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Title: The Minister of External Affairs made a statement regarding visit of Foreign Minister of Pakistan to India.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI S.M. KRISHNA): Hon. Speaker, Madam, I rise to inform the House of the visit of Foreign Minister of Pakistan to India.

Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar, Foreign Minister of Pakistan visited India from July 26-28, 2011 for the Foreign Minister level talks, which were held in Delhi on July 27. These talks were preceded by a Foreign Secretary level meeting on July 26 to prepare the ground for the ministerial meeting. Foreign Minister level talks were held to review the progress of the first round of the resumed dialogue process which commenced after the meeting of the two Foreign Secretaries in February 2011 in Thimphu.

Pakistan Foreign Minister and I, along with our respective delegations, met for delegation level talks on July 27. In the discussion, we took stock of the current state of our bilateral relations and reviewed progress in the dialogue process since its resumption. The talks were held in a candid, friendly and positive atmosphere. I reaffirmed India's desire to work with Pakistan to reduce the trust deficit and move forward in a friendly manner. I conveyed that India desires a stable and prosperous Pakistan, acting as a bulwark against terrorism, and at peace with itself and with its neighbours. India wishes to have constructive relations with Pakistan to enable both countries to effectively address our common developmental priorities.

I underscored the importance that we attach to the fulfillment of commitments made by Pakistan during the Home and Interior Secretary level talks in March 2011 on the trial and investigation, underway in Pakistan, in the Mumbai terrorist attacks case. I requested Pakistan to act on the assurance given to our Home Minister by Pakistan Interior Minister in June 2010 on the dossiers regarding seven specific individuals and the need to provide voice samples. Pakistan was asked to investigate the linkages with some elements in the Pakistani security agencies that had emerged from the evidence presented in the Tahawwur Rana trial in the United States. I called for credible and effective action against jihadi leaders such as Hafiz Saeed and terrorist groups such as Jamaat-ud-Daawa and Lashkar-e-Tayyaba, who continue to incite violence and hatred against India. I also took the opportunity to convey our displeasure at Pakistan Foreign Minister meeting Hurriyat leaders on July 26, even before bilateral discussions between the two Governments could commence.

Pakistan's Foreign Minister stated that we should not let history determine the future course of India-Pakistan relationship. There was a change in mindset in Pakistan which went beyond the present Government or Pakistan People's Party, which traditionally had good relations with India. She mentioned that the good relations between late Mrs. Benazir Bhutto and late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi were fondly remembered in Pakistan. She maintained that the resumption of dialogue has improved the atmospherics. The meeting of the Foreign Ministers was a culmination of this round of dialogue and re-engagement in itself could be considered a success.

On the Mumbai terrorist attacks trial, underway in Pakistan, the Pakistan Foreign Minister requested India to have patience, trust and confidence in the process. According to her, Pakistan was not trying to abdicate responsibility. On the issue of terrorism emanating from territory under Pakistan's control, she said that no country had suffered as much as Pakistan at the hands of terrorists and therefore Pakistan's commitment to fight terrorism should not be doubted. It was not Pakistan's policy to support terrorism in any country. Pakistan was ready to have a dialogue with India on the issue and there was a need for cooperation to combat terrorism. There was an opportunity in the new environment of Pakistan and a consensus that it is in Pakistan's national interest to have good relations with India. On her meeting with Hurriyat leaders, she informed me that Pakistan wanted to engage all the stakeholders.

On Jammu & Kashmir, both sides reiterated their respective positions which are well known and agreed to continue discussions for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Jammu & Kashmir issue, by narrowing divergences and building on convergences. Meanwhile, in order to facilitate travel and trade across the Line of Control, for the welfare of the people on both sides, we announced some additional Confidence Building Measures, which are listed in the Joint Statement that was issued after the talks.

On economic and commercial cooperation, I expressed satisfaction that Pakistan had recognized that grant of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India would help in expanding bilateral trade relations and had also committed to operationalise a non-discriminatory trade regime with India, by replacing the present "positive list" with a "negative list" by October 2011. I called for diligent follow up on decisions taken during the Commerce Secretary level talks held in April 2011. Pakistan Foreign Minister said that Pakistan's approach on the matter was very positive and constructive. Mutually beneficial mechanisms for linkages of trade and commerce could be discussed. To give further impetus to our economic and commercial relations, we agreed to convene the next meeting of the India-Pakistan Joint Commission next year, to be preceded by the meetings of the 8 technical level working groups which have been set up.

On issues like Sir Creek, Siachen and Tulbul Navigation Project/Wullar Barrage, there have been serious discussions in this round of the resumed dialogue. We have understood better each other's positions but more needs to be done. We decided to continue working together with an open mind and a problem solving approach to eventually arrive at mutually acceptable solutions. We also agreed that the bedrock of India-Pakistan relations were people of the two countries and therefore promotion of friendly exchanges in the fields of culture, sports, media, parliamentary exchanges and so on to enhance people-to-people contacts, was of particular importance. In this regard, we acknowledged the need for finalization of the revised Bilateral Visa Agreement and revision of the Bilateral Protocol on visit to Religious Shrines. We emphasized the need to address pressing humanitarian issues like the release of prisoners and fishermen in each other's custody and supported the work of India-Pakistan Judicial Committee in this regard.

As an outcome of the talks, it was decided to continue the dialogue process on all issues. In this regard, it was agreed to convene a series of Secretary level meetings on the issues of Counter-Terrorism (including progress on Mumbai trial) and Narcotics Control; Humanitarian issues; Commercial & Economic cooperation; Tulbul Navigation Project/Wullar Barrage; Sir Creek (at the level of Surveyor General/Additional Secretary); Siachen; Peace & Security including Confidence Building Measures (CBMs); Jammu & Kashmir; and promotion of friendly exchanges. The exact dates for these meetings would be decided through diplomatic channels. We also agreed that the meetings would be completed prior to my visit to Pakistan in the first half of 2012.

During her stay in Delhi, Pakistan's Foreign Minister called on Hon'ble Prime Minister and handed over a letter of invitation from Prime Minister Gilani to visit Pakistan. She also called on Smt. Sushma Swaraj, Hon'ble Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Shri L.K. Advani, Hon'ble Chairman, BJP Parliamentary Board.

The visit of the Foreign Minister of Pakistan was aimed at resolving peacefully all outstanding issues through a constructive and forward looking dialogue and to establish cooperative and good neighbourly relations between the two countries, in an environment free from terrorism and violence. In this regard, we are committed to build a relationship of trust and mutually beneficial cooperation in conformity with the determination of the people of both countries to see an end to terrorism and violence and to realise their aspirations for peace and development.

(Placed in Library, See No. LT 4573/15/11)

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