

Bilateral Brief: India-Pakistan Relations

India has followed a consistent and principled policy towards Pakistan i.e.: in keeping with its “Neighbourhood First Policy”, India seeks normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan in an environment free from terror, hostility and violence; India is committed to address issues, if any, bilaterally and peacefully in keeping with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration; and India will not compromise on issues related to its national security and take firm and decisive measures to deal with all attempts to undermine India’s security and territorial integrity.

Attempts for engagement

2. India has made a number of attempts to build normal neighbourly relations with Pakistan. Since 2014, this has manifested in the invitation to the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for the swearing-in ceremony in May 2014; the meeting between Prime Ministers’ in Ufa in July 2015; and External Affairs Minister’s (EAM) visit to Islamabad in December 2015. EAM also took the initiative to propose a Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue in December 2015. These initiatives have been responded with acts of cross-border terrorism and violence against India including the cross-border terror attack on Pathankot Airbase on 2 January 2016; attack on Army Camp in Uri in August 2016; and terror attack on the convoy of Indian security forces in Pulwama by Pakistan based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) on 14 February 2019.

3. Prime Minister spoke to Mr. Imran Khan on 30 July 2018 and congratulated him for his party emerging as the largest political party in the National Assembly. PM also sent a congratulatory letter to PM Imran Khan on 18 August 2018 desiring meaningful and constructive engagement for the benefit of the people of the entire region. EAM congratulated the new Foreign Minister on 22 August 2018.

4. In response to PM’s congratulatory letter, Pakistan wrote back on 14 September 2018 and suggested meeting between Foreign Ministers in UNGA in New York. The new Foreign Minister of Pakistan also wrote to EAM on 17 September 2018 with a similar proposal. These letters talked of bringing a positive change and mutual desire for peace, and also Pakistan’s readiness to discuss terrorism. In response to the intentions expressed in these letters, Pakistan’s proposal for a meeting was accepted by India on 20 September 2018. However, within hours of India’s acceptance, Pakistan-based terrorist entities brutally killed three police personnel in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier, that same week, an Indian BSF soldier was brutally killed at the border on 18 July 2018. All these incidents happened after Pakistan’s PM and FM wrote letters to India’s leadership expressing their desire for change and for peace. Moreover, India’s strong protests with Pakistan and call for remedial action were met with outright denial. Under

such circumstances, it was assessed that any conversation with Pakistan would be meaningless. India was left with no choice but to call off the meeting between the Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan in New York.

5. PM Modi received a telephone call from Pakistan PM on 26 May 2019 congratulating him on election victory. PM Modi thanked him and recalled his earlier suggestion to Pakistan PM to fight poverty jointly. PM Modi also stressed that creating trust and an environment free of violence and terrorism were essential for fostering cooperation for peace, progress and prosperity in the region.

6. Pakistan is yet to respond like a normal neighbour. It has continued to restrict even normal trade and connectivity with India. On 7 August 2019 Pakistan regrettably took unilateral actions to downgrade diplomatic relations with India in an attempt to present an alarming picture of bilateral ties to the world. India has urged Pakistan to review its unilateral actions in respect of relations with India so that normal channels of diplomatic communications are preserved.

Cross-border Terrorism

7. Terrorism emanating from territories under Pakistan's control remains a core concern in bilateral relations. India has consistently stressed the need for Pakistan to take credible, irreversible and verifiable action to end cross border terrorism against India and fulfill its assurances, given to India at the highest level in January 2004 and reiterated several times, that territory under its control would not be allowed to be used for terrorism against India in any manner.

8. India has repeatedly called upon Pakistan to bring perpetrators of Mumbai terror attacks to justice expeditiously. However, there has been no progress in the ongoing trial of Mumbai terror attacks case in Pakistan even after all the evidence has been shared with Pakistan side.

9. It has also been emphasised that India will continue to take firm and decisive steps to protect its national security. Following the cross border terrorist attack on an army camp in Uri in Jammu and Kashmir on 18 September 2016 and continued incidents of terrorist infiltrations, the Indian Army conducted surgical strikes at various terrorist launch pads across the Line of Control, based on specific and credible inputs, and inflicted significant casualties to terrorists and those providing support to them.

10. **Pulwama cross-border terror attack:** In a heinous and despicable act of cross border terror attack on the convey of Indian security forces in Pulwama, Jammu & Kashmir on 14 February 2019, 40 security personnel were martyred. This terrorist act was perpetrated by Jaish-

e-Mohammed (JeM), a Pakistan-based and supported terrorist organisation proscribed by the United Nations and other countries, which is led by UN designated and internationally proscribed terrorist Masood Azhar.

