

Delhi, Kabul review bilateral relations

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NEW DELHI

Feb. 3: India and Afghanistan reviewed their bilateral relations and the regional situation during President Hamid Karzai's talks here with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Besides exchanging views on the common threat of terrorism, they are understood to have discussed the proposed reintegration of the reconcilable Taliban and the phased withdrawal of the US troops that is expected to begin in July.

A joint statement issued towards the end of Mr

Karzai's two-day visit said he and Prime Minister Singh held detailed discussions covering issues of bilateral and regional interest.

In the talks India reiterated its long term commitment to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, and to the Afghan government's efforts to build a strong, independent, democratic, peaceful and prosperous nation.

The two leaders agreed that the strategic partnership between India and Afghanistan is a positive factor for peace and stability in the region.

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"He (Karzai) underlined the need for the two countries to work together in close cooperation in the interest of the people of the

two countries and stability in the region at large," it noted.

The joint statement added that Mr Karzai's visit reflected the close friendship between the people of India and Afghanistan, and the continuing tradition of high-level and frequent consultations between the leaders of the two countries.

Mr Karzai held a meeting with President Pratibha Devisingh Patil, too. Prime Minister Singh has accepted an invitation from President Karzai to visit Afghanistan.

Earlier in the day, Mr Karzai addressed the Delhi Sustainable Development

Summit.

On the occasion he said the time has come for regional energy projects to become realities and countries should collaborate more effectively to tap renewable sources of energy.

"Though we recognise that energy security is important for sustained growth in our region, we have made slow progress in power transfer, grid connectivity, and the construction of gas and oil pipelines. Afghanistan believes that the time has come for the much discussed regional energy projects to become realities," Mr Karzai noted.

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