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Joint Press Conference of External Affairs Minister of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee and Foreign Minister of Pakistan Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi held at 1400 hours in Hyderabad House, New Delhi

June 27, 2008

External Affairs Minister of India (Shri Pranab Mukherjee):

Good Afternoon:

I am glad to welcome Foreign Minister Qureshi on his first visit as Foreign Minister of Pakistan to India. Although this is his first visit as Foreign Minister, he is no stranger to India and has visited us many times in the past. I am glad that, during this visit, he will also be able to take the time to visit Jaipur, Ajmer and Chandigarh.

As you are aware, I visited Pakistan last month for meetings with the leadership of Pakistan and for consultations with my colleague, Foreign Minister Qureshi, on the Composite Dialogue. We had noted then that the Composite Dialogue process has substantial achievements to its credit. This process has proved to be a useful instrument for developing and enhancing our bilateral relations. It is our expectation that the 5th Round of this process, to be launched in July, will be even more fruitful than the earlier rounds.

Since my visit to Pakistan, we have had a visit by the Deputy Chairperson of the Pakistan Planning Commission to India for discussions with our Planning Commission. There was a very useful exchange of views and the realization that both countries can benefit from each other's experience substantially. Issues of energy security, food security, poverty alleviation, amongst others, are challenges which confront both our countries. Our cooperation in these areas fruitfully contributes to the ongoing process within SAARC. I am happy to note that certain ideas for cooperation are emerging in the areas of wind and thermal energy.

The Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism also met in Islamabad recently and the discussions in that meeting were constructive. Terrorism is a threat to the stability of our respective democratic frameworks. Whatever may be our political differences, we have to be unambiguous in addressing the terrorist threat. We hope that in its future meetings, as well as through the Home Secretary level dialogue on terrorism, concrete results, including exchange of information on terrorists and terrorist incidents, will emerge. On our part, we are committed to peace, friendship and good neighbourly relations with Pakistan and to develop these relations in an atmosphere free of violence or the threat to use violence. Such an atmosphere has to be positively promoted.

We have had a useful exchange of views today, both as a follow up to our meeting in Islamabad in May and also to build on developments since then. Our discussions covered different aspects of our relationship, including economic and commercial cooperation, political issues, promoting people-to-people contact as also a very useful exchange of views on the regional situation. I believe we both have certain ideas on the table for detailed technical follow up in the Composite Dialogue once the Fifth Round begins at the Secretaries' level.

The resurgence of democracy and popular participation in Pakistan is a positive factor for our bilateral relationship and indeed for our whole region. The scope for cooperation is immense and covers all fields. We need to deepen the levels of our cooperation in the economic and commercial fields. What has been achieved is significant, but represents no more than a small fraction of our potential. We hope that in the Fifth Round of the Composite Dialogue, concrete achievements will continue and pave the way for a qualitative transformation of our bilateral relations.

I will now read the agreed outcomes of our meeting after which, I will invite the Foreign Minister of Pakistan to make his remarks:

AGREED OUTCOMES

1. The Vth Round of the Composite Dialogue would be launched on 21-22 July 2008 with discussions on:

Peace and security including CBMs.

Jammu and Kashmir

The Foreign Secretary of Pakistan will visit New Delhi for this meeting.

2. The Technical Working Group on cross LoC Confidence Building Measures will meet in Islamabad on 10 July, 2008 to concretize decisions regarding bus services, trade and truck services across the LoC announced in May, 2008.
3. The Technical Working Groups of the India Pakistan Joint Economic Commission complete their meetings such that the Joint Commission could meet by the end of the year.
4. The respective Deputy Chairs of the Indian and Pakistan Planning Commission had felt that an institutional mechanism for regular dialogue and exchange of views between them would be useful. The modalities and framework can be evolved through mutual consultations.
5. We also noted the detailed discussions which took place on issues such as wind and thermal power and power supply arrangements and issues. The mutually beneficial cooperation in Rapid Mass Transport Systems – in particular the Metro – was also noted. We hope that these discussions will be followed up by concrete proposals for bilateral cooperation.
6. After completing their visit to jails in Pakistan, the India Pakistan Judicial Committee on Prisoners will now visit jails in India in the month of July to make further recommendations with regard to issues concerning prisoners and fishermen in custody. We agreed that the work of the Judicial Committee has proved to be an effective way to proceed with the issues arising from prisoners and fishermen in custody and hope that the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee would speedily address the humanitarian aspects of this issue.
7. We noted that the Railway authorities had agreed to increase interchange of rakes to five daily from current levels of two daily. The proposal of opening the Kokhrapar – Munabao route in freight was also discussed and will be examined.
8. We noted that the third meeting of the Anti-Terrorism Mechanism was held in Islamabad on 24th June. We decided that the meetings would henceforth be held regularly.

I am very glad once again to welcome the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and his distinguished delegation to India. I look forward to our continued engagement and interaction.

Thank you

Foreign Minister of Pakistan (Mr. Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi): Thank you, Mr. Mukherjee. Let me begin by thanking the Minister for External Affairs for the warm welcome and hospitality that I and my delegation have received.

