

India-Pakistan Parliamentarians Dialogue – IV

August 23-24, 2012; New Delhi, India

Joint Statement

The Parliamentarians from India and Pakistan met in New Delhi on August 23-24, 2012 in their fourth round of the *India-Pakistan Parliamentarians Dialogue*.

The Parliamentarians placed on record their appreciation of the services rendered to the Dialogue by **Senator S. M. Zafar** as a co-chair from Pakistan for the first three rounds of the Parliamentarians Dialogue.

General Review

As representatives of the people of India and Pakistan, the Parliamentarians affirmed their belief that there is consensus between the people of the two countries to build on peace and improved relations. They noted with satisfaction that the previous 3 rounds of Parliamentarians Dialogues, held in Islamabad and New Delhi since January 2011, have contributed to a positive milieu within which the two Governments have been able to initiate and sustain the resumed dialogue.

The Parliamentarians deeply appreciated the warm welcome accorded to the Pakistan delegation by the Honourable Speaker Lok Sabha, Ms. Meira Kumar, at the Parliament of India. They also welcomed and shared the Honourable Speaker's sentiment that frequent exchange of Parliamentary delegations is indicative of the resolve of the people of the two countries to peacefully resolve all issues of mutual concern and interest.

The Parliamentarians believe the time is ripe to consolidate the relationship between the two countries.

The Parliamentarians welcomed the forthcoming meeting of the two Foreign Ministers to mark the conclusion of the second round of the resumed dialogue and to launch the third round. The Parliamentarians also expressed the hope that conditions will prove conducive for an early visit by the Prime Minister of India to Pakistan.

The Parliamentarians noted the positive developments in the official dialogue made possible through the political mandate of democratic governments in both countries. They stressed that the Parliamentarians Dialogue should pave the way for a positive and constructive environment within which the Governments of both countries can proceed to further build and strengthen peaceful and friendly ties.

They especially noted the positive developments in establishing trade relations between the two countries to build the confidence of the business community on both sides, including developing mechanisms to address issues of Non-Tariff Barriers, opening of Bank branches of both countries, allowing foreign direct investments and initiating Munabao/Khokharapar trade route, etc. They urged the two Governments to expedite implementation of the agreements relating to trade.

The Parliamentarians recommended that the two Governments must also accelerate the process of finalisation of trade in energy-related products.

The Parliamentarians from both sides welcomed the decision to resume cricketing ties between the two countries which were suspended in 2007.

The Parliamentarians recommended that the two Governments consider modifying the parade at Wahga/Attari border and make it more ceremonial and friendly.

There is need to explore the opportunities for collaboration in facilitating people-to-people contacts in such crucial fields as education, health, local government, and media, amongst others. The Parliamentarians emphasised that to secure sustained peace, security and stability in the region, the two countries must also devote their attention to resolving long-standing disputes such as Siachin and Sir Creek; questions relating to terrorism and counter-terrorism; the final settlement of issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir; water issues; and the consideration of Afghanistan-related issues, through sustained “uninterrupted and uninterrupted” dialogue.

The Parliamentarians recommended the immediate release of prisoners who have completed their term and humanitarian treatment of fisher folk and others who inadvertently cross into the territory or territorial waters of the other country. They also recommended their early release and speedy repatriation to their respective countries of origin.

While relations between the two countries must remain anchored in the principles of reciprocity, they should also consider taking unilateral initiatives to improve relations in their respective self-interest.

Visas

The Parliamentarians urged the two Governments to sign at the earliest the liberal visa regime finalized between the two countries that introduces the concept of group tourist visa, visa on arrival and a separate category of business visas.

The Parliamentarians also urged that through the liberal visa regime, citizens of both Pakistan and India should be given visas exempted from police reporting to avoid undue harassment.

They also underlined that health-related travel and religious tourism in both countries must be facilitated as a priority by both countries.

Exchange of artists and media persons must also be accelerated by the two sides.

The Parliamentarians emphasised that educationists and senior citizens from the two countries must be allowed visa-free access.

