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Dear Friends,

This month witnessed a number of important developments in the Pakistan-U.S. relationship. The visits of U.S. Secretary Wilbur Ross and International Development Finance Corporation (DFC) CEO’s Chief of Staff, Bob Ackerly to Pakistan were significant as follow up to the decisions taken during the meeting between President Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan to expand bilateral trade relations. Secretary Ross called on the Prime Minister and had detailed meetings with the Advisor on Commerce as well as other Cabinet members to discuss avenues of bilateral trade cooperation.

On the economic front, Pakistan fared well at the FATF meeting where our progress in meeting the various targets of our action plan drew praise of the member countries. We remain fully committed to implementing the action plan. The IMF’s second review mission also visited Pakistan and acknowledged Pakistan’s macroeconomic progress, paving the way for the signing of the Staff agreement that will allow the IMF Board to release the next tranche for Pakistan.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres visited Pakistan and attended an international conference on refugees in Islamabad. He met the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and also attended a number of events. His visit bears testament to Pakistan’s decades-long commitment to hosting Afghan refugees and Pakistan’s vastly improved law and order situation.

At the Embassy, we continued to highlight India's atrocities in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir. We marked February 5 as Kashmir Solidarity Day to express our moral, diplomatic and political support to the innocent Kashmiri brothers and sisters who are bravely facing the barbaric onslaught of Indian security forces.

Our routine outreach activities continued during my visits to Boston and Philadelphia this month. In both cities, I addressed public gatherings and academic institutions to brief them about our efforts to improve Pakistan-U.S. relations. I also took part in an event to promote culture and tourism of Gilgit-Baltistan.

On a happy note, the return of Pakistan Super League (PSL) to Pakistan has brought delight to the country. I know many of you follow cricket and must be enjoying the games. May the best team win, but we know that the entire Pakistani nation is the real winner in this contest!
MESSAGE FROM H.E. PRESIDENT DR. ARIF ALVI

(AIWN-E-SADR, ISLAMABAD)

Message from H.E. Dr. Arif Alvi
President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

(On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, 5th February, 2020)

Today, we express our solidarity with brave and resilient people of Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir who have rendered un-matched sacrifices for their legitimate right to self-determination over the course of past seven decades in an indomitable struggle for freedom from oppression. It has been a battle of hope against overwhelming odds, of courage against fear, and of sacrifice against tyranny; but through all of it, the Kashmiri people have persisted, unrelenting and proud like they have always been, to deny India the perverse gratification of subjugating them.

FEBRUARY 05, 2020
5th February. 2020. Today, we observe

The Kashmir Solidarity Day to reaffirm our unflinching support for our Kashmiri brothers and sisters who have been subjected to an inhuman lockdown and communications blockade for six months now.

The unprecedented length of these restrictions has fully exposed the ‘fiction’ of India’s democracy and its scant regard for basic human norms. The Kashmiris, the Muslim ummah, Pakistan and the international community have rejected India’s travesty of law and justice.
MESSAGE FROM FOREIGN MINISTER SHAH MAHMOOD QURESHI

It is imperative to understand that when India undertook its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019, it not only violated the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Jammu & Kashmir, international law as well as its own constitution; it in fact, also tried to extinguish the very identity of the Kashmiri people and the concept of ‘Kashmiriyat’.

India hoped that by arbitrarily tampering with the demographic integrity of Indian occupied Jammu & Kashmir, it could dampen the spirit of the Kashmiri people or at the very least, make them compromise on their legitimate right to self-determination. On both counts, India has abjectly failed.

MESSAGE BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER OF PAKISTAN ON KASHMIR SOLIDARITY DAY
(5TH FEBRUARY 2020)
The Embassy of Pakistan, Washington, D.C. organized a Seminar on the occasion of “Kashmir Solidarity Day” to reaffirm Pakistan’s unconditional support to the Kashmiris in their struggle for the right to self-determination.

Guest speakers invited at the event paid tribute to the courageous people of Indian-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJ&K) who have remained steadfast in their resolve despite 185 days of lockdown, curfew and communication blackout since August 5, 2019. They criticized the mass detentions and forced disappearances of innocent Kashmiris, especially the youth, by Indian security forces.

Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to the Kashmir cause and expressed support for the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination. He added that through joint efforts of Pakistani and Kashmiri diaspora, the voice of innocent Kashmiris has echoed in the hearings and resolutions in the U.S. Congress.
Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan gave an interview to VOA Urdu on the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day. Ambassador urged all Pakistanis and Kashmiris to raise their voices in solidarity with the people of Kashmir.

Watch the full interview here.
KASHMIR SOLIDARITY DAY
ON TWITTER

On Twitter:

**Imran Khan (official)**
February 6 at 3:57 AM

We express our unshakable solidarity with the people of Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir and assure that Pakistan will always stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them. Pakistan will continue its full moral, political and diplomatic support until the Kashmiri people have realized their legitimate right to self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Charter and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions.

**Govt of Pakistan**
@pid_gov - Feb 4

The current situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir is a crisis of humanity and human rights violation that the world needs to recognize. See what the world has to say about this.

~Amnesty International Report
#KashmirNeedsAttention #KashmirSolidarityDay

**Govt of Pakistan**
@pid_gov - Feb 5

Let's be the voice for oppressed in Indian Occupied Kashmir & mark the Feb 5 #KashmirSolidarityDay this year with renewed urgency by writing, calling or tweeting about the IOK siege & humanitarian emergency now into its 185th day.

#SolidaritywithKashmir #LetKashmirSpeak

**Shah Mahmood Qureshi**
@SMQureshiPTI - Feb 6

Kashmir's desire for freedom and a life with Dignity can not be suppressed - even through tyranny. For 72 years the spirit of the Kashmiri people has not been broken, how then can a 6 month curfew extinguish their thirst for freedom?

**Spokesperson MoFA**
@ForeignOfficePk - Feb 5

The entire Pakistani nation stands as one in solidarity with our Kashmiri brothers and sisters. We will continue to raise our voice for their inalienable right to self determination #LetKashmirSpeak #KashmirSolidarityDay

**Spokesperson MoFA**
@ForeignOfficePk - Feb 5

#Kashmir Solidarity Day
5th Feb 2020

185th Day of Curfew in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir

#KashmirSolidarityDay

**Asad M. Khan**
@asadmk17

Today on #Kashmir Solidarity Day, and every day, the People of #Pakistan #StandWithKashmir. 
#LetKashmirSpeak #IOJK
Indian officials denied a British lawmaker entry on Monday after she landed at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, according to an accompanying aide.

Debbie Abrahams, a Labour Party Member of Parliament who chairs a parliamentary group focused on the disputed region of Kashmir, was unable to clear customs after the Indian visa she presented was rejected, the aide, Harpreet Upal, told The Associated Press.

Authorities in Indian-controlled Kashmir have registered a case against unidentified internet users who employed virtual private networks, or VPNs, to circumvent a social media ban in the disputed region, police said Tuesday, in an apparent effort to stop their use.

"The old mainstream has been choked off," said Abdul Hameed Kosheen, a Peoples Democratic Party leader who wasn't detained. "Kashmir is in a political freeze."
The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write as longtime friends of India regarding some of the troubling actions taken by the current government. More than six months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government unilaterally revoked the autonomy of Jammu and Kashmir, the government continues to block most internet in the region. India has now imposed the longest-ever internet shut down by a democracy, disrupting access to medical care, business, and education for seven million people. Hundreds of Kashmiris remain in “preventive detention,” including key political figures.

These actions have severe consequences. That is why, in the Fiscal Year 2020 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations report, the Congress urged the Indian government to:

1. fully restore telecommunications and internet services;
2. lift its lockdown and curfew; and
3. release individuals detained pursuant to the Indian government’s revocation of Article 370 of the Indian constitution.

In addition, the Indian government has taken other troubling steps that threaten the rights of certain religious minorities and the secular character of the state. This includes the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act, which is being challenged in India’s Supreme Court.