I want to emphasize that the talks that took place between us were cordial and friendly and they were in continuation of the talks that we held in Islamabad. I am of the view that such interaction at this level will advance our relationship and will promote shared interest between the two countries.

We discussed a host of issues – bilateral issues. Obviously, as the Minister for External Affairs has said, the Foreign Secretaries will be meeting on the 21st and 22nd of July, that is very very soon. They will be discussing a number of issues. In Jammu and Kashmir, peace and security are issues that will be focused on in those talks. But we also, in our talks, exchanged the significance and importance of ceasefire on the Line of Control and the International Border. And we are both of the view that that has by and large been upheld by both sides, respected by both sides; and it is in our mutual interest to maintain that.

While acknowledging the progress that we have made in the four rounds of talks, I urged the Minister for External Affairs to give serious thought to outstanding disputes that need our consideration. I have come to India with a very positive agenda, with a very positive frame of mind; and I have come representing a democratically elected government; I have come representing a coalition of political parties that feels that a positive movement towards peace and stability and normalization is in our mutual interest. We both stand to gain if our bilateral relations improve on the political as well as the economic front.

As Foreign Minister has said, for the Fifth Round the dates have been announced. And I also want to share with you that the commitments made by the Government of Pakistan on the 21st of May in Islamabad have been honoured. We had said that the Joint Anti-Terrorism Mechanism Committee meeting will take place and it did take place on the 24th of June. And in our discussions we have concluded that a regular exchange will be mutually beneficial. We had agreed upon that the meeting of the Working Groups on Cross LoC CBMs is to take place and it will take place. Pakistan will host this on the 8th of July.

As I said earlier on, I have come with a very realistic agenda. I personally feel that people on both sides want movement. They want progress; they want peace; they want stability; because they realize that South Asia is lagging behind. South Asia is lagging behind because both of us have not been able to fully concentrate on our social sectors, on developing our infrastructures to the extent that we could have. This region has a huge potential and we should optimally utilize that potential. And we can only do so if there is stability and there is peace.

I am of the view that the areas that we can very quickly move on, which will have a very positive impact on South Asia and the whole environment, are four in nature, and I discussed them in my talks with the Minister for External Affairs. I personally feel resolution of Sir Creek is doable. I am of the view that Siachen issue can be resolved. I am of the view that liberalization of visas is to our mutual advantage and will promote people-to-people contact. And the experience that we have had in people-to-people contact is that people when they visited each other have come back with fond memories and have developed friendships, and want to come back again and want to go back to each other's countries.

The fourth area I think is economic cooperation and trade. We have recognized the fact that there has been movement, there has been considerable progress, but we are nowhere near the vast potential that exists between the two countries.

We also discussed how to revitalize SAARC as a forum for regional cooperation and mutual benefit, and I have suggested that in the Summit that will take place in Colombo we will put forth certain ideas on a number of focused areas.

I also urged and laid emphasis on a decision, for a quick decision on the IPI gas pipeline which I feel is to our mutual benefit. Both sides stand to gain and this pipeline can be a pipeline of peace and a new bond.

On the issue of prisoners, I did bring to the notice of the Minister for External Affairs certain mishandling and unfortunately the coverage that was reported in the press. It is a humanitarian issue. We have agreed to a mechanism and the recommendations of the Judicial Committee on Prisoners and the Consular Access Agreement that we have signed in Islamabad should be followed in letter and spirit.

In conclusion, what I want to say is that the political environment to make the peace process result-oriented is right on both sides. And as I said earlier on, I am of the view that the people on both sides are ahead of the Governments. The Governments have to show the political will and they have to give leadership to this process which is to our mutual

advantage.

I feel this is a unique opportunity because all the major political players, whether on this side of the border or that side of the border, are supportive of this movement. Whether it is the Congress-led coalition in Delhi or it is the PPP-led coalition in Pakistan, major players whether it is the BJP, the Opposition here, or major opposition parties in Pakistan, there is a virtual consensus on movement and normalization. We must seize this opportunity, we have the right environment. And we must not miss this opportunity. It will be a great loss, if we fail and miss this opportunity.

I think a positive movement will give confidence and revitalize the faith of the people in the process. We are political parties; we are political leaders; and we have to carry our people along. And I think the people will support this positive movement.

I once again expressed our very keen desire that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visits Pakistan. His visit is long overdue. We are looking forward to his visit to Islamabad. And we feel that that visit could be positive and add a new chapter in our relations.

Thank you.

Question (Mr. Khalid Ahmed, Express TV, Pakistan): My question is addressed to Mr. Mukherjee.

What is the future of the IPI gas pipeline? Will India be committed to this project?

External Affairs Minister of India: We have discussed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline during my visit and during this visit. We are hopeful that it would be possible to resolve this issue both on technical, commercial and all other aspects so that it contributes substantially to resolve the problem arising out of the high energy prices all over the world and also to resolve to some extent the energy crisis which many countries including ours are facing.

