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Pakistan may free more Taliban prisoners

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In a renewed effort to jump-start the Afghan-led peace process, Islamabad might set free more Taliban detainees in response to a request from Kabul, a media report said on Monday.

In a show of support for the Afghan reconciliation process, Pakistan has freed 26 Taliban prisoners, including senior figures, since November 2012. But further releases were halted as a result of strained ties between the neighbours.

During President Hamid Karzai's visit to Islamabad later this month, the release of another batch of Taliban detainees would come up for discussion, a Pakistani newspaper reported.

The Express News quoted an unnamed official as saying the list of prisoners would be finalised during talks between Karzai and Pakistani authorities.

The Afghan leader is to travel to Islamabad for the first time since the change of government in Pakistan following the May 11 parliamentary elections.

The Karzai administration, which has long been demanding the release of all Taliban prisoners including Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, seeks sincere cooperation from Pakistan in promoting the reconciliation campaign.

Foreign Office spokesman Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry told the daily Islamabad would extend "all possible assistance that we deem is helpful to advance the reconciliation process. We look forward to the visit of the Afghan president and are ready to discuss all issues of mutual interest."

The neighbours are also likely to confer on shifting the Taliban political office from Qatar to either Saudi Arabia or Turkey. The idea to relocate the office has been floated by Pakistan and the US to break the deadlock in talks.