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Not Ready For Peace With India Without Resolving Kashmir Issue In Just Manner: Pak FM

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is not prepared to pay any price for peace with India and certainly not without resolving the Kashmir issue in a just manner, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said.

Addressing the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) think-tank here on Thursday, Qureshi reiterated Pakistan's demand that US President Donald Trump should mediate to resolve the Kashmir issue.

Ties between India and Pakistan came under severe strain after New Delhi revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and bifurcated it into two Union Territories on August 5, evoking strong reactions from Islamabad.

Pakistan has been trying to rally international support against India on the issue.

"Our government wants peace in the neighbourhood. We want, we need peace in order to focus on achieving our domestic agenda for economic reform and development. But we are not prepared to pay any price for peace with India, certainly not our dignity and certainly not without resolving the Kashmir dispute in a just manner," Qureshi said.

He alleged that instead of fighting poverty and hunger together, the "RSS-inspired BJP government has embarked upon the project of turning India into a Hindu Rashtra".

"The adherence of Hindutva and an Akhand Bharat have established this ascendancy with disastrous consequences for all in India and the world to see," he alleged.

Qureshi said on August 5 India tried to change the "disputed status" of Jammu and Kashmir and "alter" its demographic structure, breaking all relevant international laws and "violating" several UN Security Council resolutions in the process.

India has been seeking to break the will of the Kashmiri people by imprisoning them in their homes and imposing a communications blockade that continues to this day, he said.

"Indian narrative that Kashmir is India's internal part is firmly refuted by its being on the Security Council agenda. If this were not the case, why would the French President raise it with the Indian Prime Minister?" he asked.

"We know that President Trump is profoundly worried by the Kashmir situation and we welcome his repeated offers of mediation in resolving the Kashmir dispute. The United States alone commands the moral authority and respect in South Asia to resolve the longest pending dispute on the UN agenda," he said.

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Minister Narendra Modi, while interacting with the media alongside President Trump, categorically rejected any scope for third party mediation between India and Pakistan on Kashmir, saying the two countries can discuss and resolve all issues bilaterally and "we don't want to trouble any third country".

On a two-day visit to Washington DC, Qureshi is scheduled to meet Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and US National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien on Friday. On Thursday, he met lawmakers at the US Capitol.

Pakistan Ready For Plebiscite

Pakistan-administered Kashmir, Khan said Pakistan was open to allowing people from anywhere in the world to visit. "We invite anyone, anywhere in the world to come see the Pakistan side of Kashmir and then go see the Indian side of Kashmir. Let them see the difference... they will not be allowed to go to the Indian side of Kashmir," he said.

When probed on ties with India, Khan claimed he made "every effort" to talk to the Modi government, but it was due to the "RSS ideology" that the country was not responding. He also said he was the first leader to "warn the world about what is happening in India".

Khan said, "India has been taken over by a racially extremist, exclusive ideology which is called Hindutva. The ideology stems from RSS. RSS was born in 1925. Its inspiration was the Nazi Party in Germany. The founding fathers of RSS believed in the Nazi ideology of racial superiority, and just as the Nazi ideology was built on hatred for another minority, similarly the RSS ideology is based on hatred for Muslims and other minorities... Christians as well.

"When I first became the prime minister, I made every effort to talk to the Indian government. But it soon transpired that there was a reason why India was not responding, and the reason was the RSS ideology. And this became evident on August 5 when they unilaterally annexed Kashmir," Khan added.

China Defends Raising Kashmir

was not the right forum to discuss the bilateral issue between India and Pakistan.

China, Pakistan's 'all-weather ally', on Wednesday made the fresh pitch to raise the Kashmir issue under "other matters" during a closed meeting in the UN Security Council Consultations Room.

Answering a barrage of questions at a media briefing here on why China is backing Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue in the UNSC, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said, "China's position is consistent and clear. This issue is a dispute left from history and should be properly resolved following the UN charter, UNSC resolutions, and bilateral treaties and in a peaceful way."