Therefore, we respectfully request an assessment of the following items within 30 days:

1. the number of individuals detained by the Indian Government for political purposes due to India’s revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution with respect to Jammu and Kashmir, including an assessment, to the extent practicable, of whether detainees endure torture or other forms of mistreatment;
2. the Government of India’s restrictions on communications in Jammu and Kashmir, including access to the internet and cellular telephone services;
3. the level of access to Jammu and Kashmir the Indian government grants to independent observers, foreign diplomats and consular agents, foreign journalists, international organizations, and representatives of nongovernmental organizations;
4. restrictions on religious freedom in Jammu and Kashmir; and,
5. the number of individuals – including the number of religious, ethnic and other minorities – at risk of statelessness, arbitrary deprivation or denial of nationality, expulsion or arbitrary detention pursuant to the Government of India’s latest National Register of Citizens list, and any excessive use of force by Indian authorities against demonstrators opposing the Citizenship Amendment Act.

Sincerely,

Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

Ted Cruz  
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator
Every year since 2014, #WomenResistanceDay is commemorated as Kashmiri Women’s Resistance Day, inspired by the struggle of the survivors of mass rape and torture in the twin villages of Kunan and Poshpora in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

"We urge you to work across the Administration to press the Indian Government to immediately end its communications blackout of Kashmir."

"International organizations should be allowed to fully document what is happening on the ground (in Indian Occupied Kashmir)."

"Reports of violence & torture are extremely concerning, and the blockade from communication and life-saving medical care must end."

"Pakistan is the only country with legal standing to oppose what India has done. Stand with Kashmir."

#STANDWITHKASHMIR
On the occasion of Kashmir Solidarity Day, 05 February 2020, the Kashmiri community launched a truck advertisement campaign in Washington, DC, during which Indian human rights violations in Indian-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir were displayed on digital screens, at important locations including Capitol Hill, the White House, Union Station, DuPont Circle and the IMF/World Bank headquarters in Washington, DC.
UN Secretary-General António Guterres met with President Dr. Arif Alvi in Islamabad. The Secretary-General thanked Pakistan for its support to the United Nations. The Secretary-General reiterated the UN’s commitment to support the country’s efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. They exchanged views on regional developments.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres met with Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for Pakistan’s support for the work of the United Nations, particularly in UN peace operations. The Secretary-General expressed appreciation for Pakistan’s commitment and generous policy towards refugees.

The Secretary-General and the Prime Minister also exchanged views on developments in Jammu and Kashmir. UNSG informed the Prime Minister that he continues to follow the situation in Jammu and Kashmir with concern and appeals for maximum restraint and full respect for human rights. The Secretary-General reiterated his readiness to exercise his good offices if both sides agree.
40 Years Of Hosting Afghan Refugees In Pakistan

“One of the main purposes of my visit is to spotlight the real Pakistan with all its possibilities and potential.” - UNSG

United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), Antonio Guterres, visited Pakistan from 16-19 February, 2020 to attend an international conference titled “40 Years of Hosting Afghan Refugees in Pakistan”.

UN Secretary General spoke highly of Pakistan's commitment to the Afghan cause and said that Pakistan's hospitality towards Afghan refugees over the past 40 years has been remarkable. The UN Secretary-General’s participation in the International Conference is recognition of Pakistan's exemplary compassion, generosity and resolve in hosting Afghan refugees for the past four decades and our efforts for peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Mr. Guterres also visited Lahore, where he met students and attended an event on Pakistan’s polio vaccination campaign. He also visited the Sikh holy site of Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib.

Read more here.
United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG), Antonio Guterres met refugees from Afghanistan, Yemen and Tajikistan in Islamabad. These refugees are a reflection of the great opportunities that Pakistan has provided to them to pursue and fulfill their dreams in education, businesses and skill development.

Pakistan is only second to Turkey in hosting the largest number of refugees in the world. During the Afghanistan war, 4.5 million Afghan refugees came to Pakistan. At present 2.7 million Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan.

On the occasion, the representatives of refugees from various countries appreciated Pakistan and the people of Pakistan for giving them great hospitality.

“Pakistan is full of hospitality.... I am thankful to Pakistan that they hosted Afghanistan refugees for so long.”
– United Nations Secretary General , Islamabad.
Speaking at a joint press conference, UN Secretary General called for resolution of the Kashmir dispute by honouring resolutions of the UN Security Council. The UN Secretary General offered his role as a mediator and said his good offices could be used for this purpose. He also took notice of over 200-day long curfew in Indian-occupied Jammu & Kashmir and called upon India to ensure that the people of the occupied valley enjoyed the same fundamental rights and freedom of movement as being enjoyed by the people of Azad Kashmir.

