

Press Note

CUJ organises WebTalk on Neo-Taliban

The Department of National Security Studies, Central University of Jammu (CUJ) organised Web Talk on The Neo-Taliban on 9 June 2020. This is ninth in series of webtalk that was initiated in April, 2020 as an effort to engage academic activities online. The web talk was presided over by **Amb. G. Parthasarathy**, Chancellor and **Prof. Ashok Aima**, Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Jammu.

The panellists include **Amb. Gautam Mukhopadhyaya**, former Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, **Shri. Rana Banerji**, former Special Secretary to Cabinet Secretariat and **Ms. Chayanika Saxena**, National University of Singapore. Besides, noted participants include **Amb. Amar Sinha (Retd.)**, Member of National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), Govt. of India, **Shri. Shakti Sinha**, former private secretary to Prime Minister and **Shri. Anand Arni**, former special secretary to Cabinet Secretariat. The event was moderated by Dr. J.Jeganaathan, Assistant Professor, Department of National Security Studies, Central University of Jammu.

While giving the inaugural remarks, Amb. G Parthasarathy emphasised that the role of Haqqani Network and ISI in a formidable Taliban formation and set the tone for the talk. Prof. Ashok Aima welcomed all the distinguished panellist and participants and posed questions on the implications of Taliban vis-à-vis India and especially on Kashmir.

In his talk, Mr.Rana Banerji focused on the historical evolution of Taliban pouring light into the power struggle and the fragmentation process within the organisation. The influence of ISI on Taliban was also given emphasis by the speaker. The precise analysis gave food for thought for every participant on the inside happenings and influence of players like ISI and Haqqani network.

Mrs Chayanika Saxena Ph.D scholar from National University of Singapore who is an exponent of studying Afghan refugees in Calcutta and New Delhi spoke on the various changes in the Taliban with respect to organisational structure, recruitment process and the process of bureaucratising rule. The

desire to expand and internationalise the vision of Taliban is a key change of Neo Taliban observed the speaker. Regarding women rights under a new Taliban regime in Afghanistan the speaker took the reference from a recent NYT Op-ed by Haqqani and suggested the life of women under Neo Taliban rule won't be drastically different from the old one. She emphasised that India shall engage with Taliban perhaps for geopolitical reasons rather than bilateral commitments.

Amb. Gautam Mukupadhyay, made a realistic analysis on forging strong ties with the legitimate democratically elected government of Afghanistan and stressed to preserve the goodwill India enjoys on the peace loving majority of Afghan citizens especially the post 2001 generation to whom the image of India is positive. He also observed that power sharing is not in the DNA of Taliban. The speaker equated the cultural relations of India and Afghanistan to India's cultural connects with South East Asian nations. US government is now a neutral player who dumped Afghan Government and now acts as a good office and focusing on neutrality. Ambassador urged to open the lines of communication with Taliban only when Taliban accepts the democratic legitimate government of Afghanistan.

Eminent scholars from across the globe and students interacted with the panellists in the conclusion Q&A session in which the India's national security strategy towards the dynamic Afghanistan geopolitics was discussed with vigour and enthusiasm. The webinar concluded with the conclusion remarks from Chancellor Ambassador G Parthasarathy and Vice Chancellor Professor Ashok Aima of CUJ.