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News Detail

Pakistan urges \$30 billion Marshall Plan to stabilize border region

WASHINGTON, April 8 (APP): Pakistan has called for a \$ 30 billion Marshall Plan to bolster socio-economic development of people as a way to wipe out al-Qaeda threat in the Pak-Afghan border region and help win hearts and minds of the local population. The cost to the West for such a plan in the high-stakes region was negligible compared to that of rescuing failing banks and corporations, Pakistan's ambassador to the United States told The Washington Times.

"Despite the economic issues that the world is facing, the cost of a Marshall Plan for Afghanistan and Pakistan is going to be minuscule (compared) to the bailouts being given to American car companies and AIG (American International Group)," Husain Haqqani said. The plan, he advocated, will help bring stability to the region as well as blunt anti-American sentiment.

"And the impact in terms of American security and in terms of the longer term stability of the world in a very precarious region will be far greater. Pakistan has the will to fight terrorists, it needs the means and the United States should provide those," he underlined. Pakistan needs \$5 billion a year for the next five years from the United States and its allies to build local law enforcement of about 100,000 men, strengthen counter-insurgency against the Taliban and al Qaeda and persuade average Pakistanis that the U.S.-led war on extremism is Pakistan's war and essential for the country's survival, he argued.

The ambassador denied allegations against Pakistan's intelligence organization, ISI, that it was helping the Taliban. He said the U.S. public diplomacy in the Muslim world had lagged under the Bush administration and praised Obama's efforts to reach out to Muslims. "We are glad that President Obama has taken the initiative," Haqqani said. "The more President Obama and his team reach out, the easier it will be to mobilize people against the extremists and terrorists."

The envoy cautioned, however, that it would take time to change attitudes as many remember that the U.S. supported Pakistan during the fight against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, then 'deserted us.' "This is not a switch that can be turned on and off," he said. "It takes a while for the counter-narrative to be accepted."

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