"As requested by Pakistan, the Security Council reviewed the Kashmir issue on January 15. The Security Council members are concerned about the current situation and they called the relevant parties to observe the charter and resolve disputes peacefully, through political dialogue and exercise restraint and work on de-escalation," he said.

Replying to a questing on why only China, among all the members, is making such claims, whereas no other member of the body has spoken about it, Geng said, "Indeed the UNSC reviewed the Kashmir issue on January 15 and there was no statement. But China as a permanent member participated in the review meeting and what I said was in line with the review. But if you think this is not true then you can look at other sources."

When asked to name other countries he referred to, the Foreign Ministry spokesman said, "If you do not trust our views you may refer to other sites for information."

At a press briefing in New Delhi on Thursday, Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson Raveesh Kumar, while replying to questions about the developments in the UNSC, said the overwhelming majority of the UNSC was of view that it was not the right forum for such issues. Pakistan's attempt to peddle baseless allegations and show an alarming scenario failed as it lacked credibility, he said.

Commenting on India's statement, Geng said, "India's attitude and views, we understand them. But what I said was China's views and stance. I believe that India is aware of that and we have been in contact on that."

To a question on why China is raising the Kashmir issue at the UNSC, when the top leaders of India and China made efforts to improve relations through informal summits, creating a negative perception among Indians, Geng said, "Because we want to work for de-escalation and work for regional peace and stability. This is out of good will. However, if the Indian side interprets it in other way, that will be a wrong interpretation."

Following the Indian government's revocation of special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir and bifurcating it into two union territories on August 5 last year, China has criticised New Delhi for making Ladakh a union territory. China lays claim over several parts of Ladakh.

Responding to a question that the Russian envoy in India has said that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan, he said during the review most UNSC members expressed concern on the current situation in Kashmir and called for restraint and de-escalation of tensions through dialogue.

"Russia is a member of the UNSC and its posi-

tion has been fully expressed during the review," he said.

Replying to a question on why China, which in the past has advocated that the Kashmir issue should be peacefully resolved between India and Pakistan, has now changed its stand by including UNSC resolutions and UN charter, Geng said Beijing's position on Kashmir is very clear.

"We haven't changed our position. The issue between India and Pakistan has always been on the UNSC agenda. The UNSC should pay attention to the issue in Kashmir based on the latest developments. And in this region, there are still International Observer Groups and it has always been on UNSC agenda," he said.

About India's decision to invite Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan in the meeting of the Heads of the governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) countries, Geng said, "SCO is a regional cooperation organisation. India and Pakistan are members of it. Both the countries, we hope, can work together closely under this framework for the healthy development of this organisation."

"India and Pakistan are important countries in South Asia and I hope they can resolve their issues through dialogue and improve their relations," he said.

To a question on allegations of human rights violations in Kashmir during the past five months, Geng reiterated China's stand, saying that Beijing stood for enhancing dialogue and mutual trust between India and Pakistan and exercise restraint and work for de-escalation of tensions.

"As a responsible country, we have been in contact with both India and Pakistan, and are playing a constructive role on this," he said.

Jammu-Srinagar Highway Opens

He said 200 stranded trucks on way to Jammu and near about 100 LMVs stranded at Ramban were allowed to move.

Singh said more loaded trucks stranded at isolated places between Jawahir tunnel and lower Munda will also be allowed to move towards Jammu later.

4 More Mainstream Leaders

Gurezi, former MLA Mohammad Abbas Wani from Peoples Conference and former MLA Abdul Rashid from Congress have been released from house detention," the officials said.

Earlier, five political leaders were released, including National Conference leaders Altaf Kaloo, Showkat Ganaie and Salman Sagar, and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leaders Nizamuddin Bhat and Mukhtar Bandh. Salman Sagar is a former mayor of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation.

On December 30, five mainstream politicians, including two MLAs were released from detention by the JK Union Territory administration. As many as 35 mainstream leaders were moved to MLA hostel in the heart of this capital city from Centaur Hotel on the banks of Dal Lake in view of harsh weather conditions.

However, three former chief ministers -- Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti continue to remain under detention.