11. Credible intelligence was received that JeM was attempting another suicide terror attack in various parts of the country, and terrorists were being trained for this purpose. In an intelligence led operation in the early hours of 26 February 2019, India carried out an anti-terror air strike against a training camp of JeM in Balakot, Pakistan.

12. Against this counter terrorism action, Pakistan on 27 February 2019 targeted military installations on the Indian side by using its air force. Due to India’s high state of readiness and alertness Pakistan’s attempts were foiled successfully.

Trade and Commerce

13. The figures for India Pakistan bilateral trade in the last 5 years is as follows:

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Exports	US\$2.2bn	US\$1.85bn	US\$2.1bn	US\$1.83bn	US\$ 1.92bn	US\$ 2.06 bn
Imports	US\$0.426 bn	US\$0.497bn	US\$.441bn	US\$.456bn	US\$0.488bn	US\$ 0.495 bn
Trade Balance	US\$1.8bn	US\$1.3bn	US\$1.7bn	US\$1.3bn	US\$1.435	USD 1.57 bn

14. India had accorded MFN status to Pakistan in 1996. A Pakistan cabinet decision of November 02, 2011 to reciprocate remains unimplemented. In August 2012, India announced reduction of 30% in its SAFTA Sensitive List for non-Least Developed Countries of SAFTA [including Pakistan], bringing down tariff on 264 items to 5% within a period of three years. However, Pakistan continued to follow restrictive trade policy towards India. In the aftermath of cross border terror attack in Pulwama, India, on 15 February 2019 withdrew Most Favoured Nation Status to Pakistan. India also hiked customs duty on exports from Pakistan to 200% on 16 February 2019. Subsequently, as part of its unilateral measures, Pakistan suspended bilateral trade with India on 7 August 2019.

Indus Waters Treaty

15. The 115th meeting of Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) was held on August 29-30, 2018 in Lahore. The Indian delegation was led by the Indian Commissioner for Indus Water (ICIW), while the Pakistan delegation was led by Pakistan Commissioner of Indus Water (PCIW). In the two days meeting both sides discussed Pakal Dul Hydroelectric Power Project (HEP), Lower Kalnai HEP and reciprocal tours of Inspection to both sides of the Indus basin.

Subsequently, a delegation led by PCIW inspected Pakal Dul, Lower Kalnai, Ratle and other hydropower projects in the Chenab Basin in January 28-31, 2019.

People to People Relations

16. As of 01 July, 2019, 209 fishermen and 52 other civil prisoners who are believed to be Indian nationals were in the custody of Pakistani authorities. Due to India's efforts, we have been able to secure the release of 30 civilian prisoners and 2080 fishermen over the last five years.

17. A delegation of fishermen's representatives and officials from the State of Gujarat visited Karachi in March 2015 for the release of 57 Indian fishing boats. Government of India has persistently taken up the matter of release of 1100 Indian fishing boats believed to be Pakistan custody.

18. In October 2017, India suggested to Pakistan to revive the mechanism of the Joint Judicial Committee which looks into humanitarian issues of fishermen and prisoners in each others custody. India has suggested to Pakistan to also address the issue of mentally unsound prisoners. Pakistan responded positively, in principle, to the proposal in March 2018. While India has reconstituted Judicial Committee and proposed visit of a team of medical experts to examine mentally unsound prisoners, Pakistan has not responded despite repeated reminders.

19. The visit to religious shrines between India and Pakistan is governed by the Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines signed between India and Pakistan in 1974. The protocol provides for three Hindu pilgrimage and four Sikh pilgrimage every year to visit 15 shrines in Pakistan while five Pakistan pilgrimage visit 7 shrines in India.

Kartarpur Corridor

20. The Government of India on 22 November 2018 formally conveyed to the Government of Pakistan that it would initiate the Kartarpur Corridor on the Indian side and urged Pakistan to build a corridor with suitable facilities in its territory from the international border to Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan to facilitate easier access and smooth passage of Indian pilgrims throughout the year. The Government of Pakistan on 22 November 2018 concurred to India's proposal.

21. Subsequently, Vice-President of India Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu along with Punjab Chief Minister Shri Amarinder Singh laid the foundation stone for Kartarpur Corridor on 26 November 2018 at Baba Dera Nanak. Union Ministers Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Shri

Hardeep Singh Puri represented Government of India at the groundbreaking ceremony of Pakistan's part of Kartarpur Corridor on 28 November 2018 at Kartarpur Sahib.

22. Three rounds of discussions have been held on modalities for operationalization of the Corridor apart from expert level technical meetings on the alignment and construction-related issues of the Corridor.

23. Government of India remains committed to operationalise Kartarpur Sahib Corridor by November 2019 to mark the 550th Anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

25 September 2019