

Ties with Pak bigger challenge than combating al-Qaeda, Taliban: Ashraf Ghani

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Hitting out at Pakistan for providing safe havens to terrorists, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said state-to-state ties with the neighbouring country a "bigger challenge" for his government than combating terror groups such as al-Qaeda and Taliban.

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani

Ghani said that Kabul was proud of its friendship with India as New Delhi shares Afghanistan's democratic aspirations.

In contrast, Afghan President alleged that Pakistan provides sanctuaries to terrorists and trains them, making relations with Pakistan, the bigger challenge for his country.

"We cannot understand when Pakistan says it will not allow a group of terrorists to amend its constitution, army act and prepares a National Action Plan against them.

"Simultaneously, Pakistan tolerates another group which attempts to undermine the government and bring horror, death and destruction to Afghanistan," Ghani told Geo News.

The 64-year-old Afghan president claimed he can provide addresses of Taliban leaders in Pakistani city of Quetta.

On Saturday, Kabul witnessed the deadliest terror attack in 15 years which killed 80 people and left hundreds injured.

Ghani claimed that Afghan forces have bombed the chief of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Mullah Fazlullah, 11 times along with attacks on his close aides.

"Can you show me a single operation against the Haqqani network, against Mullah Omar, against Mullah Mansoor, Mansoor traveled on a Pakistani passport out of Karachi, does Fazlullah travel on an Afghan passport out of Kabul," asked Ghani.

The Afghan President also alleged terrorists wounded in Afghanistan are openly treated in Pakistani hospitals.

"Afghan designated terrorists also hold open meetings in Islamabad," he said.

Ghani rejected allegations that Afghan government had leaked the news of former Afghan Taliban chief Mullah Omar's death, which resulted in suspension of Pakistan-facilitated dialogue between the Taliban and government in the Pakistani resort city of Murree.

"The news of Mullah Omar's death came from the Taliban. We did not leak it, we just gave an official statement. After the news was leaked, we confirmed it from 19 sources, all within Taliban network," said the Afghan president.

Responding to a question, Ghani said Afghanistan was proud of its friendship with India, as India shares Afghanistan's democratic aspirations.

"India is a historical friend of Afghanistan, India is building dams in Afghanistan, it is a democratic country and shares our democratic aspirations," said Ghani, adding that his country's foreign policy is no other country's business.

Ghani presented a three point agenda in order to build trust measure with Pakistan.

He asked Pakistan to go after declared terrorist groups, saying "if you don't take action against them, we won't trust you."

Ghani said all countries should act on the quadrilateral process, regarding reconcilable and irreconcilable (groups). Thirdly, he said those who reject peace talks should be evacuated from Pakistan.

- (With PTI inputs)