The Secretary General lauded Pakistan’s contributions to the UN peacekeeping efforts as well as inauguration of the Kartarpur Corridor. Calling the Kartarpur initiative a “symbol of interfaith harmony, a unique experiment in cross-border ties”, Mr Guterres said the opening of the corridor showed “Pakistan’s commitment to peace”.

UN Secretary General also noted Pakistan’s efforts to facilitate the Afghan peace process, repatriation of refugees and to combat the growing threat of global warming by starting initiatives like the billion-tree tsunami campaign.
His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres, United Nations General Secretary (UNSG) delivered a Special Talk on Sustainable Development and Climate Change in Islamabad on February 16, 2020.

In his remarks, UNSG said that Pakistan is indeed in the front line of the negative impacts of climate change. Congratulating Pakistan on becoming co-chair of the Green Climate Fund, Guterres said he welcomed initiatives like the billion-tree tsunami and the government's clean and green Pakistan movement, adding that he was "extremely well-impressed" when he heard that the country had decided to abolish plastic bags in the Capital.
Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan attended the APPNA Strategy Meeting in Philadelphia, PA on February 1, 2020. Ambassador Khan lauded the contributions of APPNA for its charitable and capacity building work over the years, both in the U.S. and Pakistan, and appreciated APPNA’s role in strengthening Pak-US bilateral relationship. Ambassador gave an overview of the recent important developments in bilateral ties including the recent summit-level meetings between Prime Minister Khan and President Trump. He also highlighted the significance of Kashmir Solidarity Day on February 5th and positive developments viz-a-viz Pakistan’s economy and security situation.

The event was attended by a large number of APPNA members from across the United States, senior officials from the city government and Congressmen from Philadelphia.
Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan was the chief guest at a cultural event organized by Sonny Wattan Gilgit-Baltistan, USA, in New York City on February 1, 2020. The event was aimed at highlighting the tourism potential of Pakistan with a special focus on Gilgit-Baltistan. The event featured Gilgit-Baltistan’s cultural dances and musical performances. A collection of handicrafts, gemstones and jewellery from the region were also showcased.
Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan made an official visit to Boston, Massachusetts on February 7, 2020. Ambassador Khan spoke at Pardee School of Global Studies at Boston University (BU) and Fletchers School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where he interacted with students, scholars, faculty members and opinion makers.

During the discussion at both institutions, Ambassador Khan gave his perspective on a wide range of issues including Pak-US bilateral relationship and the recent developments in the region with particular focus on the ongoing humanitarian crisis triggered by the actions of BJP-led government in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

*Highlights from visit continued on next page.*
On Pakistan-US relations, Ambassador Khan emphasized recent developments in the relationships with particular reference to the three summit level meetings between President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Imran Khan since July 2019. He emphasized that we are looking forward to having a long term, sustainable and broad-based relationship with the U.S.

Ambassador also drew attention of the audience towards the grave humanitarian crisis triggered by the actions of BJP-led government in Indian-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK). He apprised the audience regarding the inhuman and unprecedented lockdown imposed in the region for the last 6 months and underlined the importance and urgency of resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with UNSC resolutions and aspirations of Kashmiri people.

Besides engagements with Academia, the Ambassador also met with Pakistani-American community notables from Boston, New Hampshire and Connecticut Area at a dinner hosted by Prof. Adil Najam.

The Embassy hosted a group of students participating in the Annual North American Invitational Model United Nations (NAIMUN) conference organized by the Georgetown International Relations Association (GIRA), on February 14, 2020.

The participants were given short presentations on a wide range of topics including recent developments in Pakistan, and security situation in the region with a particular focus on the humanitarian crisis in Kashmir.

The event was organized as part of Embassy’s two-week long activities to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day.

Defence & Army Attaché Brig. Kamal Anwar Chaudhry briefed students on improved security environment in Pakistan and Pakistan’s contribution towards regional peace and security.