The two sides must also swiftly move towards allowing citizens to travel across the border in their own vehicles.

Media: need for a new narrative

The Parliamentarians noted that while media have the unique function of reporting on actual events, both news media and entertainment media need positive changes in how they report to audiences in their own country about the other country.

The Parliamentarians recommended that both Governments remove the ban/blockage on showing each other's news and entertainment TV channels and allowing free exchange of print media. The awareness about each other on a daily basis should be elevated to a level that enables understanding, mutual respect, constructive co-operation and collective progress.

Partnership between media groups of both countries needs to be facilitated to help establish candid, regular communication, foster trust-building and mutual respect. The Parliamentarians noted the need for a new positive narrative of Indo-Pak relations.

Without curbing the accurate reporting of facts, the aim should be to avoid using words, terms and styles of presentation which promote distrust, hate and tension and instead portray the other country in humanistic and balanced terms.

As contacts to date tend to be dominated by English language media in both countries, new initiatives and inter-actions must be launched between the relevant personnel of local language media which reach the vast majorities in both countries.

Education

India and Pakistan would both be greatly benefitted by cooperation in education. The scope for such cooperation might include;

- i. Exchange of students and teachers at the level of universities and specialised institutions, such as for medicine and technology
- ii. Exchange of youth delegations
- iii. Facilitate study in each others universities by students, faculty and researchers through appropriate provisions in the visa regime
- iv. To facilitate the adequate representation of Pakistan in the South Asia University, New Delhi

Local Government

Democratic decentralisation to both the provincial and local levels is indispensable to bringing the benefits of development to the broad masses of the people. Both countries need to learn from each other's experience in federalism and local self-government.

Cooperation on local government issues would be of mutual benefit to both countries. To this end, the extant agreement between Pakistan and India on cooperation in Local Government needs to be re-visited and revised to facilitate the exchange of local government representatives and experts on a large scale as also to promote the exchange of views on the implementation of development schemes and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Health

The Parliamentarians of the two countries believe that cooperation in the health sector is essential for the benefit of the people of two countries.

To this end, they made the following recommendations:

- i. The two Governments may consider providing free medical treatment to all children and the poor when they travel to either country
- ii. The Governments should facilitate setting-up of joint medical camps on a periodic basis in both countries for specialised treatment
- iii. Exchange of medical students must be promoted. Both countries must also consider providing a number of scholarships for medical education to poor students in each other's country
- iv. The two countries can also share best practices on polio eradication
- v. Duty free import of generic drugs to each country must be promoted

Parliamentarians Dialogue: The Way Forward

The Parliamentarians from both sides recognised and appreciated the initiative of PILDAT to foster these dialogues and urged that this initiative be continued and re-inforced.

They expressed the hope that it might prove possible to increase the frequency of their meetings and focus on sectoral issues such as agriculture and irrigation, energy (including renewable energy) and information technology, etc. as also general issues such as strengthening democracy and promoting accountability in public life.

The Parliamentarians welcomed the extension of their dialogue to places outside of the capitals of the two countries, such as the visit to Patna, Bihar at the close of this round of the Dialogue.

In this connection, the Parliamentarians noted invitations extended to the Pakistani Parliamentarians to visit Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, and expressed the hope that such visits might be facilitated. It was also suggested that exchanges might take place between the legislatures at the provincial/state levels.

The Parliamentarians urged the two Governments to continue to move forward on the road to attaining and maintaining peace and security through dialogue.

