

INTERVIEW-India says Pakistan must restore trust.By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

705 words

18 July 1999

16:09

Reuters News

English

(c) 1999 Reuters Limited

NEW DELHI, July 18 (Reuters) - Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh on Sunday urged Pakistan to endorse the "inviolability" of a military control line in Kashmir and halt support for Islamic militants in Indian territory.

"Inherent in the inviolability aspect of the LOC is certainly an abjuring of promotion of cross-border terrorism...thereafter the process of dialogue and its mechanisms and choreography, all those can be attended to," Singh told Reuters.

The Line of Control (LOC) divides the disputed Himalayan territory of Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Singh said India had abundant evidence Pakistan's army was directly involved in infiltration into the Kargil region of the Indian part of Kashmir and added:

"This kind of evidence, this kind of aggression by night and dialogue by day, how do I sustain this, unless Pakistan gives up the path of confrontation and recognises that promotion of terrorism across the border in India is not an affirmation of the inviolability of the LOC."

Asked how soon he expected talks with Pakistan to resume over a host of differences between the nuclear-capable neighbours, including their 52-year-old enmity over Kashmir, Singh said:

"I just defined the route chart. Unless we go down that route chart, how do you find shortcuts? There are no shortcuts.

"There has to be a beginning made with restoration of trust and confidence...as initiators of dialogue, we are not opposed to dialogue. But dialogue has to be based on fundamentals."

Pakistani and Indian military commanders agreed the infiltrators would be withdrawn from Indian Kashmir just days after Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held talks in Washington with U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Clinton pledged to take a "personal interest" in resumption of a peace dialogue.

Singh denied India had made any concession in order to secure the withdrawal.

"I can disabuse you of any such illusions. There was no quid pro quo between India and Pakistan, there is no quid pro quo between India and the United States. We made clear our position from the beginning in explicit and unambiguous terms."

He said New Delhi would never tolerate any mediation, a notion even Washington has been careful to sidestep.

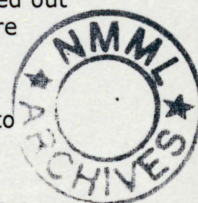
"So far as India-Pakistan relations go, there is no place for mediation, even for intermediates. The reason is very simple - primarily because we speak the same language, we understand each other. We do not need interpreters," Singh said.

"Secondly we do not believe anyone knows Pakistan or India for that matter as well as we do. Thirdly, because no kind of international interest in India-Pakistan relations comes totally without some baggage of internal agendas we do not subscribe to."

Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes declared on Saturday that the last of the infiltrators had pulled out from Indian territory. Pakistan denies the infiltrators included regular soldiers and says instead they were Kashmiri freedom fighters.

Singh admitted India's leadership may have been dazzled by the warmth and friendship that appeared to break out between the hostile neighbours earlier this year.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee made a historic bus trip to Pakistan in February for talks with Sharif that



yielded a conciliatory "Lahore Declaration".

"That we misplaced our trust is proven by facts in abundance, which we are now in the process of tidying up. Were we overconfident? No, we were trusting," Singh said.

"I think it's a very old lesson, nothing terribly original. But the best insurer of peace is constant vigilance and total preparedness."

He said he looked forward to meeting U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in Singapore later this month on the sidelines of the annual Association of South East Asian Nations meeting.

Singh said he would not like to be in Pakistan's position.

"I don't envy Pakistan's position, because it did clearly run into a blind alley. It was a gross misadventure. I do not see what Pakistan has gained from this.

"It certainly lost a great deal of goodwill. If I were a Pakistani, I would have to begin to move towards learning to live with my own history and the reality of my geography."

(C) Reuters Limited 1999.

Document Iba0000020010907dv7i047qg

