

The **TALIBAN** which refers to itself as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is a Deobandi Islamic fundamentalist political movement and military organization in Afghanistan. Currently one of two entities claiming to be the legitimate government of Afghanistan, alongside the internationally recognized Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban have de facto control of the country. The Taliban's ideology has been described as combining an "innovative" form of Sharia Islamic law based on Deobandi fundamentalism and militant Islamism, combined with Pashtun social and cultural norms known as Pashtunwali as most Taliban are Pashtun tribesmen. The group is internally funded by its activities in the illegal drug trade by producing and trafficking narcotics such as heroin,^{[71][72]} extortion, and kidnap and ransom.^{[73][74]} They also seized control of mining operations in the mid-2010s that were illegal under the previous government.^[75]

From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban held power over roughly three-quarters of Afghanistan, and enforced a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law.^[76] The Taliban emerged in 1994 as one of the prominent factions in the Afghan Civil War^[11] and largely consisted of students (*talib*) from the Pashtun areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan who had been educated in traditional Islamic schools, and fought during the Soviet–Afghan War.^{[11][12][13][77]} Under the leadership of Mohammed Omar, the movement spread throughout most of Afghanistan, shifting power away from the Mujahideen warlords. The totalitarian^{[10][78]} Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established in 1996 and the Afghan capital was transferred to Kandahar. It held control of most of the country until being overthrown after the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 following the September 11 attacks. During the group's previous rule, parts of the northeast were held by the Northern Alliance, which largely maintained international recognition as a continuation of the interim Islamic State of Afghanistan.^[79] At its peak, formal diplomatic recognition of the Taliban's government was acknowledged by three nations: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The group later regrouped as an insurgency movement to fight the American-backed Karzai administration and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the War in Afghanistan. Following the Fall of Kabul on 15 August 2021, the Taliban regained control of Afghanistan.

The Taliban have been condemned internationally for the harsh enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, which has resulted in the brutal treatment of many Afghans.^{[80][81]} During their rule from 1996 to 2001, the Taliban and their allies committed massacres against Afghan civilians, denied UN food supplies to 160,000 starving civilians, and conducted a policy of scorched earth, burning vast areas of fertile land and destroying tens of thousands of homes.^{[82][83][84][85][86][87]} While the Taliban controlled Afghanistan, they banned activities and media including paintings,^[88] photography,^[89] and movies that depicted people or other living things.^[90] They also prohibited music using instruments, with the exception of the daf, a type of frame drum.^[91] The Taliban prevented girls and young women from attending school,^[92] banned women from working jobs outside of healthcare (male doctors were prohibited from treating women),^[93] and required that women be accompanied by a male relative and wear a burqa at all times when in public.^[94] If women broke certain rules, they were publicly whipped or executed.^[95] Religious and ethnic minorities were heavily discriminated against during Taliban rule and they have engaged in cultural genocide, destroying numerous monuments including the famous 1500-year-old Buddhas of Bamiyan.^{[96][97][98][99]} According to the United Nations, the Taliban and their allies were responsible for 76% of Afghan civilian casualties in 2010, and 80% in 2011 and 2012.^{[100][101][102][103][104][105]}

The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence and military are widely alleged by the international community and the Afghan government to have provided support to the Taliban during their founding and time in power, and of continuing to support the Taliban during the insurgency. Pakistan states that it dropped all support for the group after the 11 September attacks.^{[106][107][108][109][110][111]} In 2001, reportedly 2,500 Arabs under command of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden fought for the Taliban.

Taliban's special forces 'forcibly' enter Kabul Gurdwara, Sikh community seeks India's help

A week after suspected Taliban fighters stormed Kabul's main Sikh shrine, a special unit of the group "forcibly entered" Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita at Karte Parwan in Kabul on Friday.

The Taliban allegedly intimidated and abused the worshippers inside the sanctum. This is the second incident of its kind since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan.

Puneet Singh Chandhok, President of the Indian World Forum, stated in a statement, "I've received distressed phone calls from Kabul's Sikh community. Today, around 2 pm, heavily armed officials claiming to be from the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan's Special Unit forcibly entered the Gurdwara Dashmesh Pita in Karte Parwan, Kabul."

"They are not only raiding the gurdwara but also the entire premises of the community school attached next to the gurdwara," he added.

