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Report – In-House Meeting

“Visit by Delegation of Majlis Perundingan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM)”

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PICTURES OF THE EVENT



A 12-member delegation from Majlis Perundangan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM) visited Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) on June 19, 2019. Members of the delegation included: Mohd. Azmi Abdul Hamid, Datuk Seri Ahmad Awang, Mrs. Masadah Sajadi, Datin Seri Rosiah Salleh, Rozaidi Taib, Ust. Hj. Mohd. Nasir Zakaria, Fadhil Bin Osman, Muhammad Fadhil, Yusni, Johan Ariff Ismail, DW Ust. Hj. Abdul Othman Bin Samsudin, Datuk Rahat Bin, Mohammad Tahir Khan and Latifah Bint Mahmood.

Welcoming the delegation, Director General ISSI, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry said that number of changes is taking place around the world. The United States is now being challenged by rising powers like China, and therefore, focus is shifting towards Asia. The US, realizing this changing reality, has now started seeing China and Russia as competitors. This competition will further increase as is indicated by the policies pursued by US. A trade war between US and China has already started, and among other issues, immigrants are facing increasing hostility and difficulties, and nationalism is on the rise. This situation is affecting the entire world. Globalism is disappearing and United Nations has been marginalized. US has also introduced a new Indo-Pacific strategy, largely to contain China, and South China Sea has become a source of constant tensions and conflict.

Similarly, the South Asian region is also not very stable. Relations between Pakistan and India are strained, and a lot is changing within India where the Hindutva ideology is gaining grounds to revive Hindu glory. This ideology holds on to the notion that India belongs to Hindus and people of other religions should either convert to Hinduism or leave India. This is dangerous not only for the region, but for India also. Today, Muslims in India are under tremendous pressure, and as evident from the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, this ideology has been endorsed by majority of Indians. Many Indian scholars are also worried because this situation means an end to secular India.

India is not willing to talk to Pakistan alleging that it is sponsoring terrorism in India, whereas the fact is, Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism. The freedom struggle in Kashmir is an indigenous movement. However, there is a lot of sympathy for this movement in Pakistan. There are centuries old cultural, religious and linguistic bonds between Pakistan and Kashmir and hence, Pakistan extends moral, diplomatic and political support to Kashmiri freedom struggle. A

number of resolutions have been passed by the UN and OIC, but unfortunately, India does not pay heed to these resolutions.

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan are also not very smooth. Conflict started long time back and US supported Jihad in Afghanistan. Following the 9/11 incident, US felt that Afghanistan was home to Al-Qaeda. They invaded Afghanistan and ousted the Taliban regime. Now, after years of war, talks are underway between the US and the Taliban, but it will take a long time for these talks to be fruitful as there is no unity among different Afghan factions. Besides, regional consensus is also important for any Afghan solution to be sustainable. It has to be made sure that Afghan land is not used for proxy war by any country, Pakistan has been raising the issue that India is using Afghanistan to destabilize Pakistan.

Iran has also seen 40 years of tensions with US. The nuclear deal was signed between Iran and US (along with UK, France, China, Russia and Germany) after 10 years of negotiations. Later, President Trump felt that this agreement was not right and decided to withdraw from it. Iran also has serious differences with Saudi Arabia which is a matter of great concern for Pakistan. Saudi Arabia has a very special place in the Muslim world as two holiest cities are located there. On the other hand, Iran is also Pakistan's neighbour, which makes it difficult for Pakistan to take sides. Unfortunately, this whole region is disturbed. Iraq, Syria and Libya are all going through turmoil. Arab Spring became Arab Autumn, and now it is Arab Winter. Palestine, one of the oldest crises on the UN agenda, continues to suffer at the hands of Israel. On the other hand, Israel is reaching out to Muslim countries. Pakistan continues to support its Palestinian brethren.

The Director General also talked about Pakistan's relations with China and how China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will bring prosperity to Pakistan and the region. Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry also highlighted the brotherly relations that Pakistan enjoys with Malaysia. He said that Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan holds Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir in high esteem.

Majid Mahmood, Research Associate at ISSI, while briefing the delegation on the Kashmir issue said that agitation in Indian occupied Kashmir is rooted in the struggle of the people to exercise their right to self-determination. He divided the Kashmir struggle in three different phases. The first phase started from 1987 and lasted till 2000; second phase started in 2008 and lasted till

2014; whereas the third phase started in 2016 following the extra-judicial killing of young Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Wani. He went on to explain the deteriorating human rights situation where people are being used as human shields and pellet guns are being used as a new weapon of choice by occupying Indian forces on unarmed protesters. He said that Kashmiri people hope that the Muslim world will empathize and support them.

Mohd. Azmi Abdul Hamid, the leading member of the Malaysian delegation said that Muslim Ummah is divided into two different blocs. There are countries who are members of OIC, and there are countries where Muslims are in minority. US is trying to put down one Muslim country after another. First they supported the Shah in Iran, and later supported Saddam in Iraq to go after Shah. US claims that it is fixing things up, but in reality, it has broken up everything. Mr. Hamid was of the view that if four countries i.e. Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia can sit together outside the OIC, it would be fruitful and a strong alliance. This can be done at two levels: government-to-government and people-to-people. Mr. Hamid identified number of areas where Pakistan and Malaysia could work together which included joint research programs, people-to-people connections, human capacity building, establishing strong relief work network, and more cooperation on Palestine issue. He also expressed his dismay over the manner in which Muslims are being lynched in India and said there is a need to create more awareness about the issue of Kashmir.

A question was raised regarding the current state of Afghan refugees in Pakistan to which the Director General ISSI replied that currently there are around 3 million refugees in Pakistan. Efforts are made to repatriate them to their country, but due to worsening security situation in Afghanistan, these refugees usually return to Pakistan.

Concluding the meeting, Chairman Board of Governors, ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood highlighted the importance of people-to-people contacts. He was of the view that there are more pressures in government-to-government contacts, whereas dialogue at non-governmental level has more flexibility. He thanked the Malaysian delegation for visiting ISSI and for holding a very fruitful discussion on issues faced by the Muslim Ummah.