

Kashmir issue also on agenda for talks with India: Sartaj

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Prime Minister's Adviser on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz says normalisation of Indo-Pakistan relations is urgently needed to reduce tension on the Line of Control (LoC).

"It is premature to predict the outcome of foreign secretary level talks between Pakistan and India scheduled for next week but chances of a decision to resume a composite dialogue are likely either in the upcoming or the follow-up meetings," Mr Aziz told newsmen at the launching ceremony of economist Shahid Javed Burki's Institute of Public Policy (IPP) at NetSol Technologies Ltd on Sunday.

Mr Aziz said all outstanding issues, including the Kashmir dispute, had been part of agenda for talks with India.

About the recent eight per cent increase in India's defence allocation, the PM's adviser said Pakistan had never been involved in arms race. However, he said, Pakistan would never compromise on availability of conventional weapons for its armed forces.

Answering a question that foreign policy was being controlled by the army chief, the PM's adviser said: "Harmony between political and military leadership is essential for national security which is an integral part of country's foreign policy."

It is not possible to implement the priorities on security issues without coordination with the armed forces."

Mr Aziz said the time of blame game between Afghanistan and Pakistan was over.

Cooperation between Kabul and Islamabad in intelligence sharing and defence sector had improved as confidence building environment had been restored with Afghanistan, he said.

"Pakistan will never allow its soil to be used against Afghanistan," he said while adding at present no mechanism to jointly conduct operation against terrorism existed between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

However, both countries have agreed to take steps against terrorists in their respective jurisdiction. Now there is no difference between good and bad Taliban," he said.

Earlier, in his keynote speech at the launching ceremony, Mr Aziz elaborated the background of the institute and pointed out that seven reports on state of economy have been published till date.

He appreciated Beaconhouse National University (BNU) for providing logistics for the institute and expressed his deep gratitude to the Shahid Javed

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Burki and Jehan Ara Burki Foundation for providing endowment fund.

He said the institute would set up series of centre of excellence and the first one would be the setting up of Dr Afaaf Centre for Science, who was a close companion of Nobel laureate Dr Abdus Salam.

He appreciated the idea of placing the institute at the NetSol Technologies, saying that science and technology would play a major role in future.

Former federal minister Dr Zubair Khan, BNU head Mrs Nasreen Mehmood Kasuri and NetSol Technologies Ltd chairman Salim Ghauri also spoke.

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