**A maiden visit to Turkey**

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Both Pakistan and Turkey have enjoyed good relations for decades. They are similar in their views on issues of regional and international importance and are key members of the Islamic world. Turkey has long supported the Kashmiris’ right to self-determination as well. The current economic situation prevailing in Pakistan requires seeking friendship with various countries.  
Pakistan and Turkey’s warm, sincere and brotherly relations were duly highlighted, promoted and strengthened when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, along with a delegation, paid a three-day long visit to Ankara at the invitation of Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. They were met with a warm and enthusiastic reception.  
It was an important historical visit, the success of which will be known in due course of time after the agreements, memorandum of understanding (MOUs) and protocols signed in different sectors for enhancing economic cooperation, trade and boosting bilateral relations start bearing fruit and materialising. It was good that the top leadership of both brotherly countries had exchanged views on promoting bilateral ties, regional and international issues and pledged to take the mutual relations to new heights by infusing new vigor in cooperation.  
President Recep Tayyip Erdogan thanked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for visiting Turkey in a Tweet and said that Turkey was prepared to further develop relations in the light of two nations with a shared history. Both want to expand trade which has already surpassed $1 billion for the first time since 2011.  
On the first day of visit, PM Shehbaz Sharif while interacting with leading businessmen, traders and investors quite rightly and justifiably pointed out that the closeness in the relations of Pakistan and Turkey was somehow not reflected in their trade relations. He expressed the ardent desire that the volume of trade between the two countries should go up. In all fairness, there is no doubt that both the countries certainly have great potential for promoting trade and economic relations. More importantly, the PM held a one on one meeting with host President Erdogan, followed by discussions at the delegation-level. Afterwards, the two leaders had also signed various agreements and MoUs for enhancing cooperation.  
They also addressed a joint press conference during which they spoke about what they had deliberated between themselves and the agreements reached for promoting existing relations in different sectors and fields between the two countries.  
The Prime Minister described his meeting with President Erdogan as very productive, further expressing the hope that the bilateral ties between the two countries would scale new heights under the dynamic leadership of the Turkish President.  
Needless to mention here that Turkey has made exponential progress in the field of hydropower generation and renewable energy and Pakistan can benefit from its rich experience in this regard. Turkey’s support and cooperation in terms of profitable investment by the Turkish companies would surely help Pakistan in the production of low cost energy to the consumers.  
Pakistan and Turkey are also partnering with each other in the defence sector. Launching the MILGEM-class ship PNS Badar in Karachi was a shining example of the excellent cooperation between the two countries. Quite obviously, both the countries are determined not only to continue their mutual cooperation but also further enhance with the passage of time.  
As briefly mentioned above, Turkey has all along been supporting the Kashmiris struggle for their birth right of self-determination. President Erdogan emphatically reiterated that the Kashmir issue must be resolved in accordance with the UN Security resolutions. PM Sharif thanked President Erdogan over Turkey’s unflinching support to Pakistan over the Kashmir issue.  
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif availed the opportunity to reiterate Pakistan’s principled stance on Kashmir and is reported to have said that the Kashmiris have been struggling for their legitimate right and have been subjected to Indian brutalities and atrocities for more than seven decades. The Indian government was attempting to incur demographic changes in the region as well. He quite emphatically reiterated by saying that Pakistan would not abandon its quest for peace and was convinced that durable peace and security in the region was only possible if the long standing issue of Kashmir issue was resolved in accordance with United Nations Security Council resolutions.  
It is also worth mentioning here that Pakistan has also told the Turkish leadership that it supports Turkey over Northern Cyprus and stands with it in its fight against terrorism as enemies of Turkey are the enemies of Pakistan.  
Top leadership of the two countries will quite expectedly be meeting in Islamabad when the seventh High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council is held in September this year.