

Pakistan shuts down seminaries run by Jaish-e-Mohammad

Lahore: Pakistani authorities have shut down several religious schools run by the Jaish-e-Mohammad militant group accused of masterminding an attack this month on an air base in India, the provincial law minister said on Friday.

The crackdown in Punjab province, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's power base and the headquarters of Jaish-e-Mohammad, follows the arrest this week of several members of the militant group, including its leader, Maulana Masood Azhar, an Islamist hardliner and long-time foe of India.

Pakistan has said it is clamping down on Azhar's group, which India has long accused Pakistani authorities of tolerating, while it investigates Indian assertions that the January 2 attack on the Pathankot air base was the work of the Pakistan-based militants.

"Officials of the Counter-Terrorism Department raided the Jamiatul Nur seminary in the Daska area on Thursday and arrested more than a dozen people," Rana Sanaullah, the law minister of the Punjab province where Jaish-e-Mohammad is headquartered, told Reuters.

"The seminary has been sealed off and documents and literature have been confiscated from the premises."

Pathankot attack: Pakistan says 'not aware' of JeM chief Maulana Masood Azhar's arrest

In a volte-face, Pakistan's Foreign Office on Thursday said it has no idea if [Jaish-e-Mohammad](#) (JeM) chief [Maulana Masood Azhar](#) has been detained in connection with terror attack at Pathankot airbase in India.

Talking to press, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qazi Khalilullah also said that dates of Foreign Secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan, which were scheduled to be held tomorrow, are being rescheduled.

The development raises question mark on Pakistan's commitment to act against terrorism.

On Wednesday, Pakistani media had reported that the JeM chief, known for his close ties with Pakistani intelligence agencies, was taken to an undisclosed destination and was questioned as part of a crackdown.

Reports had also claimed the detention of his brother Mufti Abdul Rauf and brother-in-law Ashfaq Ahmad as well as some 10 others.

Pakistani media quoted unidentified sources as saying that "concerned authorities" interrogated Masood Azhar and the others about the Pathankot attack that left seven security personnel dead.

India says all six terrorists who raided the IAF base and got killed were Pakistanis and were allied to the JeM. India later said it had delivered "actionable intelligence" for Pakistan to act against the attack plotters.

The Pathankot attack took place just a week after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi flew to Lahore and met his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif in a bid to push forward the dialogue between the two countries.

Pakistan opposes preconditions for Afghan-Taliban peace talks

Pakistan on Monday said that no precondition should be attached for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, as a key meeting of a quadrilateral group involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US began here aimed at reviving the stalled peace process.

“It is important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process, as it will create difficulties in bringing Taliban to the negotiating table,” PM Nawaz Sharif’s Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz said at the meeting.

The group was set up last year to facilitate the reconciliation process in the war-torn country.

“The primary objective of the reconciliation process is to create conditions to bring Taliban to the negotiating table and offer them incentives that can persuade them to move away from using violence as a tool for pursuing political goals,” Aziz said.

“It is therefore important that no preconditions are attached to the reconciliation process,” Aziz added.

“Proper sequencing is required in the negotiating process,” he said, adding that “threat of use of military action against the group will cause hindrances and cannot proceed the offer of talks to all groups.”

He said that it was important to undertake a realistic assessment of the opportunities as well as anticipated obstacles in the process and then develop clarity on how to proceed further.

“I want to reaffirm that Pakistan values its brotherly and neighbourly relations with Afghanistan, and is firmly committed to continue serious efforts for long term peace and stability in Afghanistan,” he added.

Afghanistan hoped that Pakistan will share a list of insurgents who are ready for peace talks.

The first round of talks was held in July but the process was suspended in the same month after news of Taliban chief Mullah Omar’s death was announced.

Officials from Pakistan, China and US were present when representatives of the Taliban and the Afghan government met in Murree near Islamabad during the first round.

According to officials, the second round may take place towards the end of January if the four nations agreed on the minimum agenda of talks.

It is believed that the process of peace in Afghanistan will be testing for all parties due to strong opposition within Afghanistan towards any peace with the Taliban.

