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Title : The Minister of External Affairs laid a statement regarding "Talks between India and Pakistan on February 25, 2010".

MADAM SPEAKER : Now statement by hon. Minister Shri S.M. Krishna. If you want you can lay it on the Table of the House.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): Madam Speaker, I beg to lay a statement informing this august House of an important matter concerning India's foreign relations.

India and Pakistan held talks at the level of Foreign Secretaries in New Delhi yesterday, February 25, 2010. The delegation of Pakistan was led by the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, Mr. Salman Bashir.

The invitation to the Pakistan Foreign Secretary should be seen in the context of Government's desire to ensure communication between the two countries, to address the core concerns relating to terrorism directed against us from Pakistan, and pending humanitarian issues.

I wish to inform this august House that the two sides held a frank, constructive and useful meeting. The Indian delegation stated clearly and in a forthright manner India's continuing concerns on terrorism. While noting the steps taken so far by Pakistan regarding the Mumbai terrorist attack, it was conveyed that these steps did not go far enough to bring the perpetrators of the Mumbai terrorist attack to book in an expeditious and transparent manner, nor are these steps enough to unveil the full conspiracy behind the attack. Our Foreign Secretary also stressed the need for Pakistan to take effective action to ban the anti-India activities of organizations such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which has been proscribed by the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee established under

* Laid on the Table and also placed in Library, See No. LT 1721/15/10.

the UNSC Resolution 1267, and their leaders who have openly and blatantly espoused an agenda of violence and terrorism against India, and also to dismantle the infrastructure of terrorism which continues to exist in the territory under Pakistan's control and used against India. Concerns regarding increased infiltration into India and ceasefire violations by Pakistan across the Line of Control were also conveyed and Pakistan asked to take necessary steps to prevent the same. The Indian side called upon Pakistan to investigate the claims made in the territory under Pakistan's control owning the responsibility for the recent Pune blast. Additional information on terrorist activities against India emanating from Pakistan was also handed over to the Pakistani side for investigation and appropriate action.

The Indian delegation reiterated the need to fulfill the repeated assurances given by the leaders of Pakistan not to allow the use of Pakistani soil for terrorist activities against India. The four rounds of Composite Dialogue between the two countries between 2004 and 2007 had been premised on those assurances.

The Pakistan Foreign Secretary expressed the desire and determination of the Government of Pakistan to make all possible efforts for a successful conclusion of the Mumbai attack trial which is underway in Pakistan. He stated that Pakistan was determined not to allow its territory to be used for terrorist activity against any country, and said that the additional information provided by India will be studied.

The two delegations agreed to address some urgent and humanitarian matters relating to the release of fishermen and prisoners in each other's custody.

As can be expected in a diplomatic interaction, Pakistan raised certain issues of interest to it. We responded appropriately, reiterating our stated position that outstanding issues in the relationship should be resolved through bilateral dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence, free of terror and violence. On Pakistan's view that the Composite Dialogue between the two countries should be restored, we responded that the resumption of such a process would have to await the restoration of greater trust and confidence.

If we are to build upon the past discussions held between the two countries at an appropriate time, trust and confidence between the two countries must be restored. The sincere and genuine efforts made in past years in this direction by India have, however, been repeatedly thwarted by acts of terrorism.

The talks between India and Pakistan on February 25, 2010 represent an encouraging step towards restoring dialogue and better communication between the two Governments. The two Foreign Secretaries have agreed to remain in touch and continue this endeavour.

As the hon. Prime Minister has said in this august House, we cannot wish away the fact that Pakistan is our neighbour. Government is convinced that we must not shut the door on dialogue with Pakistan, and that such a dialogue, if it gathers momentum, holds tremendous potential for the progress and well-being of the people of our region.

India's engagement with Pakistan will be predicated, as it has been since the Mumbai terrorist attack, on the response of Pakistan to our core concerns on terrorism. However, we do not dilute our position, or our resolve to defeat terrorism, as our hon. Prime Minister has said, by talking to any country. Communication and engagement represent the best way forward.

MADAM SPEAKER : The House stands adjourned to meet again on 3rd March, 2010 at 11 a.m.

12.48 hrs

The Lok Sabha then adjourned till Eleven of the Clock

on Wednesday, March 3, 2010/Phalguna 12, 1931 (Saka).
