan

India on November 17 called for a “strong Afghanistan”, saying that this was not only good for the stability of the country but also essential for peace and stability of the entire region.”

In a joint press interaction soon after their bilateral meeting, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Hamid Karzai also underlined the need for stepping up regional cooperation for the stability and prosperity of that country and reiterated New Delhi's support for the ongoing socio-economic reconstruction of Kabul.

“Regional economic cooperation can't happen in a political vacuum,” Manmohan Singh said after his talks with Karzai. The

Bilateral Meeting

Afghan President, in turn, spoke about “cross-border linkages” of rising violence in his country.

“We are not blaming the Government of Pakistan. We are seeking the cooperation of the Government of Pakistan for better handling of violence in the country,” Karzai said when asked whether he held Islamabad responsible for rising incidents of Taliban-led terrorism in his country.

“Security of Afghanistan is essential for the stability of the entire region,” the Afghan President added.

Addressing the press meet, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said: “Afghanistan has undergone a remarkable transformation over the last five years. From a country that was wrecked by violence and civil strife for nearly three decades, it has transformed itself into a country where democratic institutions are taking strong root.”



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Afghan President Hamid Karzai addressing a joint press meet in New Delhi on November 17. They underlined the need for stepping up regional cooperation for stability in the region.

The two leaders discussed in detail the security situation in the region. “A strong India-Afghanistan relationship is not only beneficial to both countries, but it is vital for peace and stability in the entire region,” the Prime Minister said. He also expressed India's concern about the increased activities of terrorist groups in Afghanistan. He said India looks forward to Afghanistan joining SAARC.

In his opening remarks, President Karzai said: “During the last five years India stood among a few other nations at the forefront of assisting Afghanistan.”

He said the two leaders exchanged views on how to have better investment opportuni-

ties in Afghanistan for Indian businesses and on how to facilitate that investment in Afghanistan and what the Afghan Government and Afghan business should do to make that investment easier in Afghanistan.

The President expressed the gratitude of Afghan people to the Government and people of India for the help that “they have given to us” and expressed a desire and hope of the Afghan people “to grow this relationship in all areas where Afghanistan and India are already engaged”.

“Afghanistan seeks a more prosperous India, a stronger India, and a region that lives in peace and prosperity,” he said. ■

President Karzai is awarded the Indira Gandhi Peace Prize for 2005

President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on November 19 presented the Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development for 2005 to Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The award is given for extraordinary accomplishments in peace and development. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi, who is also president of the Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust, were also present. At the event, the Prime Minister said Indira Gandhi “would have felt truly proud that an award in her name is being presented today to a great son of South Asia, a nation builder, and a true leader of his people, President Hamid Karzai.” He added that the region needed “an Afghanistan of peace, an Afghanistan of prosperity, an Afghanistan of plurality.”