This Reddit Thread Between India and Pak

Today morning, Reddit India started a cultural [exchange thread with Pakistan](#). In this thread, people from Pakistan asked questions about India. If you think it was an unpleasant conversation with both sides hurling abuses at each other, then you are wrong. Pakistanis asked

relevant questions from everything about Indian food, to why people from the North East feel neglected.

We bring you some excerpts from the thread.

On phobia Indians may have towards the Muslim community.



Pakistan: On a grass root level, how much of a phobia, if any exists that perhaps one day Muslims will rule the whole subcontinent again just like we did back in the medieval times.

India: The only subliminal phobia Indians have is that the Indian Muslims will out breed the Hindus, and that India will become another Pakistan.

On Pakistani women.



Pakistan: It seems to be a trope, on both sides of the border, that Pakistani women are attractive. Additionally, it's one of the common themes of comments from Indians on the cultural exchange thread on our side.

Is this a widespread belief on your side of the border?

India: Yes. Pakistani women are considered hotter. It is a case of grass being greener on the other side.

On partition



Pakistan: What was partition like for your family?

India: Both my maternal grandparents are from small villages in the Pakistani side of Punjab. My Dadaji used to tell me stories about crossing the Sindh (Indus) and its enormous width. He suffered enormously during partition because he was an engineering student in Lahore and had to give up his studies to flee with his family. No one died, but they lost everything and had to start from scratch. Dadi is religious and never talks about her past, but I know that her story is a bit darker since some of her relatives were abducted during the journey. Thankfully, they got an Apartment in Delhi and made a career in public education

Pakistan: My maternal grandparents happened to be on the Indian side of Punjab. They were close to the boundary and found out on the 3rd day (i.e. when Radcliffe Award was announced) that they're on the wrong side. They were also told that some Sikhs are coming to kill them, so they fled for Pakistan with nothing but the clothes on their backs, they had no time to gather their belongings. When they came to Pakistan my paternal grandparents helped them settle and that's how the two families met. I guess they were lucky in a sense that they escaped violence. In those days, they didn't trust banks so they used to fill up pots with money and bury them. They had two pots full of coins made of mostly silver which they couldn't retrieve when fleeing. So somewhere in India, there's likely two pots full of silver still buried.

On what Indians like about Pakistan and Pakistanis.



Pakistan: What is one thing that you respect about Pakistanis? I respect the Indian tendency to focus on studies. Also the fact that you guys are able to run such a diverse and large country fairly smoothly.

India: You guys are trying to expand the middle-class and settling things down, despite having a lot of political turmoil, drones overhead, and a lot of terrorist attacks on schools and shit. The youth culture and things like MTV Coke Studio. Also, your TV serials and coal-smoked Kebabs are the one thing I'll acknowledge you've beaten us Indians in.

On Mumbai attacks, and India-Pakistan friendship.



Pakistan: If the Mumbai attacks hadn't happened, how different do you guys think the relationship between the two countries would be?

India: 26/11 showed us that the intentions on your side were not just for vote bank appeasement or money laundering (like in Kashmir). This was intense and insane. With any other government in place, a cold start would have been activated. It has caused us a lot of pain just like the continued support for separatists in J&K from your side. Still, I feel it matters more to you than to us of what you make of the future of our friendship. Stop supporting anti-India ideologies and yours will be a more prosperous nation.