Charge d’ Affaires Mr. Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani briefed students on bilateral relations between Pakistan and the US and inhuman and unprecedented lockdown in Indian Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK).

Deputy Chief of Mission Ubaid-ur-Rehman Nizamani interacted with a large number of Pakistani-American students at the Cultural & Musical evening organized by PSA of George Mason University on 28 February, 2020. DCM Mr. Nizamani spoke about Pakistan-US relationship and recent developments in the region with special emphasis on Indian atrocities in Indian-Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IOJK).
AMBASSADOR GIVES AN INTERVIEW TO BEN WOLFGANG OF THE WASHINGTON TIMES

In a wide-ranging conversation with The Washington Times, Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan slammed India’s actions in recent months in Kashmir, warned of a potential refugee crisis if the Kashmir dispute isn’t resolved peacefully and urged the U.S. and Iran to cool tensions or risk further destabilization in a fragile region.

AMBASSADOR GIVES AN INTERVIEW TO ERIN DOUGLAS OF THE HOUSTON CHRONICLE

Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan gave a detailed interview to Erin Douglas of the Houston Chronicle during his official visit to Houston, Texas.

Ambassador Asad M. Khan said that the energy capital of the world contains two key ingredients his country is looking for to jump start its economy: reliable energy and Pakistani Americans.

AMBASSADOR GIVES AN INTERVIEW TO VIEW 360, VOICE OF AMERICA

Ambassador Dr. Asad M. Khan gave a detailed interview to Nukhbat Malik, host of View 360 Program, VOA. During the interview, Ambassador talked about Pak-U.S. relations and the prolonged humanitarian crisis in IOJK and expressed resolve to stand with the people of Kashmir.
Spokesperson @MoFA ☢ @ForeignOfficePk - Feb 20

Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood welcomed U.S. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees and Migration Carol Thompson O’Connell.

Highlighted Pakistan’s hospitality to the millions of Afghan refugees for last 40 years. 1/2

Imran Khan @ImranKhanPTI

Congratulations to the Pakistan Kabaddi team for winning the Kabaddi World Cup after defeating India.

State_SCA @State_SCA

Inspired by the Pakistani women serving with distinction in the @UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC. The first Pakistani all-female group of 15 peacekeepers received medals last week for their work performing a range of services to the conflict-affected eastern DRC. AGW

U.S. Embassy Islamabad @usembislamabad

Our trade relationship with #Pakistan is growing ever stronger. President Dr. Arif Alvi & #AmbJones recently met with the American Business Council, & Amb. Jones commended Pakistan for its record $4 billion exports to the U.S., its largest export market. #Partners4Prospereity

Dr. Arif Alvi and 3 others
Prime Minister Imran Khan received the visiting U.S. Secretary of Commerce, Wilbur Ross on February 26, 2020. Welcoming Secretary Ross to Islamabad, Prime Minister said that his visit would help in realizing the shared vision of Pakistan-U.S. leadership to transform the bilateral relationship into a broad-based, multifaceted and economic-centered partnership.

The Prime Minister underlined that Pakistan’s business friendly policies had led to a vast improvement in the Ease-of-doing Business in Pakistan. The Prime Minister also highlighted the huge potential in the areas of e-commerce and digital services as well as energy, mining, technology and agribusiness sectors that offered additional opportunities for U.S. corporate sector.
U.S. Secretary Commerce Wilbur Ross visited Pakistan on February 26, 2020.

He called on the Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Dr. Abdul Hafeez Shaikh at the Finance Division.

The Adviser welcomed the Secretary Commerce and said the arrival of the commerce delegation from the commerce sector would have positive consequences for Pakistan. He apprised Secretary Wilbur Ross on the government’s efforts towards a tourism-friendly and investment-opportunity Pakistan.

The US Secretary Commerce said the US can help Pakistan in the energy sector and hoped that a healthy interaction shall continue in future as well.
An International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission, led by Ernesto Ramirez Rigo, visited Islamabad during February 3-13, to initiate discussions on the second review of the authorities’ economic reform program supported under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement.

