

KARZAI WELCOMES INDIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN TALKS

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Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has welcomed the American gesture to bring in India into the ongoing negotiation for sustained peace in the war-torn country. The response followed hours after U.S. Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad discussed the state of the peace talks and the coronavirus crisis in South Asia with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar.

"I have said this since the process began... I do hope India will join the peace process in support of a sovereign and united Afghanistan with a strong government, in keeping with the traditional friendship between India and Afghanistan," Mr. Karzai, who met with Indian envoy to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar on Saturday, told *The Hindu*.

During his visit to Delhi in January, Mr. Karzai had also pitched for India's support to the U.S.-Taliban and intra-Afghan process in meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval.

Mr. Khalilzad on Saturday made the move and said, "I reached out to Indian External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar yesterday to discuss the latest on the Afghan peace process..." He said that both sides discussed the issue of release of prisoners. "We also spent some time covering the immediate and longer-term impact of the coronavirus."

The development is significant as it came days after a six-nation talk on the Afghan scenario was held which had excluded India.

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