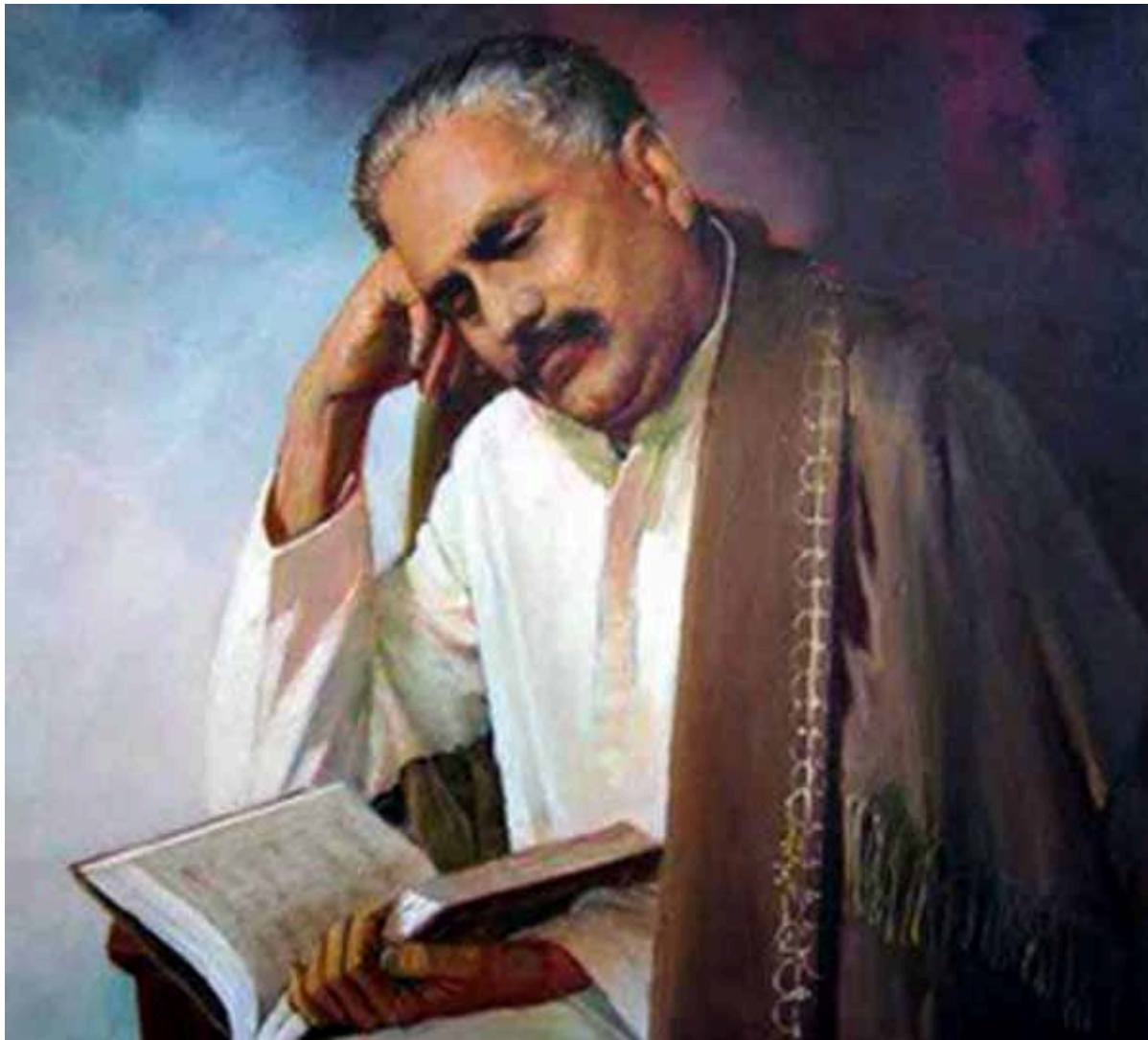
On why North East seems disconnected from the rest of India



Pakistan: How culturally connected is the Northeast to the rest of India? I've only met one person in my life from the NE, and they identified themselves as Assamese, not Indian. In fact, they really didn't like being called Indian, spoke zero Hindi, etc.

India: There is a disconnect and gentrification which has created problems, but more and more NE Indians come to major metropolitan cities in rest of India for jobs and assimilate. There is also increasing awareness about stopping discrimination, and the issue has gained visibility. So things are getting better.

On Allama Iqbal- the man who wrote Saare Jahaan Se Acha



Pakistan: What is the general opinion of people about Allama Iqbal? Do people even know about him?

India: He wrote Saare Jahan Se Achha. He is well known for this. But, our textbooks don't mention that he was Pakistan's Tagore.

On the bonding of Indians and Pakistanis outside Asia



Pakistan: But Indian Americans and Pakistani Americans seem way closer than Indians/Pakistanis back in Asia. Especially in college campuses where you have desi dance nights targeted at Ind/Pak Americans. Also grocery stores, restaurants, art stores etc. Are shared between Indians and Pakistanis. Lots of Indian grocery stores are owned by Pakistanis. What's your take on that?