J&K Congress Passes Resolution

The Congress resolution demanded "adequate legal and constitutional guarantees to safeguard the rights of locals over land, jobs and admissions in professional courses in Jammu & Kashmir".

"All curbs and restrictions on mainstream political parties, their leaders and activists should be lifted to allow them to resume their usual political activities to create a congenial and conducive political atmosphere for a meaningful and credible political process to pave way for holding of early Assembly elections," the resolution said.

The resolution also demanded "a special employment package for the youth, especially fulfilling the promise of 50,000 jobs, announced by then Governor in August, 2019."

Lg Reviews Jammu Lake Project,

The administration is set to release fresh tenders to resume work.

A revised detailed project report was framed, according to which Rs 51.57 crore shall be required to complete the project and Rs 4.97 crore to undo the damage caused due to floods till date, officials said.

The project, launched in 2009 by the Congress-NC government, was marred by delays and missed six deadlines before work came to a standstill in 2018.

As per the project plan, an auto-mechanical barrage would be constructed on the river Tawi, one kilometre downstream of main Tawi Bridge. This will help create an artificial lake at Belicharana. The 1,500-metre-long and 600-metre-wide artificial lake, a first-of-its-kind here, will give

a new dimension to tourism in Jammu city, officials said.

In phase-II of the project, beautification and embankment works are to be taken up under Tawi River Front Development Project for which an MoU has already been signed by Jammu Development Authority (JDA) with the Sabarmati River Front Development Corporation.

Before beginning the tour Murmu paid obeisance at the famous Raghunath temple in the morning.

Z-Morh Project Goes To APCO

V K Singh.

The Z-Morh Tunnel along with the Zojila tunnel are designed to provide all-weather road connectivity to Jammu and Kashmir parts which remain closed during the winters due to heavy snowfall. The project is likely to be completed by 2023.

The project was earlier allotted to Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS), but the contractor had abandoned it after IL&FS Group faced financial crisis. The work on it has begun in 2012.

"National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation (NHIDCL) has awarded the Rs 2,379 crore Z-Morh Tunnel to APCO Amanathaji Tunnelway Pvt Ltd," NHIDCL Managing Director K K Pathak said.

The Z-Morh Tunnel project was awarded on build-operate-transfer (annuity) basis with concession period of 20 years including 5 years of construction period to IL&FS but due to financial crisis of IL&FS group of companies, the concessionaire stopped all work w.e.f July 2018.

"This is an old and ongoing project. Earlier it was with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) then it came to the Ministry and finally to NHIDCL. We started the work when the IL&FS left the project and finally we re-rendered it and now the new bidder is on board. This is a sort of private partnership project and is an annuity based project," he said.

Pathak said NHIDCL will give an annuity of Rs 297 crore to the contractor every six months and the concessionaire is mandated to complete the project in 3.5 years.

"The tunnel is in a very strategic, important place and it has got a lot of bearing in the forthcoming Zojilla tunnel, which is also being taken by the NHIDCL. Together, these two tunnels -- the Z-Morh and Zojilla -- will help in all-weather connectivity in that area," he said.

About the partially constructed structure, he said NHIDCL will ensure that it is not damaged and a full-fledged work on the project will start after the snow melts in March.

"By the time the concessionaire will be fully mobilised. Today, the agreement has been signed and the developer has to achieve the financial closure. Once that is achieved we will start the work," he said and added that both the tunnels are contiguous to each other.

"The concessionaire is supposed to complete it by 2023. The developer has to achieve the financial closure within next month," he said adding that the cost and the risk associated with the project is totally borne by the concessionaire.

Z-Morh Tunnel would provide all-weather road connectivity to Sonamarg tourist spot in Jammu and Kashmir which mostly remains closed during the winters due to heavy snowfall in Gagenger area.

Bids for the project were re-invited on June 24, 2019 with a TPC of Rs 2,378.76 crore on BOT - build operate transfer - (Annuity) basis, he said.

