

Nawaz Sharif accuses India of adopting dangerous military doctrines

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Washington: Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Friday kept up his attack on India and warned that Pakistan will have to take "credible deterrent" measures in the face of Indian "arms build-up" and "dangerous military doctrines".

"While refusing dialogue, India is engaged in a major arms build-up, regrettably with the active assistance of several powers. It has adopted dangerous military doctrines. This will compel Pakistan to take several counter measures to preserve credible deterrence," Sharif said in his address to the US Institute of Peace (USIP), a US Congress top American think-tank.

Sharif claimed that after coming to power two-and-a-half years ago, he has made several "sincere efforts" to improve relationship with India.

"I accepted his (Prime Minister Narendra Modi's) invitation to attend his swearing-in ceremony New Delhi," he said.

The momentum this generated was scuttled when India cancelled the NSA-level talks on "flimsy excuse", he alleged. In his address, Sharif blamed India for narrowing the talks to just one issue of terrorism after his meeting with Modi at Ufa, Russia in July.

"The cancellation of NSA-level talks have been followed by increased ceasefire violations by India across the Line of Control (LoC) and the working boundary, and a stream of hostile statements by Indian political and military leadership," he alleged.

The NSA-level talks scheduled for August 23 in New Delhi were called off at the last minute, after India made it clear that Pakistan's insistence on holding discussions on Kashmir and a meeting with separatists will not be acceptable to it.

Sharif also said anti-Pakistan actions by Hindu extremist groups in India have exacerbated the present tension in the region.

He was apparently referring to incidents targetting Pakistanis in India by Shiv Sena activists, who stormed the BCCI headquarters in Mumbai and forced cancellation of a meeting between the cricket chiefs of the two countries.

Earlier, they threatened organisers of a show by legendary Pakistani singer Ghulam Ali in Mumbai, forcing them to cancel the event.

"In my address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), I proposed a new peace initiative comprising four specific and feasible steps that could serve as the basis for progress towards normalisation.

"Unfortunately, India's response was not positive," he said.

During his address to the UNGA on September 30, Sharif proposed a 4-point "peace initiative" with India which includes demilitarisation of Kashmir and unconditional withdrawal of forces from Siachen.

India, however, had said de-militarising Kashmir is not the answer for achieving peace but "deteriorating" Pakistan is.

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In his address today, Sharif also said a normal and stable relationship between Pakistan and India can be built by adherence to the principle of the UN charter, especially the principle of sovereignty, equality of States and non-interference in internal affairs and the right of people of self-determination.

"There is no alternative for the two countries but to resume a comprehensive dialogue to resume all outstanding issues including the core issue of Jammu and Kashmir," the Pakistani Prime Minister said.

Sharif had raised the Kashmir issue during his talks with US President Barack Obama and the two leaders called for a "sustained and resilient" Indo-Pak dialogue process to resolve all outstanding issues.

In a joint statement, the two leaders had emphasised the importance of a "sustained and resilient dialogue process" between India and Pakistan to resolve all outstanding territorial and other disputes, including Kashmir.

However, the US firmly ruled out any role for itself in Indo-Pak peace process unless both the countries jointly asked for it.

Notwithstanding the US' stance, Sharif today renewed his appeal for its intervention in normalising Indo-Pak ties.

The visiting premier asked the US to review some of its "existing assumption and analysis".

He added that paying greater attention to Pakistan's views and interests would be useful for the US to play a "very constructive role in preventing the ever present danger of escalation" and promoting stability in South Asia.

Observing that the focus of his foreign policy is "peace for development and peace for neighbourhood", Sharif said one of the first steps he took after assuming office was to send a "message of peace to all our neighbours including Afghanistan and India".

He, however, pointed out that there exists a "real and present threat" to peace and security in South Asia.

"The international community can no longer pretend that it does not exist. It must play a role to stop the slide towards a dangerous Pakistan-India crisis by preventing India's belligerent actions rather than Pakistan's defensive responses," Sharif added. Senior Pakistani officials have claimed that India had created a gap in the capabilities of the two countries through its cold-start doctrine - developed for use in a possible war with Pakistan that involves various branches of India's military conducting offensive operations.

"Obviously, the Pakistan-India relationship poses the most difficult and urgent challenge," Sharif said, adding that "Pakistan's priority is to defeat TTP".

Noting that radicalisation emerges from multiple sources, Sharif said "we" must address the root causes.

"One of the key pillars of my government is to promote regional integrity and connectivity," he said and referred to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which he called the most promising element of this policy.

Sharif arrived in the US on Tuesday on his second bilateral visit.

À During his four-day stay, he met top American leadership, including Obama at his Oval Office on Thursday during which he committed himself to take strong action against Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Haqqani network.

In all his meetings, Sharif told the Pakistani media that he raised the issue of Kashmir and sought US intervention.

Sharif also met US Vice President Joe Biden besides holding talks with Defence Secretary Ashton Carter at the Pentagon, among others.

When the Secretary of State John Kerry called on him on Wednesday, he handed over a set of three dossiers to the top American diplomat about alleged Indian "subversive activities" in Karachi, Balochistan and FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas).

The US has said it has not yet reviewed the contents of the dossiers.

At the start of his speech, Sharif faced a protest from an individual identified as Ahmar Musti Khan of the Free Baluchistan Campaign USA.

He raised slogans of "Free Balochistan" and "You are friend of Bin Laden" before being taken out of the auditorium by security personnel.

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