

JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Indo-Pak Dialogue

LUMS, Lahore

January 26-27, 2012

BALUSA, a joint India-Pakistan initiative working towards good relations between the two countries along with Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation Centre (CDR), Delhi, held a meeting on 26-27 January, at LUMS, Lahore which was personally hosted by Syed Babar Ali, Pro-chancellor, LUMS.

It was felt that there was a strategic shift in the thinking amongst important stakeholders on both sides to replace the animosity and mistrust of the past and try to move towards peace and friendship. The BALUSA-CDR Dialogue was designed to explore and encourage this shift for the common good of the people of the two countries. Following themes were discussed –

Theme 1: How the people and civil society of India and Pakistan can join hands and provide momentum to the peace process.

Theme 2: Role of academia and media in developing understanding and friendship between the two countries.

Theme 3: Make recommendations on how the two countries need to manage and resolve the future of Kashmir and related issues eg. Siachen, stability of the LOC, water management, expanding Intra-Kashmir trade and people to people contact between the peoples on both sides of the LoC.

Theme 4: Evaluate the threat of terrorism and offer recommendations on how best to turn this menace into an opportunity for cooperation and enhancing trust.

Theme 5: What do the two countries need to do to expand trade and set the pace for unifying the region economically?

At the conclusion of the discussions following recommendations were made. These recommendations will be forwarded to the governments of India and Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Restrictive visa regime is the greatest impediment for people to people contact. There is need to liberalize and simplify procedures and to do away with city specific and police reporting visas
2. Expand economic interaction with the primary focus on trade and investment to set the pace for unifying the region economically. Provision of transit facility will improve connectivity and promote economic integration. This would also require improvement of infrastructure.
3. Movement towards granting of MFN status by Pakistan to India is a welcome development. We hope that India will take early steps to remove non-tariff barriers.

4. Visit by the Indian Prime Minister to Pakistan is long overdue and should take place at the earliest. In fact frequent meetings between the Prime Ministers of both countries are necessary to foster better understanding and promote good relations. Such visits are the best CBMs between the two countries.
5. There is need for urgent sustained discussion on Kashmir. For this purpose all appropriate means for carrying the discussion forward should be utilized.
6. Terrorism is a key issue and must be addressed in a manner that gives confidence to both countries.
7. To remove mistrust, military to military contact at the highest level would be most desirable.
8. Meetings at the highest level between the primary intelligence agencies of both countries would be greatly helpful to counter terrorism.
9. We support a bilateral dialogue on Afghanistan and related issues.
10. Institute a student and faculty exchange programme between the schools, colleges and universities of the two countries.
11. The meeting noted with great appreciation the announcement of 10 scholarships, by Syed Babar Ali for Indian students for pursuing studies at LUMS.
12. Restrictions on availability of print and electronic media in each other's countries should be removed

Mahmud Ali Durrani
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