

Pakistan opposes preconditions for Afghan-Taliban peace talks

Pakistan on Monday said that no precondition should be attached for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as a key meeting of a quadrilateral group involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US began here aimed at reviving the stalled peace process.

"It is important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process, as it will create difficulties in bringing Taliban to the negotiating table," PM Nawaz Sharif's Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said at the meeting.

The group was set up last year to facilitate the reconciliation process in the war-torn country.

"The primary objective of the reconciliation process is to create conditions to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and offer them incentives that can persuade them to move away from using violence as a tool for pursuing political goals," Aziz said.

"It is therefore important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process," Aziz added.

"Proper sequencing is required in the negotiating process," he said, adding that "threat of use of military action against the group will cause hindrances and cannot proceed the offer of talks to all groups."

He said that it was important to undertake a realistic assessment of the opportunities as well as anticipated obstacles in the process and then develop clarity on how to proceed further.

"I want to reaffirm that Pakistan values its brotherly and neighbourly relations with Afghanistan, and is firmly committed to continue serious efforts for long term peace and stability in Afghanistan," he added.

Afghanistan hoped that Pakistan will share a list of insurgents who are ready for peace talks.

The first round of talks was held in July but the process was suspended in the same month after news of Taliban chief Mullah Omar's death was announced.

Officials from Pakistan, China and US were present when representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government met in Murree near Islamabad during the first round.

According to officials, the second round may take place towards the end of January if the four nations agreed on the minimum agenda of talks.

It is believed that the process of peace in Afghanistan will be testing for all parties due to strong opposition within Afghanistan towards any peace with the Taliban.