

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4421

ANSWERED ON:22.08.2001

INDO-PAK FOREIGN SECRETARIES MEETING

A. VENKATESH NAIK;ASHOK NAMDEORAO MOHOL;CHANDRA NATH SINGH;GADDE RAMAMOHAN;M.V.V.S MURTHI;PUTTASWAMY GOWDA;RAMSHETH THAKUR;SADASHIVRAO DADODA MANDLIK;SHIVAJI MANE

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether any meeting between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan was held on August 10, 2001;

(b) if so, the details of the matter discussed; and

(c) the outcome thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a)-(c) The Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan met on 10th August 2001, on the sidelines of the Special Session of the Standing Committee of SAARC Foreign Secretaries held at Colombo (9-10 August 2001).

During the meeting, Foreign Secretary reiterated India's commitment to continue with the dialogue process with Pakistan that had been initiated by Prime Minister, and the acceptance, in principle, of the invitations extended to Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister.

Foreign Secretary expressed the hope that the Pakistan authorities would facilitate the implementation of the CBMs announced by India on 4th, 6th and 9th July, prior to the visit of President General Pervez Musharraf to India and also take similar measures. Foreign Secretary also reminded the Pakistan side that India awaited Pakistan's response to the 6th July 2001 proposal for talks between the Directors General of Military Operations, and for an expert level official dialogue on nuclear CBMs. It was also suggested that there should be a follow-up to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), dealing with CBMs, that was signed by the Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries at Lahore, in February 1999.

The question of early release of civilian prisoners, avoidance of arrest of fishermen who inadvertently transgress and the issue of the 54 Indian POWs, was also brought up by Foreign Secretary.

Foreign Secretary also raised the issue of cross border terrorism. It was pointed out that the spurt in violence in Jammu & Kashmir following the Agra Summit had created an extremely negative sentiment, both at the public and political levels, in India. It could not be accepted that the violence in Jammu & Kashmir, with its foreign mercenaries and generous assistance from abroad, is anything but cross-border terrorism. The daily killing of innocent men, women and children cannot under any circumstance be glorified as 'jehad' or as a political movement. India's resolve, strength and stamina to counter terrorism and violence until they were decisively crushed was also reiterated.

Foreign Secretary also stated India's commitment to establishing a relationship of peace, friendship and cooperation with Pakistan and reiterated India's overall approach to bilateral relations. It was made clear to the Pakistan side that there was no question of India accepting that Jammu & Kashmir was either the 'core issue', or 'central' to the normalization of bilateral ties. As emphasized by Prime Minister on numerous occasions, India's approach will be to improve relations, build trust and confidence, so that a conducive climate is created to resolve issues.

Pakistan has also indicated a desire to continue with the dialogue process.