

PM praises Ghani's bold move towards peace

Modi promises India will play an active role in the contact group for Afghanistan under SCO banner

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi today termed Afghanistan as an "unfortunate example" of effect of the extremism and terrorism as he praised Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's bold initiatives towards peace.

Speaking at the restricted session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit here, Prime Minister Modi also promised that India will play an active role in the contact group for Afghanistan under the SCO banner.

"Afghanistan is an unfortunate example of effect of extremism and terrorism. I hope the bold initiatives towards peace taken by President Ghani will be respect-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi looks on during the restricted session of the annual SCO summit, in China's Shandong province.

ed by all parties," Modi said at the summit, also attended by Pakistan President Mamnoon Hussain.

It is "our common respon-

sibility to ensure that reasons that had threatened Afghanistan's sovereignty, security and democracy in the past are not repeated," he said. Modi was referring to the Afghan president's peace initiatives including a surprise announcement of a week-long ceasefire with the Taliban for Eid.

The ceasefire will last from the 27th of Ramadan until the fifth day of Eid-al-Fitr, President Ghani had tweeted last week, indicating it could run from June 12-19.

Responding to Ghani's announcement, the Taliban yesterday announced the suspension of fighting for the first three days of Eid - the first ceasefire by the militant group in Afghanistan since the 2001 US invasion. In February, Ghani had offered recognition of

the Taliban as a legitimate political group as part of a proposed political process aimed at ending more than 16 years of war. India and China have agreed to undertake a joint economic project in Afghanistan. They have agreed to move forward in identifying a specific project initially in the area of capacity building in Afghanistan.

This will be a first such project in the war-torn country where China, while trying to expand its influence, has tacitly backed Pakistan, which has been accused by Afghanistan and the US of backing the Taliban and its most violent attacks in the country destabilising any attempts to restore peace. Since 2002, India has committed USD 2 billion to the socio-economic rebuilding of war-torn Afghanistan.