The project includes construction, operation and maintenance of the tunnel including approaches on NH-1 at Srinagar-Sonmarg-Gumri Road from 61 km to 89.30 km on Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) Annuity basis.

The developer has been awarded maintenance Period of 15 years from the completion date.

The earlier contract is being foreclosed in terms of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways "Guidelines Principles for Resolution of Stuck National Highway Projects".

Earlier, the tunnel project was awarded on BOT (annuity) basis with concession period of 20 years including 5 years of construction period to IL&FS group.

Lg Murmu's Security Grid

and matters connected therewith.

Those posted with the SSF, like their counterparts in the SSG, have commando training.

The legal framework related to constitution and regulation of a separate security force in Jammu and Kashmir for providing proximate security to the chief minister, members of his immediate family and other connected matters is contained in the Jammu and Kashmir Special Security Group (SSG) Act, 2000.

The SSG, which was set up in 1996 after the National Conference president Farooq Abdullah came to power, will continue to provide security to the chief minister and the former CMs.

The SSG at present provides security to four former CMs including Farooq Abdullah and Omar

Abdullah of the National Conference, Mehbooba Mufti of the PDP and Ghulam Nabi Azad of the Congress.

DSP Arrest: Cong Seeks

said on Twitter, adding, "In YK's care, the case is as good as dead."

Gandhi put out the Twitter post using the hashtag "WhoWantsTerroristDavinderSilenced" and asked "why".

Later, Congress spokesperson Supriya Srinate said serious questions are being raised on national security.

She said Singh was not "just any other officer" as three days before his arrest, he was entrusted with the security of foreign diplomats visiting Jammu and Kashmir and prior to that, he was DSP in Pulwama when the militant attack happened.

She said Singh also faced three FIRs for extortion.

When Singh was arrested in Kulgam, he was accompanying Hizbul Mujahideen militants Naveed Baba and Altaf and a lawyer operating as an overground worker for militant groups.

"Why is the government conspicuously silent. The conspicuous silence of the government raises so many questions. It is government's moral responsibility to conduct a fair probe so that there are no doubts," the Congress spokesperson said.

Srinate said the government should hold a fair probe as the country's conscience needs to be satisfied. "It is not a matter to politicise. It is a matter of national security. The probe has to be above board. There can be no scope for suspicion. It is important for the government to satisfy any doubts raised."

"We need to revisit the Pulwama attack. What is the role of Davinder Singh in the Pulwama attack and his role in the Parliament attack also needs to be looked into," she said.

She also asked where did so much RDX used in the Pulwama attack come from.

She claimed DSP Singh has stated after his arrest that "it's a bigger game". "This is serious".

"Whose confidence does he really enjoy. Why are prime minister, home minister and the National Security Adviser conspicuously silent," she asked.

Srinate alleged NIA's role has been questionable in the probes against Swami Assemananda and Pragma Thakur.

It is incumbent upon the government to clarify the questions raised, she said.

"A fast track court needs to look into the entire activities and his (DSP's) role. A fast-track court should conduct a probe within six months," she said.

Oppn Parties Differ On Imran

said that when it comes to external affairs, the party stands with the government. It is only on internal matters like the Citizenship Amendment Act and National Population Register that the party stands opposed to the government.

"We want cordial relationships with our neighbours and a shrewd and successful diplomatic policy by the Indian government. We need India to articulate among global partners that it is a victim of terrorism emanating from one's neighbourhood," said Memon.

He added that it will be in Pakistan's interest, as well, to understand that Kashmir is a bilateral issue which can only be discussed on the table in a peaceful manner.

"There's no room for intimidation," he added. The Rashtriya Janata Dal's Manoj Jha said that there is a complete lack of consistency on the government's position on Pakistan.

"At one point we are severing ties, and at another, we are inviting them. Mature democracies do not work like that," Jha said.

India will be hosting the meeting of the council of heads of government of the China-led SCO for the first time this year.

India and Pakistan were admitted to the eight-member economic and security bloc in 2017, sixteen years after it was founded in 2001 by Russia, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Mos Home Backs Rawat's

of state for home said

In the first such disclosure, Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Thursday said de-radicalisation camps are operating in the country as it was necessary to isolate people who are completely radicalised.

