

MR. SPEAKER: You are always there in the picture. Now, the Minister of External Affairs.

13 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTER'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): If it is the wish of the House, I may lay a copy of the statement.

AN. HON. MEMBER: Does it contain five pages?

SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE: No. I read: "Ever since the Janata Party assumed office last year...."

एक माननीय सदस्य : हिन्दी में पढ़िये ।

SHRI KANWAR LAL GUPTA (Delhi, Sadar): Please proceed in English.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE): Sir, ever since the Janta Party assumed office last year, the major thrust of the Government of India's foreign policy has been towards fostering the development of friendliest possible relations between India and her neighbours. It was on the basis of this policy that I had earlier visited Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan and Burma. The same policy motivated my goodwill visit to Pakistan from February 6 to 8, 1978.

I went with no agenda for discussion. My intention, as an emissary of goodwill, was to make clear India's desire for a relationship of peace and friendship with Pakistan, on the basis of respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs and mutual benefit.

The past history of the relations between the two countries has created psychological problems which both sides have to recognise, to face and to attempt to resolve. I mentioned to Mr. Agha Shahi, Adviser on Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, that while it is true that India happens to be a big country, we want to improve relations between India and Pakistan on the basis of equality, understanding and goodwill. This clearly implies respect not only for the sovereignty of each country but the right of each country to determine its own political and social system. One of the most heartening features of our general elections last year was the absence of any controversy over our relations with Pakistan. During 1977, there were far reaching political changes in Pakistan also. The fact that despite political upheavals in both countries, the climate of Indo-Pakistan relations did not receive a setback is a tribute to the maturity of our two peoples. This encouraged me to undertake this mission of goodwill.

During my visit, I had discussions with Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, Chief of Army Staff and Chief Martial Law Administrator and Mr. Agha Shahi, Adviser on Foreign Affairs. Our discussions were held in a very cordial atmosphere. They covered bilateral relations, and also international issues such as the North-South dialogue and the U.N. General Assembly's Special Session on Disarmament, on which we had a broad similarity of approach.

During our discussions, the Pakistan side referred to the Simla Agreement. We assured them that the Janata Government stands by this Agreement. In this context the Pakistan side made a mention of Kashmir. Both of us stated our respective positions, while recalling that the Simla Agreement commits both countries to abjure use of force.

During my discussions with Gen. Zia, we noted that there has been a significant growth of our trade rela-

tions, and recognised that they should and could grow in a balanced manner to our mutual advantage. Trade teams of the two countries are to meet shortly to review the Trade Agreement of 1975, and to study how two-way trade can develop.

The two sides also had discussions on the need to facilitate a freer flow of people and information between the two countries. In this context, the Government of India are happy to note that there has been some exchange of artists, scholars and sportsmen. We were also happy to welcome Dr. Amir Mohammad, Adviser on Agriculture, Government of Pakistan on February 20, 1978. He is visiting a number of our projects during his stay in India. We hope that his visit will mark the beginning of exchanges in the field of science and technology, so that experts in both countries can learn from each other's experience.

During my discussions, it was also agreed that we should complete the process of exchanging detenus held in either country with utmost expedition. This is a humanitarian problem and we are interested in seeing it resolved, as soon as possible.

Another point of agreement was that we would resume talks on the Salal dam project from where they were left off in October, 1976. A delegation from Pakistan is expected to come here for this purpose shortly. Dates will be fixed according to our mutual convenience.

On behalf of our Prime Minister, I transmitted a letter to the Chief Martial Law Administrator, formally inviting him to visit India. He accepted the invitation in principle.

Sir, there was widespread speculation in the press about my visit before it took place. My own belief is that public opinion in both countries has welcomed the normalisation of our relations and the restoration of the severed links. It is also my belief that there is a recognition in both countries

that the pace in the development of our relations can and should be accelerated. We on our part are ready to go ahead. However, we recognise that such acceleration and further cooperation can be possible only with the consent of both the countries.

In conclusion, I would like to state that I am convinced that good relations between the two countries of the sub-continent are in our separate and common interest, and in the interest of the region as a whole. My visit to Pakistan was based on this conviction. I do not think I would be wrong if I say that the discussions I had with Pakistani leaders have led to a better understanding and have helped in the task of removing misapprehensions, promoting greater goodwill and better understanding between the two countries. With greater contact between the two peoples and the established Governments, there can grow a climate of trust and confidence in which problems can be solved and good-neighbourliness can be patiently fostered. India stands ready to cooperate in the growth of such relations to the extent Pakistan is willing to go.

13.07 hrs.

STATEMENT RE: SUGAR POLICY

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (SHRI SURJIT SINGH BARNALA): The House will recollect that at the beginning of the sugar season 1977-78 Government had decided that the dual pricing policy for sugar should continue and that the State Governments be requested to ensure that the cane producers got at least the same price for cane as was being paid to them last year. The production of cane during this season has been an all-time record being about 10 million tonnes over that of 1976-77. Due to the consequent higher availability of sweetening agents and also for other reasons there has been a fall in the price of gur, khandsari and free-sale sugar. This has led to a situation