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Taliban Seeks Support From India to Decrease Dependence on Pakistan

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India's deepening ties with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan represent a calculated geopolitical shift aimed at diminishing Pakistan's leverage in the region. Amid escalating border tensions between Islamabad and Kabul, the Taliban regime has actively sought India's support to bolster its economic isolation and reduce reliance on Pakistan. They have requested humanitarian aid, trade facilitation, visas, and investments in key sectors like health and mining. This engagement marks a reversal from India's historical aversion to the Taliban, prioritizing strategic realignment over ideological differences to exploit fractures in Pakistan-Afghan relations.

- India's decision to reopen its embassy in Kabul and host Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in October 2025 underscores a pragmatic reset, coinciding with Pakistan's airstrikes on Afghan territory that triggered retaliatory clashes. This move allows India to regain influence lost after the 2021 Taliban takeover, while the Taliban seeks economic aid and legitimacy from New Delhi to offset dependence on Pakistan.



- The India-Taliban joint statement in October 2025 emphasized respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, a pointed rebuke to Pakistan's military actions, while New Delhi's condemnation of Pakistani strikes further strains Islamabad-Kabul ties. This rhetoric exposes Pakistan's frustration, as the Taliban refutes claims of fighting a "proxy war" for India.
- India has provided ongoing humanitarian aid, including wheat, medicines, and earthquake relief, while pledging to resume infrastructure projects and offer e-scholarships. India also agreed to restore the India-Afghanistan Air Freight Corridor connecting Delhi, Mumbai, Amritsar with Kabul and Kandahar to boost bilateral trade.



India Receptive to Increasing Support Taliban Regime To Build Long Term Relationship

India's calibrated offers, including a 27% increase in aid allocation to Rs 150 crore in the 2026-27 budget and the upgrade of its Kabul mission to a full embassy, reflect a shift toward structured engagement focused on humanitarian and economic ties. This approach allows New Delhi to hedge against regional instability while the Taliban leverages Indian support to gain legitimacy and offset border tensions with Pakistan.

- Following Muttaqi's visit, India gifted 20 ambulances and committed to six new initiatives in infrastructure, food security, and capacity-building, while the Taliban invited Indian investments in hydroelectric projects and local pharmaceutical production. This builds on India's historical \$3 billion investments in Afghan projects like the Zaranj-Delaram highway.
- In January 2026, the Taliban appointed its first Chargé d'Affaires in New Delhi, requesting expanded political and economic relations, including visa facilitation for traders and students. India reciprocated by upgrading diplomatic ties and emphasizing mutual interests in water resource management and air connectivity.
- Taliban Trade Minister Alhaj Nooruddin Azizi's November 2025 visit focused on boosting bilateral trade to pre-2021 levels of \$1.8 billion, offering incentives for Indian businesses; India responded with commitments to healthcare cooperation and trade facilitation amid the Taliban's push for independence from Pakistani routes.

Conclusion

The Taliban's requests for aid, trade, and diplomatic support, coupled with India's offers of humanitarian assistance and economic engagement, indicate a maturing pragmatic relationship driven by mutual strategic

needs. With continued tensions with Pakistan over the Durand line and safe havens for anti-Pakistani militants, the Taliban will continue to seek support from India for the long term.



Tal Shiar was founded by Nadeem Iqbal, a national security expert who served over 16 years as an intelligence officer for the Department of Defense from 2006-2022. His career began as a counter-insurgency analyst on the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force (2006–2013), followed by 9 years as a military analyst in the Syria Branch (2013–2022). He deployed five times in support of combat operations (3× Afghanistan, 2× Iraq), including two rotations with

Special Operations Forces focused on counter-terrorism missions in the CENTCOM theater. Additional roles included rotations to CIA Headquarters as the military analyst for the DNI Middle East Task Force and served as the Syria Country Director for Office of Secretary of Defense Policy (OSDP). He was recognized with Joint Civilian Commendation/Achievement Medals, the NATO Medal(x3), the Secretary of Defense GWOT Medal, DoD Expeditionary Award and the OSD Excellence Award.