Pakistan & China among invitees as India looks to host NSA meet on Afghanistan next month

Meeting was supposed to take place in April amid concerns about Afghanistan ahead of NATO pullout. But worsening security situation in Afghanistan foiled it

New Delhi: India is planning to host a meeting next month involving the national security advisers (NSAs) of all countries in the region with a stake in Afghanistan's stability, ThePrint has learnt. These include Pakistan and China, high-level official sources said.

India, the sources added, has also sent invitations for the planned in-person NSA-level meeting to Russia, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The invites were sent out Friday but no country had confirmed its participation by Saturday evening, the sources said.

The insurgent group has since set up its own regime in Afghanistan but has yet to be recognised by international governments.

While Islamabad is an invitee at the NSA talks, sources in Pakistan said its participation will be “difficult”, pointing to the Taliban dispensation in Kabul.

Sources in the Pakistan government said it will be against Islamabad’s official stance to participate in a meeting where no representative from the new Taliban dispensation will be invited.

It was reportedly because of Pakistan’s insistence on Taliban representation that a proposed informal SAARC meeting last month never materialised. Other member states objected to Pakistan’s proposal, urging instead that Afghanistan be represented by an empty chair.

Pakistan had also batted for the Taliban to be represented at the UN General Assembly last month in New York, to no avail.

If the invitation is accepted, however, it will be Pakistan NSA Moeed Yusuf’s first-ever visit to India.

The decision to hold the NSA meeting was taken, official sources said, after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing the annual Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit last month, stressed on deploying counter-terrorism mechanisms that are laid out under the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS).

As India grows increasingly concerned about the Taliban takeover's spillover effect in the region, New Delhi is intensifying its efforts to chalk out a strategy to deal with Afghanistan.

It is also among the invitees to the 20 October Moscow Format talks next month where a representative from the Taliban regime will also be present.

The Moscow Format talks have been in place since 2017 as an initiative to resolve issues plaguing Afghanistan. India last participated in it in 2018, where former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Amar Sinha and former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan T.C.A. Raghavan served as the country's representatives.

Afghan 'government-in-exile'

The Taliban are operating under the nomenclature Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The day after it seized power, India shut down its embassy in Kabul. Four consulates in Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif were closed earlier.

According to another source, there are efforts underway by members of the erstwhile civilian government in Afghanistan to create a government-in-exile with Ahmad Massoud — son of Northern Alliance commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, who fought the Taliban for years before he was assassinated by the al-Qaeda in 2001.

Ahmad Massoud, who led the Panjshir resistance against the Taliban alongside former Vice-President Amrullah Saleh, is currently believed to be in Tajikistan.

The source, however, said there has been a rift between Massoud and Saleh since the Panjshir valley fell to the Taliban last month.

Last month, the Taliban regime sought a video conference with all its embassies and diplomats, but most refused to participate, the source added.

Since the Taliban took over, India has spoken to them once — when India's Ambassador to Qatar Deepak Mittal met the head of the Taliban's political office in Doha, to discuss the "safety, security and early return of Indian nationals stranded in Afghanistan".

According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the meeting had taken place on the Taliban's request.

All eyes are now on the Moscow round of talks, which will be seen as the first official platform between the Narendra Modi government and the Taliban administration after an interim cabinet was announced in Kabul last month.

"We have received an invitation for the Moscow Format meeting on Afghanistan on 20 October. We will be participating in it," MEA spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said last week during a media briefing.

Taliban In Afghanistan: Impact On Import-Export Trade With India, Indian Dry Fruits Industry

New Delhi: The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan has adversely impacted the import-export trade in India — the largest beneficiary of Afghanistan's exports — a development that has left traders, especially those importing dry fruits, worried. Afghan exports to India include dried raisins, walnut, almond, fig, pine nut, pistachios, dried apricot, and fresh fruits such as apricot, cherry, watermelon, and medicinal herbs. India's exports to Afghanistan include tea, coffee, pepper and cotton, toys, footwear, and various other consumable items, traders said.