India: Australian Indian here. Yeah, South Asians here all get along, unless cricket is involved then there's a lot of trash talking. We all wish Happy Diwali and Eid Mubarak to each other. Our communities are pretty small here so we all stick together.

It's a general unspoken rule you don't talk about Kashmir.

This article has been taken from [this](#) thread.

Pakistan confirms participation in Saudi-led anti-terror alliance

After initial ambiguity, the Pakistan government confirmed on Wednesday its participation in a Saudi-led military alliance for 'fighting terrorism', but said the scope of its participation would be defined after Riyadh shared the details of the coalition it was assembling.

"Pakistan... is awaiting further details to decide the extent of its participation in different activities of the alliance," a statement issued by the Foreign Office said.

Saudi Arabia had announced on Tuesday that it had forged the 34-nation alliance of Muslim countries for fighting terrorism and extremism, which included Pakistan. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al Jubeir had later explained that the participating countries would



Saudi special forces take part in a graduation ceremony held in Riyadh on May 19, 2015. Photo: Reuters.

themselves decide about the extent of their participation.

The coalition was envisaged to serve as a platform for security cooperation, including provision of training, equipment and troops, and involvement of religious scholars for dealing with extremism.

Senior officials at the foreign ministry initially expressed surprise at Pakistan being included in the new group, and said that Riyadh had not taken Islamabad on board. But subsequent developments revealed that Saudi Arabia had been given a secret commitment regarding joining the alliance, about which the Foreign Office was not aware.

There were speculations about who had given that assurance.

The military had started in October a new phase in the bilateral defence relationship by training Saudi special forces personnel in countering terrorism. Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif visited Saudi Arabia after the special exercises for discussions on counter-terrorism efforts.

The Foreign Office statement tried to brush off the embarrassment caused to Riyadh because of the reports that it had included Pakistan in the coalition without its prior knowledge by saying that it welcomed the formation of the counter-terrorism alliance.

It impliedly conceded that some information had been shared with it before the announcement from Riyadh, as the statement noted that it was awaiting 'further' details.

The Foreign Office said it consistently supported all efforts at fighting terrorism and a

resolution adopted at the 42nd session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation had called on members to “join regional and international efforts to fight terrorism and extremist thought”.

Anwar Iqbal adds from Washington: The United States said on Wednesday that the new coalition supplemented its efforts to defeat terrorism and it had long been urging its Muslim allies to form such an alliance.

“It certainly is in line with what we have long been saying and urging countries in the region to do, which is to coalesce around the need to deal with the terrorist threat there in the region,” US State Department spokesman John Kirby said at a news briefing.

“We welcome, as we have welcomed, any intensification of the effort against ISIL (the militant Islamic State group) in the region, as well as against other terrorist networks. Any effort to increase pressure on those networks is a welcome effort.”

He said the US was waiting for details on how this force would operate but noted that the Saudi announcement had given a broad outline.

“I would only point you to what the deputy crown prince himself said, which is that they’re not ruling anything in or out at this point in terms of what it could mean,” Mr Kirby said.

“There’s every expectation and anticipation by this coalition to work with neighbours and partners in the region in ways that collectively they think is most appropriate to go after terrorist threats,” he added.

Asked if it would be a parallel alliance or work with the US-led international coalition, Mr Kirby said those 34 nations were already part of the 65-plus-member coalition against the IS.

“This is something separate and distinct that they have done themselves and have arranged for themselves, ... but they are already part of the coalition countering” the IS in the region, he said.

Pakistan protests reports on diplomat’s terror link

Pakistan today protested reports in Bangladeshi media on alleged involvement of one of its diplomats in financing terrorism here.

A media release was issued from the Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka termed the reports “utterly baseless” and “fabricated”.

Diplomatic norms and courtesies were “thrown to the wind” by publishing such news, the release said.

[READ MORE: Pakistani diplomat ‘linked to terror financing’ in Bangladesh](#)

The news of a Pakistan diplomat’s link to financing terrorism was quizzed out from a militant of banned Islamist outfit Jama’atul Mujahideen Bangladesh, according to detectives.

