Afghanistan's CEO Abdullah Abdullah said on Sunday that his government is for talks with the Taliban to bring durable peace to his country and also welcomed China's role in facilitating the negotiations.

Delivering the Distinguished Jindal Global Lecture hosted by O.P. Jindal Global University at its Sonipat campus, Abdullah said: "We are for reconciliation (with the Taliban) but in a dignified manner to bring about peace which is durable."

On China’s role in facilitating the negotiations with the Taliban, he said "support from China is welcome, but the talks have to be Afghan-led and inclusive", he said on the topic, "The Future of Afghanistan-India Relations", according to a press release from Jindal University.

On Afghanistan-India relations, Abdullah said: "The two countries have long standing relations which are not just government to government but people to people relations. There is great cultural affinity, mutual respect and civilisational commonality. Post 2001 India has emerged as the fifth biggest donor with a multi-dimensional role. I thank India for helping us when we were in dire crisis."

He added that "Afghanistan is like a bridge between energy-rich Central Asia and fast industrializing India. With improved connectivity, if the SAARC countries can attain consensus and overcome negativity, India will benefit immensely from its closeness with Afghanistan".

On the future of the relations between the two countries and India’s contributions in specific areas, Abdullah said: "There is no limit on what India can do for Afghanistan, strategically India is welcome to contribute in all areas, including education, human capacity building and in the security sector."

He also emphasized on the need for Indian assistance in the field of education in Afghanistan.

The lecture was attended by diplomats, scholars, faculty members, media and students as well as an Afghan delegation.

New Delhi to host Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani in April

Prime Minister Modi had invited Ashraf Ghani to India on the sidelines of a regional summit in November

Sondep: India is preparing to host Afghan President on his first visit to India next month since taking office, two people familiar with the development said on Sunday.

Prime Minister had invited Ahmadzai to India on the sidelines of a regional summit in Kathmandu in November. India’s national security advisor and external affairs minister have already visited Kabul since Ahmadzai’s national unity government came to power in September.

India considers Afghanistan as part of its extended neighbourhood, and was once seen on the side of the former Soviet Union that had occupied the country for a decade till 1989.

The civil war that followed brought the Pakistan-backed Taliban militants to power, until they were ejected by international forces in 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US. Afghanistan’s next president was close to India, paying at least a dozen visits during his tenure. India has been building goodwill in the strategically located country with aid and reconstruction, and has pledged $2 billion in aid since November 2001.

Former foreign secretary welcomed the proposed visit, noting that it would help clear the perception that Ghani was pro-Pakistan and therefore anti-India.

“India is one of few countries that can help Afghanistan in its transition phase. India is Afghanistan’s strategic partner, it’s the principal member of SAARC; India is a fast-growing economy in the region,” Mansingh said.

Recalling that many quarters in India had viewed Karzai, too, as pro-Pakistan in his early days, Mansingh said Pakistan was the most important country for Afghanistan because it could influence the country’s internal dynamics. If Ghani wants to sort out Afghanistan’s ties with Pakistan, he should try to do so, Mansingh said. Both Pakistan and India are vying for a friendly government in Kabul.
Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Dr Abdullah Abdullah today said the country was facing big challenges and quality education was needed to overcome these. He was delivering Distinguished Jindal Global Lecture on “The Future of Afghanistan-India Relations” at OP Jindal Global University, near Sonepat.

“In terms of cooperation between India and Afghanistan, there is no limit to what India can do with Afghanistan, and there is no exclusion of any area of cooperation,” Abdullah said when asked if the arms request was still on the table. “Based on our national interest, we seek cooperation, and India has been helpful based on our priorities... It is a comprehensive and a strategic partnership which forms the basis of our relationship. It will only expand,” he said at an event organized by the Jindal Global University at Sonipat in Haryana.

According to government officials, India has been training Afghan military and police personnel in that country as part of its efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. New Delhi has also handed over three helicopters to Afghanistan. But India being a net importer of arms could not readily satisfy its arms requests, said a person familiar with the matter.

