India and Afghanistan have a strong relationship based on historical and cultural links. Indo-Afghan relations have been further strengthened by the Strategic Partnership Agreement signed between the two countries in 2011. As Afghanistan prepares itself for three simultaneous political, security and economic transitions in 2014, India has sought to allay fears about the future by making a long-term commitment to the security and development of Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the two sides, inter alia, provides for assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance to re-build indigenous Afghan capacity in different areas, encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources, providing duty free access to the Indian market for Afghanistan's export products, support for an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, broad-based and inclusive process of peace and reconciliation, and advocating the need for a sustained and long-term commitment to Afghanistan by the international community.

Bilaterally, India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan. India's extensive developmental assistance programme, which now stands at around US $2 billion, is a strong signal of its abiding commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan during this critical period of security and governance transition. This makes India one of the leading donor nations to Afghanistan, and by far the largest from among the regional countries.

India believes that sustainable development of Afghanistan requires long-term investment in Afghanistan that can help it exploit its natural resource wealth. India is, thus, at the forefront of the promotion of investment in Afghanistan and a consortium of public and private Indian companies has been selected to make one of the biggest investments in the country's mining sector, in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

India also realises that stability can result in Afghanistan only if all the major actors and countries have a stake in its stability, growth and prosperity. India has, thus, been championing efforts to attract regional and trans-regional investment into Afghanistan that provides a viable alternative to the dominant narrative of extremism and offers job opportunities to its population, by pioneering events like the Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan in June 2012. Recognising that the region holds the key to peace in Afghanistan, India is spearheading commercial confidence building measures in the region within the purview of the Istanbul Process. Multilaterally, it helped initiate a dialogue on Afghanistan through [various] platforms like the Afghanistan-India-US trilateral and the Afghanistan-India-Iran trilateral that seek to bring together international partners with disparate worldviews in pursuit of the common goal of securing peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. India also expressed its support to international cooperation on Afghanistan at the UN and at various international conferences focused on the future of Afghanistan, including the seminal Tokyo Developmental Conference in July 2012.

There also exists a high-level political engagement with Afghanistan, which is reflected in the large number of bilateral high-level visits. There have been frequent high level visits from both sides, including among others, External Affairs Minister (EAM) and National Security Adviser (NSA) in January and March 2011 respectively;
Prime Minister in May 2011; Special Envoy to PM to Kabul in June 2011 for a meeting of the International Contact Group; Foreign Secretary in September 2011; Minister of Law & Justice Shri Salman Khurshid on September 24, 2011 after the demise of Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani, and again on June 14 for the Heart of Asia Conference in Kabul, and Minister for Steel Shri Beni Prasad Verma in April 2012 for signing a Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the iron & steel sector.

From the Afghan side, high level visits to India included President Hamid Karzai's state visit in November, 2012, when he delivered the prestigious Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Memorial lecture, had intensive discussions with political and business leaders and oversaw the signing of four MoUs with India. A high-level delegation comprised of Dr. Zalmai Rassoul, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, Minister of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Omar Zakhilwal, Minister of Mines, Mr. Wahidullah Shahrani and Mr. Asef Rahimi, Minister of Agriculture was in Delhi on June 28, 2012 for the Delhi Investment Summit on Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassoul also co-chaired the first Partnership Council meeting on May 1, 2012, while the Minister of Mines and the Finance Minister were in Hyderabad in January 2012 for the CII Partnership Summit. India also hosted the Upper House of the Afghan Parliament for a study visit from 11-1 February, 2013.

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