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Participating Parliamentarians from India and Pakistan

Dialogue Co-Chair India:

Honourable Mr. Yashwant Sinha

Member, Lok Sabha (Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, BJP); former Union Minister

Dialogue Co-Chairs Pakistan:

- i. **Honourable Senator Muhammad Jehangir Bader**, Leader of the House, Senate of Pakistan (Punjab, PPPP)
- ii. **Honourable Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan**, MNA
Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce
(NA-96, Gujranwala-II, Punjab, PML-N)

Pakistani Parliamentarians:

1. **Honourable Senator Sabir Ali Baloch**, Deputy Chairman, Senate of Pakistan (Balochistan, PPPP)
2. **Honourable Senator Haji Muhammad Adeel**, Chairman, Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit Baltistan (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, ANP)
3. **Honourable Senator Muhammad Jehangir Bader**, Leader of the House, Senate of Pakistan (Punjab, PPPP)
4. **Honourable Senator Dr. Saeeda Iqbal**, Chairperson, Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change (Islamabad Capital Territory, PPPP)
5. **Honourable Mr. Nadeem Afzal Gondal**, MNA, Chairman Public Accounts Committee, (NA-64, Sargodha-I, Punjab, PPPP)
6. **Honourable Mr. Zahid Hamid**, MNA, (NA-114, Sialkot-V, Punjab, PML-N);
7. **Honourable Syed Tayyab Hussain**, MNA, (NA-219, Hyderabad-II, Sindh, MQM)
8. **Honourable Ms. Anusha Rahman Khan**, MNA, (NA-288, Punjab-XVI, Punjab, PML-N)
9. **Honourable Mr. Khurram Dastgir Khan**, MNA, Chairman, National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce (NA-96, Gujranwala-II, Punjab, PML-N)
10. **Honourable Honourable Mir Amer Ali Khan Magsi**, MNA, (NA-206, Larkana-III, Sindh, PPPP)
11. **Honourable Mian Abdus Sattar**, MNA, Parliamentary Secretary, Planning and Development Commission (NA-193, R.Y.Khan-II, Punjab, PPPP)
12. **Honourable Dr. Nafisa Shah**, MNA, Chairperson, National Commission for Human Development (NA-309, Sindh-II, Sindh, PPPP)

Indian Parliamentarians

1. **Honourable Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar**, (Member, Rajya Sabha (Nominated, INC)
2. **Honourable Mr. Ali Anwar Ansari**, Member (Rajya Sabha , Bihar, JDU)
3. **Honourable Mr. Satyavrat Chaturvedi**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Madhya Pradesh, INC)
4. **Honourable Mr. M. S. Gill**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Punjab, INC)
5. **Honourable Mr. Naresh Gujral**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Punjab, SAD),
6. **Honourable Mrs. Kanimozhi Karunanidhi**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Tamil Nadu, DMK)
7. **Honourable Dr. Bhalchandra Mungekar**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Nominated, INC)
8. **Honourable Dr. E. M. Sudarsana Natchiappan**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Tamil Nadu, INC)
9. **Honourable Mr. N. K. Singh**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Bihar, JDU)

10. **Honourable Prof. Saifuddin Soz**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Jammu & Kashmir, INC)
11. **Honourable Mr. Shivanand Tiwari**, Member, Rajya Sabha (Bihar, JDU)
12. **Honourable Mr. Kirti (Jha) Azad**, Member, Lok Sabha (Darbhanga, Bihar, BJP);
13. **Honourable Mr. Bhartruhari Mahtab**, Member Lok Sabha (Cuttack, Orissa, BJD)
14. **Honourable Mr. Asaduddin Owaisi**, Member, Lok Sabha (Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, AIMIM)
15. **Honourable Mr. Baijayant Jay Panda**, Member Lok Sabha, (Kendrapara, Orissa, BJD)
16. **Honourable Mr. Jaswant Singh**, Member, Lok Sabha (Darjeeling, West Bengal, BJP)
17. **Honourable Mr. Uday Singh**, Member, Lok Sabha (Purnia, Bihar, BJP)
18. **Honourable Mr. Yashwant Sinha**, Member, Lok Sabha (Hazaribagh, Jharkhand, BJP); former Union Minister
19. **Honourable Ms. Supriya Sadanand Sule**, Member, Lok Sabha (Baramati, Maharashtra, NCP)
20. **Honourable Mr. Madhu Goud Yaskhi**, Member, Lok Sabha, (Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh, INC)