

Britain backs Pak deals with miscreants

PAN Monitor - May 22, 2008 - 17:12

KABUL (PAN): Unlike its American and Afghan allies, the United Kingdom has supported peace negotiations between the Pakistan government and tribal elders to rein in a relentless insurgency along the Durand Line.

While opposing too much of emphasis on a military solution alone, the British foreign secretary argued on Wednesday security measures could deal with symptoms, but a politics solution was needed to address the root-causes of terror.

As quoted by leading British and American news channels, David Miliband told a Washington-based think-tank: In both Afghanistan and the FATA, we need to accept that government reconciliation efforts will reach out to people that we are uncomfortable with.

Speaking at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, the British foreign secretary endorsed Pakistans effort to reach out to local tribesmen in reconciliation efforts as a way to long-term solution to the problem. He ruled out a military solution to the spread of militancy in the Asian countries.

In his opinion, which sharply contrasts with US views, Islamabad needs to go ahead with talks with rebel groups, often left outside of the political mainstream, to convince them into moving away from extremism to politics.

Allies had every right to oppose any deals that might allow extremists to act freely and put their citizens at risk, Miliband conceded. In the same breath, however, he contended: "Reconciliation will be infinitely more legitimate and effective if it is locally owned.

He urged Islamabad and Kabul to shun the blame game over Taliban and al-Qaeda attacks along their porous frontier and work together to fight the scourge in an effective way.

The visiting British diplomat cautioned: If the terrorist threat continues to be shunted back and forth across the Afghan-Pakistan border, democracy will have little chance of success."

Also on Wednesday, the United States said it reserved its judgment on the Pakistan government's decision to go ahead and ink a controversial peace deal with insurgents in the troubled Swat valley.

"We have our metric for these kinds of efforts and are looking at the results. What results does it produce? Does it produce a result where you have people who were previously unreconciled to a political process, participating in that process and turning away from violence? We'll see," a State Department spokesperson said.

Sean McCormack told reporters in Washington: "What we don't want to see is any sort of effort that results in the violent extremists, militants being able to use the Swat Valley or Waziristan or the FATA for the purposes of planning and launching terrorist attacks, whether those terrorist attacks are directed at Pakistan or Afghanistan, or us or others."

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