At the conclusion of the visit, Mr. Ramirez Rigo made the following statement:

“The IMF staff team had constructive and productive discussions with the Pakistani authorities and commended them on the considerable progress made during the last few months in advancing reforms and continuing with sound economic policies. The mission and the authorities made significant progress in the discussions on policies and reforms. In the coming days progress will continue to pave the way for the IMF Executive Board’s consideration of the review.

The macroeconomic outlook remains broadly as expected at the time of the first review. Economic activity has stabilized and remains on the path of gradual recovery. The current account deficit has declined, helped by the real exchange rate that is now broadly in line with fundamentals, while international reserves continue to rebuild at a pace considerably faster than anticipated. Inflation should start to see a declining trend as the pass-through of exchange rate depreciation has been absorbed and supply-side constraints appear to be temporary. Fiscal performance in the first half of the fiscal year remained strong, with the general government registering a primary surplus of 0.7 percent of GDP on the back of strong domestic tax revenue growth. Development and social spending have been accelerated.”
Imran Khan @ImranKhanPTI · Feb 29
We welcome the Doha Accord signed between US & the Taliban. This is the start of a peace & reconciliation process to end decades of war & suffering of the Afghan people. I have always maintained that a pol solution, no matter how complex, is the only meaningful path to peace.

Imran Khan @ImranKhanPTI · Feb 29
Replying to @ImranKhanPTI
Now all stakeholders have to ensure that spoilers are kept at bay. My prayers for peace for the Afghan people who have suffered 4 decades of bloodshed. Pakistan is committed to playing its role in ensuring the agreement holds & succeeds in bringing peace to Afghanistan.

Shah Mahmood Qureshi @SMQureshiPTI · Feb 29
Today is historic in the advancement of the ultimate aim for peace & reconciliation in Afghanistan. Pakistan has played a committed & decisive role in the realization of the AfghanPeaceDeal. PM @ImranKhanPTI's vision has consistently championed diplomacy over military solution.

Asad M. Khan @asadmk17
Today, an important step taken towards peace in Afghanistan. A long way still to go but to have come this far is no mean feat. Pakistan proud to have made substantial contributions to this outcome, which is a testament to @ImranKhanPTI & @realDonaldTrump's vision for peace.

Asad M. Khan @asadmk17
Pakistan has fulfilled its part of the responsibility.... [We hope] that the Afghan parties would now seize this historic opportunity & workout a comprehensive & inclusive political settlement for durable peace & stability in Afghanistan & the region. @PakEmbassyDC
Pakistan Wants 'Responsible Withdrawal' of U.S. Troops From Afghanistan

By Reuters
Feb. 29, 2020

DOHA — Pakistan wants a 'responsible withdrawal' of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said on Saturday, shortly before Washington is set to sign a major agreement between Washington and Taliban Islamist militants.

"We want a responsible withdrawal," Qureshi told Reuters in Qatar's capital of Doha, when asked about the timeframe for American forces' departure.

"It's an important day," he added. "Hopefully it will set the tone for peace and stability in Afghanistan."

The pact could bring an end to the United States' 18-year war in Afghanistan.

Pakistan welcomes the announcement regarding the U.S.-Taliban agreement. Pakistan has consistently supported direct negotiations between the U.S. and Taliban. From the outset, Pakistan has facilitated this process and contributed to its progress thus far. We look forward to the signing of the agreement on 29 February 2020.

We believe the signing of the U.S.-Taliban agreement will pave the way for the next step of intra-Afghan negotiations. We hope the Afghan parties would now seize this historic opportunity and work out a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region.

Pakistan reaffirms its support for a peaceful, stable, united, democratic and prosperous Afghanistan, at peace with itself and with its neighbours.

We are also looking forward to the international community playing its part in reinforcing the efforts for the establishment of sustainable peace in Afghanistan and helping to create conditions inside Afghanistan to enable the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan to their homeland with dignity and honour.

Islamabad

21 February 2020

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Pakistan will see an influx of foreigners with the 2020 edition of the Pakistan Super League starting in Karachi this month. Darren Sammy of the West Indies and Shane Watson of Australia will be among 36 foreign cricketers involved in the six franchises. Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive Wasim Khan told the Associated Press that foreign players coming to participate in the PSL is a massive step forward for Pakistan and the PCB and points to an increasing confidence in security in the country.
EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN, WASHINGTON, D.C.