On peace talks with the Taliban, Abdullah said his government has established preliminary contact with the group. Formal talks are yet to begin.

“Once it starts, we will see how it moves forward,” he said.

“Our will, determination to pursue that path is there. The intention of the other side which has used violence to achieve its goals will be tested when they enter the talks,” he said.

When asked about Pakistan’s concerns about close India-Afghan ties, Abdullah said Afghanistan was pursuing its foreign policy keeping its national interests in mind. “While countries have different relations and challenging relations between themselves, when it comes to Afghanistan we are in the need for stable relations with countries around us,” he said.

Pointing to frayed ties between the US and Iran, Abdullah said: “We did not allow aspects of their bilateral relations to overshadow us... An independent foreign policy based on the national interest of a country is the sovereign right of every country,” he said, adding that so far, no country has been successful in persuading Afghanistan not to have relations with any country that it wanted to have ties with. While the US is involved in all aspects of Afghan life from security to reconstruction, Iran is next door to Afghanistan.

Without naming Pakistan, Abdullah sought a change in mindsets that he said would promote economic well-being in the region.

“Is it against anybody’s interest to have connectivity or trade (and) transit?” he asked in a possible reference to Pakistan not permitting Indian goods to be ferried to Afghanistan across its soil.

“The challenge is to overcome those mentalities which keep us stuck in our old ideas.”

Abdullah welcomed China’s role in the incipient peace process. But any peace talks would be Afghan-led, he said.

He also emphasized on the need for Indian assistance in the field of education in Afghanistan.

The lecture was attended by diplomats, scholars, faculty members, media and students as well as an Afghan delegation.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF AFGHANISTAN DR ABDULLAH

Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, delivers a lecture at OP Jindal Global University, near Sonipat

India major contributor to Afghan growth: Dr Abdullah

Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Dr Abdullah Abdullah today said the country was facing big challenges and quality education was needed to overcome these. He was delivering Distinguished Jindal Global Lecture on “The Future of Afghanistan-India Relations” at OP Jindal Global University, near Sonipat.

“India has extended multi-dimensional support to Afghanistan in fundamental capacity building and providing quality education and training in different fields,” he said, reminding that Afghanistan had remained deprived of education in the past as the Taliban had banned education. Dr Abdullah said post-2001, India had emerged as the fifth biggest donor with a multi-dimensional role. “Afghanistan is like a bridge between energy-rich Central Asia and fast industrialising India. With improved connectivity, if the SAARC countries can attain a consensus and overcome negativity, India will benefit immensely from its closeness with Afghanistan.”

He said India was among the five nations, including the US, that had contributed a lot in different fields to strengthen the infrastructure in the war-torn country. India had contributed around $2 million during the past 15 years, he remarked. On upcoming talks with the Taliban, Dr Abdullah said: “We are for reconciliation but in a dignified manner to bring about peace which is durable.” Discussing China’s role in facilitating the negotiations with the Taliban, he said “support from China is welcome, but the talks have to be Afghan led and inclusive”.

On the role of Pakistan in Indo-Afghan relations, Dr Abdullah said India and Pakistan were the main members of SAARC and all issues should be settled by peaceful means. “Terrorism and communal hatred cannot solve any problem and the people have started realizing it gradually,” he said.
No Limit for India’s Cooperation with Afghanistan: Dr. Abdullah Abdullah

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chief Executive, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan delivered the Distinguished Jindal Global Lecture hosted by O.P. Jindal Global University at its Sonipat campus today.

While speaking on Afghanistan – India relations Dr. Abdullah Abdullah said, “the two countries have long standing relations which are not just Government to Government but people to people relations. There is great cultural affinity, mutual respect and civilisational commonality. Post 2001 India has emerged as the fifth biggest donor with a multi-dimensional role. I thank India for helping us when we were in dire crisis “He added that “Afghanistan is like a bridge between energy-rich Central Asia and fast industrializing India. With improved connectivity, if the SAARC countries can attain consensus and overcome negativity, India will benefit immensely from its closeness with Afghanistan.”

