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Report - In-House Meeting
with
“Media Delegation from Nepal”

November 26, 2018



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Pictures of the Event





A ten-member media delegation from Nepal visited Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) on November 26, 2018 to exchange views on issues of mutual interest. The members of the delegation included: Dr. Buddhi Narayan Shrestha, Ex-DG Survey, Border Expert; Mr. Laxman Humagain, GM Janta TV; Mr. Sharach Chandra Bandhari, RSS Foreign Correspondent; Mr. Jhapindra Raj Bista, Chief Editor, National Mirror; Mr. Tapta Bahadur Malla, Chief Editor Kuesnews.com; Mr. Rajan Karki, Chief Editor, Gorkha Express; Mr. Teknath Neupane, Chairperson/Editor-in-Chief, Mediamissionsnews.com; Mr. Sushil Babu Aryal, News Coordinator , Himalaya TV in Kathmandhu, Nepal; Mr. Nanda Lal Tiwari, correspondent Rising Nepal and Mr. Nimkant Panday, Editor-in-Chief Swaviman Nepal Magazine Janadharana National Weekly.

Extending a warm welcome, the Director General ISSI, Ambassador (Retd) Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said that people in Pakistan have a very positive image of Nepal which is undoubtedly a country of rich culture, friendly people and beautiful landscape. He said that for Pakistan, the global situation is changing in many ways . A world based on United Nations Charter of respecting sovereignty is now under stress. US is still the most powerful state in the world, but it is also now coming under threat from emerging powers like China and Russia which US now recognises as competitors. New alignments are also taking shape and US has chosen to deepen its relations with India. Pakistan has also come closer to China and their relationship has become more deeper when the idea of an economic corridor was conceived.

There are other trends also. Immigrants are not welcome in Europe. Climate change - one of the most important issue is also on the back burner. There is also a rise of nationalism and xenophobia.

Within South Asia, India and Pakistan are not talking to each other, and India and China have a very uneasy relationship. Countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are consolidating democracies. In 1947, when Pakistan was carved out of British India, the whole process was done in a way that gave birth to many insecurities in Pakistan. As a result of these insecurities, Pakistan came close to the US. Pakistan's desire to have good relations with India are not being reciprocated as India blames Pakistan for promoting terrorism without realising that Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism.

Pakistan's relations with China are cordial and based on mutual respect. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has further strengthened this relationship. Some countries are opposed to it and they are spreading all sorts of propaganda and rumours against this project. However, Pakistan believes that this project will be extremely beneficial for Pakistan. Pakistan's relations with Iran are also very cordial. However, the tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia are a matter of great concern as both the countries are important allies of Pakistan. Situation in Afghanistan is also a matter of great concern. Pakistan believes that there cannot be a military solution to the Afghan problem.

Mr. Waqas Sajjad, Senior Research Fellow (ISSI) appraised the delegation about Pakistan's relations with Nepal. He said that both the countries enjoy cordial relations since the 1960s. Trade agreements were signed which led to the creation of Joint Economic Commission. However, both the countries have not been able to realise the economic potential. Referring to the visit by Pakistan's Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi to Nepal, Mr Sajjad said that it was after two decades that a Pakistani Prime Minister visited Nepal and the visit highlighted the importance of bilateral relations between the two countries. The Joint Economic Commission which was established some forty years ago has met only six times. Nepal is Chair of SAARC and it has issued some positive statements about holding the next SAARC summit in Pakistan, but that has also not been actualised. This exemplifies the relationship on many other fronts. There is an expressed willingness, but this has not translated into action on ground.

Dr. Buddhi N Shrestha while expressing his views said that area of Nepal has been encroached by India in 71 spots. Biggest encroachment is in Kalapani and Lipulekh area. Modi visited China in 2015 and made agreement to increase trade through the Lipulekh area. There was hue and cry in Nepal. He said that China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is connecting Karakoram to Gwadar port which will boost Pakistan's economy. Nepal is also member of BRI project now much to annoyance of India. China will build a railway link from Lhasa- Shigatse-Gyirong to Rasuwagadhi by 2022. This will help enhance Nepal's economy. He also informed his Pakistani hosts that due to heavy smoke emanated by industries in both China and India, snow is melting and soon the Himalayas will be black.

He said that Nepal too has a very positive image of Pakistan. The media community in Nepal very actively takes part in all national events that are arranged by Pakistan embassy in Kathmandu. He acknowledged that Pakistan has always extended a helping hand towards Nepal whenever such need arose. He also mentioned about military personnel from Pakistan getting training in Nepal's military institutes and Nepali students getting scholarships in Pakistan's educational institutes.

A member of the media delegation raised a question regarding Pakistan's views about BIMSTEC.

Ambassador Chaudhry replied that Pakistan supports regional cooperation. Pakistan also wants SAARC to play an active role. For many years, SAARC has not been able to hold a summit. Pakistan is still willing to hold the summit, but India is creating hurdles. Chairman Board of Governors (ISSI) Ambassador (Retd) Khalid Mahmood was of the view that at times BIMSTEC is taken as SAARC minus Pakistan. He said that it has to be made sure that BIMSTEC is not used to undermine SAARC.

Another member expressed his desire to know how Nepal-Pakistan relations can be further improved and what is the Kashmir issue.

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said that both Nepal and Pakistan have been successful in achieving very positive political relations. People in Pakistan have a very good sense about Nepal and vice versa. Unfortunately, economic relations are not strong because both the countries are separated with India between them. He hoped that in future, all barriers to economic cooperation will be overcome through other routes. He then went on to explain the Kashmir issue in its historic context and said there are 18 UN resolutions still waiting to be implemented. The people of Kashmir have centuries old linguistic, cultural, and religious relations with Pakistan. If India is so sure that Kashmir belongs to India, it should not hesitate to hold plebiscite as per UN resolutions. He hoped sanity will prevail and this issue will be resolved through dialogue.

A question was raised regarding the latest terror attack on Chinese Consulate in Karachi to which the Director General replied that the government of Pakistan believes that this was a terrorist

attack by an entity that is banned in this country. Both China and Pakistan have expressed their resolve that such incidents will not deter them from pursuing their objectives.

Another member said that Nepal and Pakistan share an emotional bond because of Indian hegemony. Nepal is trying that a SAARC summit is held in Islamabad. Is Pakistan also making any effort by talking to SAARC members other than India?

The Director General replied that Pakistan is very keen and eager to hold the summit in Islamabad. Unfortunately, it was India which forbade other smaller countries from attending the 19th SAARC Summit in Islamabad. There is no doubt that India is the biggest country in the region, but smaller countries also have a right to live and look after their interest.

The Director General Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry and Chairman Board of Governors Ambassador Khalid Mahmood thanked the delegation for visiting the Institute and hoped that the discussions would further help in bringing the two countries closer to each other.