

## **Making Peace in Afghanistan**

### **What is the issue?**

- At least 20 people were killed and 50 injured in a complex attack against the Afghan vice presidential candidate Amrullah Saleh's office.
- Afghans suffering from the effects of war even in the middle of peace talks needs attention and calls for progress in making peace soon.

### **What happened?**

- Mr. Saleh is a former intelligence chief and a strong critic of the Taliban and Pakistan.
- He is Afghan vice presidential candidate for the upcoming election.
- The attack saw a suicide bomber detonate a car packed with explosives near Saleh's office building.
- No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.
- However, both Taliban insurgents and the Islamic State group are active in the capital and have carried out attacks there in the past.

### **What does it imply?**

- In recent months, insurgents have kept up attacks, both on military and civilian locations.
- This is despite the U.S. and Taliban representatives holding multiple rounds of talks in Doha, Qatar.
- [The peace talks between the US and the Taliban are going on. *Click [here](#) to know more.*]
- Given this, the recent attack is a grave reminder of the crisis the war-torn country is going through even amid attempts to find peace.
- The irony is that the assault occurred a few hours after President Ghani officially launched his campaign, promising that peace was coming.
- The attack indicates that even the most fortified political offices in the country or its top politicians are not safe.
- The insurgents have made it clear that they would carry out their offensive irrespective of the peace process.
- The Taliban appears to be trying to leverage these assaults to boost its bargaining position in the talks with the U.S.
- Moreover, Kabul government's inability to prevent them and the U.S.'s

decision to delink the negotiations from the daily violence are giving the insurgents more liberty in many Afghan cities.

### **What are the challenges to peace process?**

- Afghanistan's crises are many. Half the country is either directly controlled or dominated by the Taliban.
- The Taliban has expanded its reach to the hinterland, but not the urban centres.
- In the eastern parts, the Islamic State has established a presence, and the group targets the country's religious minorities.
- On the other hand, the government in Kabul is weak and notable for chronic corruption.
- Its failure to ensure the basic safety and security of civilians is in turn eroding the public's confidence in the system.
- At present, the government is under much pressure as its security agencies are strained by the prolonged war.
- The government, even with U.S. support, is not in a position to turn the war around.

### **What lies ahead?**

- It is high time that a political settlement is made in Afghanistan given the prolonged war.
- A peace process is the best way ahead in the present scenario.
- However, it is felt if the U.S. was giving too much leeway to the Taliban in its quest to get out of its longest war.
- It is to be noted here that the decision to keep the Afghan government out of the peace process was a big compromise.
- The absence of a ceasefire even when talks are under way is another big drawback.
- The result is that Afghans continue to suffer even when the Americans and the Taliban talk.
- Given all these, there has to be more pressure, both political and military, on the Taliban to cease the violence.
- Also, the U.S. should back the Afghan government and the coming elections resolutely.

**Source: The Hindu**



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