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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