The information came during a strain in diplomatic ties between the two countries over Pakistan’s denial about committing genocide in Bangladesh during the 1971 War of Independence.

Majority quarters have raised demands to sever diplomatic ties with Pakistan.

While talking on the alleged link of the Pakistan diplomat with terror financing, the home minister yesterday said Pakistan was still conspiring against Bangladesh.

[News Source](#)

Pakistan diplomat's links with terror groups revealed

Police have found evidence of the terror links of a Pakistani diplomat, according to documents available with bdnews24.com.

Some Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activists recently arrested in Dhaka have blown the lid off these clandestine links during their interrogations, the documents relating to police investigation show.

At least one JMB radical has testified to these links in a judicial confession.



Farina Arshad

Pakistan High Commission's Second Secretary (political) Farina Arshad is said to be involved with the Islamist radicals.

Earlier in January this year, Mazhar Khan, a Pakistani official working in the Dhaka mission, had been expelled after Bangladesh intelligence accused him of funding Islamist radicals and peddling fake currency.

Two of the four JMB radicals, including Idris Sheikh, arrested at Uttara and Khilgaon in Dhaka on Nov 29, were found to be carrying Pakistani passports, said Detective Branch's Joint Commissioner Monirul Islam at a press briefing at the time.

Both these radicals had been travelling frequently between Bangladesh and Pakistan, he said.

Monirul Islam said Idris was in possession of a 'spy mobile', which he was using to communicate regularly with a foreign intelligence agent outside the country.

"He was regularly sharing information with that agent and was also in touch with a female diplomat based in Dhaka." The police officer did not disclose the diplomat's identity at that time.

In his judicial confession before Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abdullah Al Masud under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), Idris named Second Secretary Farina Arshad as the diplomat he was in contact with.

The Pakistan High Commission did not respond to bdnews24.com's attempts to cross-check details.

Senior intelligence sources say another junior diplomat of same origin working in a European

mission in Dhaka is alleged to have been involved in anti-Bangladesh propaganda.

Idris details

DB's Monirul Islam told journalists in November that Idris had visited Pakistan via India in 1985.

He married a Pakistani school teacher, Shahnaz Begum, in 1990 and settled in that country. A son, Mohammed Adil, was born.

In 2002, Idris contested national elections from Pakistan Muslim Alliance but lost. In 2007, he returned to Bangladesh and joined the JMB.

Monirul Islam said Idris, 49, had been to Pakistan 48 times in the past two years.

Idris told the magistrate that he had hailed from Chitolmari, Bagerhat and that his father, Kausar Sheikh, was no longer alive.

About his links with Pakistani diplomat Farina Arshad, Idris said on return to Bangladesh in 2007, he had first tried his hand in garment business, but five years later, he switched over to air ticketing and visa processing.

That is when he first met Babul and then Kamal, who introduced himself as someone working for Pakistan intelligence.

Idris said in the judicial confession that he had run up a huge debt to Babul who had frequently booked tickets for him. Babul, he said, left for Pakistan at one stage and gave him Farina's contact number.

Idris said in his confession that Babul later told him that a man arrested for peddling counterfeit Indian currency in Dhaka airport was closely linked to Farina.

On return from Pakistan, Idris married again – this time Manowara Begum from a neighbouring village. He has two daughters and a son with Manowara.

Government sources said when Idris was arrested at Uttara, he introduced himself as a relative of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

One government source said Idris had earlier been arrested on May 1, 2011 from the house of a top radical.

At that time, he was found carrying 47 passports and a case was filed with the Airport Police.

Idris said in his judicial confession that he got a ride from Farina in her car from Baitul Mukarram to Fakirapool and received Tk 30,000 from her.

An intelligence official told bdnews24.com that Idris had saved a foreign number in his mobile phone as his own.

That number actually belongs to a Pakistani intelligence official called Captain Asim, who is performing a crucial under-cover assignment based in an airport in Pakistan.

The phone Idris carried had the capability to record conversations of other people using malware.

Indian Sikh pilgrims arrive in Pakistan

Over 2,500 Sikh pilgrims from India have arrived in Lahore to participate in religious rituals to mark the 547th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev.