In an address at the Raisina Dialogue, Gen Rawat, delving into the situation in Kashmir, said girls and boys as young as 10 and 12 years are being radicalised in the Valley which he described as a matter of concern.

Several political leaders, including AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi and CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury had hit out at Rawat, saying the CoD is meddling with civilian issues.

"It (de-radicalisation) is the responsibility of the Army.... This (these camps) are there for a

long time. It is part of their (army) service.

They will go to places which have been identified as radicalized and organise medical camps, offer them educational guidance and counsel parents. Our military personnel always do this," Reddy said.

The minister further said all these services are offered as part of the de-radicalisation programme of the youth.

Speaking at a public meeting at Adilabad on Thursday night, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said de-radicalisation was needed for those who lynch and kill innocent Dalits and Muslims.

"This is deeply condemnable and shocking. A military commander has no business saying this. It shows the weakness of the political leadership and is detrimental to India's case on Kashmir," Yechury tweeted on Thursday.

Gen Rawat had further said that containing radicalisation is the key to effectively combat terrorism, adding that radicalised young people were involved in pelting stones at security forces in Kashmir.

Ridiculous, Says Owaisi

not applicable to children. What kind of de-radicalisation you are talking about," he said.

"General saab says that they will bring new law to deradicalise children. Meerut SP says in Muslim localities that they (Muslims) eat here and sing songs in favour of Pakistan. He says go to Pakistan. Who will de-radicalise such SPs. Dalits and Muslims are being lynched. Who will de-radicalise those attackers?" the AIMIM chief said.

Rawat on Thursday in an address at the Raisina Dialogue, said de-radicalisation camps are operating in the country as it was necessary to isolate people who are completely radicalised.

The MIM supremo alleged that names of five lakh Bengali Hindus and an equal number of Muslims are missing in Assam and the Hindus will be given citizenship under Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), leaving out the Muslims.

He said the names of some family members of former president of India Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed were also missing in Assam and questioned who would de-radicalise those responsible for the blunder.

In a series of tweets, Owaisi said this is not the first time that Rawat uttered comments undermining the civil administration.

"This is not the first ridiculous statement he has made. Policy is decided by civilian administration not by any General. By speaking on policy/politics, he is undermining civilian supremacy," he tweeted.

"Who'll deradicalise lynchers & their political masters? What about those opposing citizenship for Assam's Bengali Muslims? Maybe deradicalise "Badla" Yogi & "Pakistan jao" Meerut SP? Maybe deradicalise those imposing hardship on us through NPR-NRC?" the MIM leader said in another tweet.

Ministers' J&K Visit: Bjp

Singh said the government has failed to win the confidence of the people.

"This is a publicity stunt," Singh said. He said people in Jammu and Kashmir were not interested in merely seeing the faces of ministers. "They want restrictions to be lifted and an end to the internet blockade," he said.

"A drama is being enacted at a time when people are worried about losing jobs and the right to own land after the abrogation of Article 370.

"At a time when the J&K today is not in a position even to pay salaries to its employees, the government will be spending from its coffers on the visit of the ministers," Singh said.

The National conference said that nothing will come out of this meeting at a time when so many politicians, including three former chief ministers are under detention.

"It is a futile exercise, it has no meaning," Akbar Lone, the National Conference MP said.

But, the BJP said there were no restrictions for people to meet the ministers in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Probably they are coming with an open mind and would meet anybody who wants to meet them," Arun Gupta said.

As many as 36 members of the Union Council of Ministers will visit Jammu and Kashmir later this week in order to spread words about the government's policies, particularly those taken in the last five months after the abrogation of Article 370.

The ministers will visit different districts in both the UTs between January 18 and January 24. (IANS)

Leopard Caught In Shopian

forced many animals to roam in human habitations in search of food.

People have been asked to take precautionary measures and inform the wildlife department, if any such wild animal is found roaming in their area, without disturbing or trying to catch the animals.