

POST SAARC-12 SCENARIO

STATEMENT

Press Conference

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Prof. khurshid Ahmad

While welcoming some positive aspects of the SAARC - 12 and the Agreements signed, on this occasion, I express my great concern for the unjustified euphoria the Government and its spin-doctors are ballooning. Indo-Pak Relations have a long chequered history; the expected breakthrough should not be celebrated even before the ice begins to really melt. So many uncertainties cloud the horizon. It should also be noted that beginning of a dialogue does not mean resolving of the issues to the satisfaction of demands of justice and the best interests of the country. Everyone would welcome beginning of negotiations but the fact is that they could not start earlier because of the arrogance and intransigence of India. It is unfortunate that Pakistani leadership has adopted a disturbing strategy of making all the concessions even before negotiations begin. We are not negotiating from a position of sovereign equality. It is India that is calling the shots. This does not auger well for the final outcome.

However, even now, it is time to do our homework properly to take the nation and Parliament into confidence and to move fairly yet cautiously. History tells us that those who start with the minimal position, as unfortunately the Palestinian leadership did, are left with little to achieve. We should learn from these writings on the wall and restructure our diplomacy in such a way that we could protect our vital national interests and achieve right of self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

I have very strong reservations about the manner in which we are conceding on the economic front without resolving the political issues. I would also like to express my strong apprehensions about trade and tariff concessions including the proposed "Most favoured Nations State" treatment for India without restructuring our own economic policies and developing enough leverage in cooperation with other countries of SAARC Region to ensure against destabilising effects that naturally come from asymmetry of size and level of development of India vis-a-vis other smaller countries of the region.

I would like to express my and the nation's utter disappointment on the casual manner in which Kashmir has figured in the final Indo-Pak Communiqué. We have, it seems, silently and submissively abdicated our commitment to centrality of the Kashmir issue. I have also strong reservations about the Track II and behind the scene diplomacy, which India is trying to use to systematically liquidate our principled positions and frustrate the efforts and sacrifices of the heroic national resistance in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The signing of the supplementary Protocol on Journalism is a very unfortunate and ominous development. The nation must dissociate itself from the commitment, which has been given in a hasty cavalier manner without keeping in view its implications for the right of self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

I therefore demand that the session of the National Assembly and Senate should be called immediately to discuss Indo-Pak Relations in the context of the post SAARC 12 scenario.