From Lahore the pilgrims left for Hasan Abdal town in Attock district to visit the temple of Panja Sahib under strict security arrangements, Dawn online reported.

"We respect Pakistan, in general, and Punjab, in particular, as it is the soil of our gurus (spiritual leaders)," group leader Rumeet Singh said at Wagah railway station.

"Our top spiritual leader Guru Nanak Dev Ji has given a message about humanity, peace and love," he added.

The pilgrims thanked Pakistani government for the arrangements during their 10-day tour to the country.

"It reflects pilgrims' satisfaction on Pakistan's arrangements," Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Chairman Siddiqui Farooq said while receiving the pilgrims at Wagah station.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif wants to have good relations with India, Farooq added.

Rumeet Singh said he was grateful to the Pakistan high commissioner to India and the Indian high commissioner to Pakistan for ensuring the arrival of Sikhs.

"On Thursday, the Pakistan high commission in New Delhi had issued visas to 3,000 pilgrims. Of them over 2,500 arrived in the country," he said.

The pilgrims will stay in Hasan Abdal till November 22 and will depart for Nankana Sahib on the same day.

On November 24, they will proceed for Farooqabad (Sacha Soda) and will return back to Nankana Sahib on November 25.

On November 26 and 27, they will stay in Lahore at the temple of Dera Nawab Sahib. On Nov 28, the pilgrims will visit Darbar Sahib temple in Narowal and will return back to India on November 29.

Pakistan wants durable peace in Afghanistan: Sartaj Aziz

Pakistan desires durable peace in Afghanistan and instability in the region is not in the interest of the country, Pakistan prime minister's advisor on foreign affairs Sartaj Aziz said on Tuesday.

While addressing a meeting prior to the Heart of Asia conference here, Aziz said Pakistan will continue to support all endeavours aimed at strengthening peace and security in Afghanistan.

Aziz said the Heart of Asia conference is an effective platform for promoting regional economic cooperation and connectivity, with Afghanistan at its centre.

It provides an opportunity for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan, and a secure and prosperous region as a whole.

Aziz said that as the process matures, “our focus should be on strengthening engagements and collaboration to effectively combat challenges in the field of security and promoting regional economic collaboration”.

Afghanistan deputy foreign minister Hikmat Khalil Karzai called for a united and collective approach to counter the menace of terrorism and violent extremism.

He said the conference was taking place at a critical juncture when the region was confronted by many challenges, including terrorism.

He also said that his country attaches importance to having strong relations with all the regional countries for promotion of economic relations and meeting the challenges.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, US discuss stalled Afghan peace talks

Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US began deliberations here on Wednesday on the resumption of the stalled Afghan peace process.

The deliberations, on the sidelines of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process conference, saw Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Afghan President Ashraf Ghani leading their respective country’s delegations while Deputy Secretary of State Tony Blinken led the US delegation at the meeting, the Daily Pakistan Urdu newspaper reported.

The trilateral meeting was being held in the aftermath of a brief dialogue between the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan in which they took up several issues of mutual interest, including the resumption of talks with the Afghan Taliban.

Ghani is on a daylong visit to Pakistan for the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process conference which aims to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and strengthen regional economic cooperation and connectivity. Nawaz and Ghani jointly inaugurated the process in Islamabad.

The trip follows a trilateral meeting between Sharif, Ghani and British Prime Minister David Cameron in Paris where the three agreed on cooperation-based regional relationship.

Ghani had, however, maintained that Kabul will not compromise its sovereignty and independence at any cost.

Relations between the two neighbours received a hit after Ghani blamed Pakistan of supporting the Afghan Taliban for carrying out suicide blasts in Kabul.

His statement was followed by Islamabad’s accusation that an attack on Pakistan Air Force’s Badaber airbase was planned and controlled from Afghanistan.

The governments of both the countries were communicating through ‘backdoor channels’ to get bilateral ties back on track.

The Heart of Asia conference was a platform to repair the stalled relations between the two neighbouring countries.

Indian External Affairs Minister also arrived in Islamabad to attend the conference which was established in 2011 at the initiative of Afghanistan and Turkey.

Sushma will later on Wednesday hold bilateral meetings with Sharif.

[News Source](#)