- Most of the imports from Afghanistan transit through Pakistan. The import-export shipments are currently stuck which may cause heavy losses to the traders, who may also see large amounts of payments blocked.
- Vineet Sethi of Verdure Herbals from Delhi's Khari Baoli said his dry fruits consignment comes via Attari (in Punjab), but it has been stopped since one and a half months already.
- Echoed a worried Rajendra Bhatia of Ramco Traders from Mumbai, who deals in dry fruits and imports from Afghanistan, "We have not been in touch with people at that end for the last four days."
- Bhatia said his firm imported a truckload of dry fruits per week by road and now he has no option but to wait and watch.
- Like Sethi and Bhatia, there are scores of traders who have faced hardships over the last few days. Since the last two days, cargo movement has totally stopped.
- Director General and CEO of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) Ajay Sahay told IANS, "We have been given to understand that shortly, they (Taliban) are taking a review because the Taliban have said that they will see that businesses will not be affected. Not sure, how long it will last, but as of now, this is the situation."
- Bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan stood at USD 1.4 billion in 2020-21 as against USD 1.52 billion in 2019-20. Exports from India were USD 826 million, and imports were aggregated at USD 510 million in 2020-21, according to the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), a premier organisation of eight crore traders across India.

- Most of India's exports either go through the international north-south trade corridor routes or through Dubai (therefore) it has not been directly affected. "But looking into the growing uncertainty, wherever the exporters have time for delivery period, they are delaying the shipments. Whenever they are supposed to make the shipments, we are cautioning them to take the credit insurance so that even if the payment is not coming, they are not unduly worried about that. So, they should cover their risk," Sahay said.
- The traders cannot be sure what kind of instructions may come for the banks or what kind of businesses may be stopped there, he said.
- CAIT secretary general Praveen Khandelwal advised the domestic exporters to remain alert and keep a sharp eye on the developments. He also urged the government that "it must take cognisance of it and help the traders in the event of facing a financial crisis."

More Indians Stranded In Kabul To Be Flown Back : 10 Points

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This comes a day after an Indian Air Force transport aircraft managed to evacuate around 85 Indians from Kabul; the plane has landed safely in Dushanbe in Tajikistan

New Delhi: Several Indians waiting at the Kabul airport are set to be brought back to India on Sunday, sources have told NDTV, amid reports that around 150 Indian citizens questioned by the Taliban on Saturday are now safe in the facility guarded by US troops

Here are the top 10 points in this big story:

1. The Indians inside the Kabul airport are likely to be flown back on Sunday, while approximately 85 Indian nationals who were rescued and flown to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, were flown to New Delhi on an Air India airliner overnight. A number of rescued Indians will also be flying into India on Vistara and IndiGo flights from the UAE.
2. Earlier, Indian citizens waiting outside Kabul airport for evacuation flights were taken to a nearby police station for questioning and checking of travel documents, a top government source said, amid worrying reports from local media that they had been abducted.
3. The Taliban's 'picking up' of Indian citizens comes hours after an Air Force transport aircraft managed to evacuate around 85 Indians from Kabul; the plane has landed safely in Tajikistan, sources said, adding that a second aircraft is on standby in India.
4. Sources said on Saturday morning the government is trying to bring as many Indians as possible into the airport at Kabul to keep them safe while it works out the evacuation logistics.
5. India has evacuated all embassy staff but an estimated 1,000 citizens remain in several Afghan cities and ascertaining their location and condition is proving to be a challenge, the Home Ministry has said.
6. Among those are around 200 Sikhs and Hindus at a gurudwara in Kabul. Late Wednesday a spokesperson for the Taliban - which is trying to project a more moderate image - released a video of the gurudwara head saying he had been assured of safety.
7. Separately the political office of the Taliban also sent messages to Delhi urging against the evacuation of embassy staff, saying India had nothing to fear for their safety.
8. However, days before those 'outreach' messages sources said Taliban forces had entered at least two of India's consulates, "ransacked" offices and took away documents and parked vehicles. A senior official told NDTV "we expected this..."

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar this week said the government is "very carefully" monitoring the situation in Kabul and Afghanistan, but that the immediate focus is on safely evacuating all citizens. Asked how India plans to deal with Taliban leadership, he said it is "early days", and did not comment if the government is touch with the group.

9. The Taliban took control of Afghanistan Sunday, after President Ashraf Ghani fled and the group walked into Kabul with no opposition. This was after a staggeringly fast rout of major cities, after two decades of war that has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.