On the future of the relations between the two countries and India’s contributions in specific areas, he said “There is no limit on what India can do for Afghanistan, strategically India is welcome to contribute in all areas, including education, human capacity building and in the security sector.” Speaking on the relationship between the role of educational institutions and nation building, Dr. Abdullah said that “Afghanistan had been deprived for more than three decades and educational initiatives were disrupted by the war and terrorism.” He emphasized on the need for Indian assistance in the field of education in Afghanistan and thanked the Chancellor Mr. Naveen Jindal and Vice Chancellor Prof. Raj Kumar for their contributions toward the same. Speaking on the forthcoming talks with the Taliban, Dr. Abdullah said, “We are for reconciliation but in a dignified manner to bring about peace which is durable.” Discussing China’s role in facilitating the negotiations with the Taliban, he said “support from China is welcome, but the talks have to be Afghan led and inclusive”

The Lecture was attended by Diplomats, Scholars, Faculty members, Media and Students as well as an Afghan delegation including Mr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali, Ambassador of Afghanistan to India; Mr. Said Tayeb Jawad, Political and Foreign Policy Advisor to the Chief Executive of Afghanistan and Mr. Ahmad Zahir Anwari, Special Assistant to the Chief Executive.

Welcoming Dr. Abdullah and other distinguished guest to the university Prof. C Raj Kumar Vice Chancellor O.P. Jindal Global University spoke about the various initiatives that the university had undertaken in Afghanistan. He said, “We have been committed to significant institution building initiatives in Afghanistan for the last five years. Trainings of Afghan civil servants of various ministries on Human Resource Management, Good Governance and Public Administration under the Capacity Building for Results (CBR) Facility of the Ministry of Finance as well as capacity building for Ministry of Commerce and Industries, government of Afghanistan. Vice Chancellor Raj Kumar also mentioned “We intend to do a lot more in the fields of research, training and capacity building of key civilian institutions in Afghanistan. We have just launched an Afghan Institution Building Initiative under the aegis of the International Institute for Higher Education Research & Capacity Building (IIHEd) at our university.” Speaking on this occasion, Professor Sreeram Chaulia, Dean of the Jindal School of International Affairs, said that “India has unique endowments to help raise the human capital of Afghanistan in subjects such as agriculture, mining, governance reform, public administration, laws and justice. Our University is deeply involved with the Afghan government to fill the gaps in all these areas.”

O.P. Jindal Global University has also been doing institutional mentoring of the Nokhbagan Private Institute, Mazar-e-Sharif, and of the Afghanistan Institute of Higher Education, Kabul. The university has Afghan students pursuing full-time degree programmes and has recently announced the Jindal Afghanistan Scholarship and Empowerment Program (JASEP) offering 100 percent scholarship for five Afghan girls and 50 percent scholarship for all students from Afghanistan who wish to study at the Jindal Global University.

Prof. R Sudarshan Dean of Jindal School of Government and Public Policy gave the Vote of Thanks and expressed gratitude on behalf of the university to Dr. Abdullah Abdullah for taking out the time at such short notice and delivering such an enlightening lecture.
While speaking about Afghanistan-India relations, Dr. Abdullah said: two countries have long standing relations which are not just Government to Government but people to people relations. There is great cultural affinity, mutual respect and civilisational commonality. Post 2001 India has emerged as the fifth biggest donor with a multi-dimensional role. I thank India for helping us when we were in dire crisis “He added that “Afghanistan is like a bridge between energy-rich Central Asia and fast industrializing India. With improved connectivity, if the SAARC countries can attain consensus and overcome negativity, India will benefit immensely from its closeness with Afghanistan.”

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Speaking on the forthcoming talks with the Taliban, Dr. Abdullah said that Afghanistan was for reconciliation but in a dignified manner to bring about peace which was durable. Discussing China’s role in facilitating the negotiations with the Taliban, Dr. Abdullah pointed out: ‘Support from China is welcome, but the talks have to be Afghan led and inclusive’.

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