

Indo-Israel ties a threat to regional peace: Pakistan

ANI, Lahore

Growing ties between India and Israel in the defence sector would pose a serious threat to regional peace in South Asia, said Pakistan's Defence Minister.

In an apparent reference to the US sanction to India to go ahead and buy three Phalcon air-warning systems from Israel, Rao Sikandar Iqbal said such developments could disturb the balance of power in South Asia.

The Phalcon systems were originally meant to be sold to China, but objections from Washington prevented the deal

from going through. Tel Aviv then approached New Delhi and pending relevant government-to-government guarantees, the purchase is expected to be finalised.

According to sources in New Delhi, the Phalcons will augment India's existing defence requirements considerably.

Online News said Iqbal was talking to media persons at his residence in Okara City, which is located 127 km southwest of Lahore.

Commenting on senior Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) leader Maulana Fazlur Rehman's

visit to India, he said that it was private one. Rehman's views on improving Indo-Pakistani ties and on the disputed Kashmir issue were his own and not a reflection of the federal government's stance, he added.

Pakistan, he said, would continue to extend political, moral and diplomatic support to Kashmir's 'freedom' movement.

On the tension prevailing on Pakistan's borders with Afghanistan, Iqbal reiterated that no troops had crossed over to create disturbances in Afghan territory.

He was responding to Afghan

and US allegations of Islamabad extending covert support to disbanded elements of the ousted Taliban regime, helping them to regroup and to infiltrate into southern and eastern Afghanistan.

Relations between the two countries have taken a downward curve over the past month, with both sides trading charges on this issue. The Pakistan embassy in Kabul was also attacked and was shut down for some time because of this.

Iqbal insisted that misunderstandings between Pakistan and Afghanistan had been removed.

'Asia, Europe should not impose will on each other'

AFP, Nusa Dua

Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri on Thursday formally opened a meeting of Asian and European foreign ministers, urging the two sides to respect differences and not impose their will on each other.

Megawati made the call at the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Bali, where there are divisions on how to handle the Myanmar issue.

The Europeans have imposed political and economic sanctions to pressure military-ruled Myanmar to release democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi while the Asians prefer the problem to be resolved through diplomacy.

The Asians have rejected a European proposal to have a special agenda on Myanmar at the ministerial meeting although the Nobel peace prize winner's detention is a key topic along the conference corridors.

Megawati did not refer to Myanmar in her opening remarks but warned that much time and resources would be lost unless the two continents are realistic in accepting and respecting their

differences. She said that based on experience "it is essential to build mutual understanding, refrain from the imposition of will, and respect each other when we are determined to engage in cooperation, especially between different groups."

"This is particularly true when cooperation involved countries which are different in culture, level of socio-economy, and in many other aspects of their lives," she said.

Megawati said Indonesia's experience, where "differences and diversity have no comparison in many places, not even Europe," had enabled the people to build tolerance and to respect differences.

"It is within the Asia-Europe partnership that I would like to underline that we need to be really sincere, honest and earnest to accept and respect differences."

"Admittedly, we have wasted (much time) without really accomplishing substantive and concrete benefit to our peoples in our joint efforts to carry out our vision into the 21st century," she said.

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