

S Asia rivals agree to resume peace moves

BBC ONLINE

India and Pakistan say they have agreed to resume peace talks "on all issues".

Peace moves were put on hold after Pakistan-based militants attacked Mumbai in 2008, although the sides have met a number of times in the past year.

The nuclear-armed rivals' decision to discuss key issues in the dispute came after top officials met at a summit in Bhutan at the weekend.

Pakistan's foreign minister will visit India by July to review progress in the dialogue, a joint statement said.

Before then, senior officials from both sides will get together to discuss a range of issues which have harmed relations for decades.

"They have agreed to resume dialogue on all issues following the spirit of the Thimpu meeting between the two prime ministers," a joint statement said, referring to weekend talks in the Bhutanese capital.

BBC correspondents say no-one is expecting swift progress on issues at the heart of the dispute.

"The two countries will work to narrow the trust deficit so that we can discuss all bilateral issues," Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesman Vishnu Prakash told the BBC.

"We are picking up the threads again, we have to move forward step by step. We are

taking baby steps."

Pakistan's Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani said he welcomed "the important decision taken both by Pakistan and India to resume [a] full spectrum of dialogue".

In a statement, Mr Gilani said the peace negotiations had resulted from his talks with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

As well as the main disputes over counter-terrorism and the Himalayan territory of Kashmir - which both countries claim - the talks teams will look at economic issues and a number of other, smaller, territorial disagreements.

Before the Mumbai attacks, the two sides held formal peace talks known as a "composite dialogue" for several years but made little headway, apart from a number of confidence-building measures.

These included cross-border transport links, among them a bus service linking divided Kashmir, and cricket matches between the two countries.

There was no fanfare around yesterday's low-key announcement, which came out in statements on the two countries' foreign ministry websites.

It is thought officials are trying to play down expectations - mistrust is still high on both sides.

In India, many people feel Pakistan has not done enough to tackle militancy following the Mumbai attacks.



PHOTO: AFP

Sri Lankan soldiers help displaced people cross a flooded road in the eastern Sri Lankan town of Batticaloa yesterday. At least 21 people have died and over 1.2 million affected by heavy monsoon showers that have flooded most parts of the island's north, north central and eastern regions. Flooding in the same areas last month left 43 dead and drove over a million people from their homes.

Liaquat Ali's murder made things

FROM PAGE 1

addressing a public rally in Rawalpindi. His assassin was quickly pounced upon by a mob and lynched. The incident sent shock waves throughout Pakistan, especially since it was the first murder of a leading political figure in the country. The subcontinent had already been reeling from the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi in January 1948. Liaquat Ali Khan's murder brought to the fore the fact that assassination as a political weapon was quickly making inroads into subcontinental culture.

The murdered prime minister was quickly succeeded by Khwaja Nazimuddin, who over the past three years had been in office as Pakistan's governor general. As Nazimuddin took charge as prime minister, Ghulam Mohammad, so long finance minister in the government, assumed office as the new governor general. The new head of state, whose

stewardship of the state would prove disastrous over the next few years, had already become known for his antipathy to the causes of the Bangalees of Pakistan.

Prime Minister Nazimuddin, on a visit to Dhaka in January 1952, only ended up muddying the waters over the language question. At a public meeting on 27 January, he reiterated the conviction of the ruling classes that Pakistan's state language would be Urdu as noted in the report of the Basic Principles Committee. It was a move which clearly left East Bengal Chief Minister Nurul Amin, who was on the dais, irritated. As Amin was to note more than two decades later (in 1972, when he served as Pakistan's vice president under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto following the liberation of Bangladesh):

'In the course of (Nazimuddin's) lengthy speech from a written script

he mentioned that Urdu shall be the state language. The statement was not only uncalled for but also inconsistent with the stand of the Muslim League members of the CA (Constituent Assembly) from East Pakistan and the assurances received from a section of their counterparts from the West. It is also worth mentioning here that the Prime Minister seemed to have been so effectively briefed from interested quarters that he kept such an inflammable issue a guarded secret from me even and did not have the courtesy to consult me if it was a matter worth forming a subject of his speech in the meeting. I was sitting on the dais where he was speaking from and as soon as he uttered the sentence I could foresee its consequences. When I charged him after the meeting, he told me that the brief was (sic) prepared in Karachi.'

Iraq car blast kills six Shiite pilgrims

AFP, Samarra

A car bomb ripped through a Shiite Muslim procession just north of Baghdad yesterday killing at least six worshippers, a police officer said. Forty others were wounded in the attack, which struck on the outskirts of the mostly Shiite town of Dujail at 1:30pm, a police major said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Among the dead and injured were women and children, the officer said, without giving further details. The pilgrims were walking to the city of Samarra to commemorate the death of the 11th imam, Hassan al-Askari, at his gold-domed shrine in the majority-Sunni city.

PM asks special JS body

FROM PAGE 20

constitutional issues keeping intact the basic principles of the Liberation War and the proclamation of independence, he said.

Some crucial issues including the status of Islam as state religion, the caretaker government system, restoration of pre-eminence of parliament by reinstating the original article 96, the state of emergency and transitional clauses in the constitution and stringent provision to prevent extra-constitutional takeover were discussed at the two-hour meeting, said committee members.

They think the issues of the caretaker government system and the status of Islam as state religion that goes against secularism -- one of the four fundamental state principles -- are highly sensitive.

The committee has to proceed with them very carefully keeping in mind the present political situation, they said.

The prime minister suggested the parliamentary body draft proposals for bringing amendments to the constitution with the current political situation in mind, said a committee member wishing anonymity.

They however did not discuss whether any change would be brought to article 70 to relax restrictions on lawmakers to allow them to play due role in parliament.

Some committee members yesterday said the recent debate over the parliament's sovereignty prompted the parliamentary body on Wednesday to change its mind over the implementation of the verdict on the fifth amendment.

The committee on October 12 last year had consented to the law ministry's move to reprint the constitution by restoring the articles either amended or repealed during the first martial law regime.

In the watershed verdict in the Fifth Amendment Act case, the Supreme Court declared illegal and void all the changes brought to the constitution during the martial law rule.

Meanwhile, a debate over the House's sovereignty prompted the parliamentary body to reject the argument that the articles in question had automatically been reinstated in the constitution through the cancellation of the Fifth Amendment by the Supreme Court.

In consultation with the prime minister, the committee on Wednesday decided to bring a bill in parliament to reinstate the articles, besides bringing other changes to the republic's charter, a committee member said.

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How to apply
Application forms can be obtained from British Council offices in Dhaka (5 Fuller Road, Dhaka), Chittagong (77/A East Nasirabad, Chittagong) and Sylhet (Al-Hamra Shopping City, Level 6, Zindabazar, Sylhet) or downloaded from www.manchester.ac.uk/international/bangladesh

You must indicate clearly on the form which course(s) you would like to study. You may apply for up to 3 different courses.

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The deadline is 20 March 2011. Please write "University of Manchester, Equity and Merit Scholarships 2011/12" on the top of the envelope. Applications received after this date will not be processed. We regret that we will not be able to contact unsuccessful applicants. Applicants who have not heard from us by April 2011 should assume that they have not been successful.

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