Foreign Minister of Pakistan: May I add to that? I am of the view, and I discussed it with the Minister for External Affairs, that the energy prices have gone berserk and both countries are suffering on account of that. You know, the subsidies both countries are providing on petroleum products are immense and really are contributing to our fiscal problems. This is a project that can help us mitigate our problems vis-à-vis energy shortages. Pakistan's requirements are growing at seven per cent per annum and so are India's. Indian economy is growing at a rapid pace. We need energy and this is a project which is a doable project. It so happens that I am holding the portfolio of Petroleum and Natural Resources as well, and later in the day I will be meeting the Minister for Petroleum Mr. Murlu Deora and I will discuss in detail this project. Pakistan is keen to move ahead and I would want to seek his input whether India is ready to fully engage with us or would they like to spend some more time thinking about it.

Question (Mr. Srinjoy Choudhuri, Times TV, India): Question for the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. Sir, you have spoken about the abolition of the death penalty. Where does that leave Sarabjit Singh? Is the Government of Pakistan actively considering commuting the sentence?

And question for External Affairs Minister. Sir, the Government of India has spoken about being determined to go to Vienna and signing the Safeguards Agreement. Can you give us a timeline? Also, is the Government talking with the Samajwadi Party?

Foreign Minister of Pakistan: My answer is a very brief one. Yes, Sarabjit Singh's case is under consideration.

External Affairs Minister of India: You are aware that we are currently engaged in resolving these issues and I do hope through the discussions of all the parties concerned it will be possible to arrive at an acceptable solution. Of course, I am aware about the constraints of time. But at the same time we shall have to keep in view the concerns expressed from different sections are to be addressed adequately.

Question (Geo TV, Pakistan): My question is addressed to Pranab Mukherjee. Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh is visiting Pakistan, as we understand from media and Minister Qureshi already talked about the visit, do you think that the resolution of such kind of less complicated issues like Siachen and Sir Creek will be possible before his visit and during his

visit to Pakistan? Is there any possibility?

External Affairs Minister of India: Prime Minister has accepted the invitation from Pakistan and he has agreed to visit Pakistan. We are working out on the date of his visit as per mutual convenience. I do hope shortly we will be able to finalize the date.

Question (Ranjit Kumar, Navbharat Times, India): My question is addressed to the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. It is related to the Siachen issue which has just been asked. You said that the Siachen issue can be resolved. I want to know as to why it has still not been possible to resolve. What are the areas of difference between the two countries?

Foreign Minister of Pakistan: Well, it is certainly not going to be resolved in front of the press in Delhi right now. But I think, as I said earlier on, we were close to a resolution. I think it is a resolvable issue. It is a doable question. I think both sides stand to gain if this issue is resolved. There is a huge financial and human loss being incurred on both sides. There are environmental issues that need to be considered. But there is a forum to discuss that and this is not the forum.

Question (Pak Media): My question is about the CBMs across the LoC. Do you think that during your discussion today, both in the delegation-level talks and your one-to-one meeting, some new initiatives were discussed? What about the implementation of those which have been pending for two-three years?

External Affairs Minister of India: Yes, confidence-building measures on the cross-LoC issues are being considered and we have taken certain steps. As you are fully aware, certain positive and concrete steps have been taken to ease the problem, particularly to facilitate the people-to-people contacts across the LoC. We have peace and tranquility on the border all along the LoC since November, 2003. Of course, in the recent weeks there have been some aberrations. But we do hope it would be possible for us as both countries are trying to restore the normalcy and to maintain peace and tranquility on the border, and to address these issues at the expert level; and thereafter of course the final solution will be taken at the political level.

Foreign Minister of Pakistan: May I just add to what the External Minister has said on the cross LoC CBMs?

We are of the view, Pakistan is of the view, that they have been useful, and they have been beneficial, and there is need for more such CBMs; and we will look into other CBMs that will promote this kind of environment. We also need to examine the status of implementation of the CBMs that are already in place and I am sure the Working Group constituted for this purpose will certainly look into this.

Question (D'Souza, Headlines Today, India): My question is to Pakistan Foreign Minister. Sir, you speak of speeding up decision on the gas pipeline. But as far as India is concerned there have been two areas of concern that of the short supply and security. Could you tell me what assurances have you given the Indian Government on these two fronts? My second question is, can you give us some clarity on the situation in Peshawar? What is the security situation as of today?

Foreign Minister of Pakistan: Let me address the pipeline first. You see, we are not trying to reinvent the wheel here. There are many such international experiences in front of us, and international securities can be built into. The will is there, the desire should be there, and the need is there. Given that, I think we can do it. There are mechanisms in the past that have worked well. They have worked well under testing conditions. And let me add, the mechanism of resolution of the water dispute that we have had, the Indus Waters Treaty, has withstood the test of time. If we can work out issues as complicated as water, then the gas pipeline is chicken feed according to that.

Responding to the second part of the question, yes, Pakistan is dealing with this menace of terrorism and we are dealing with it in a very effective manner. We have evolved a new strategy, a three-pronged strategy. And that is: we will engage politically with the positive element that does not believe in violence, that does not believe in taking up arms, we would concentrate on socioeconomic development of that area, tribal belt and the border area; and if required, we will use force when required. As far as Peshawar is concerned, Peshawar is secure and we will defend our integrity and our borders; and we know how to do that.

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