**Welcome gestures of bonhomie**

**[Malik Muhammad Ashraf](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/malik-muhammad-ashraf)**

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Prime Minister Imran Khan responded to Indian Modi’s letter of felicitations on the eve of Pakistan Day which expressed the desire for cordial relations with the people of Pakistan, by saying, “The people of Pakistan also desire peaceful and cooperative relations with all neighbours, including India. We are convinced that durable peace and stability in South Asia is contingent upon resolving all outstanding issues between India and Pakistan, in particular, the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. An enabling environment is imperative for a constructive and result-oriented dialogue.”

The relations between the two countries took a nosedive ever since the advent of Modi as the Prime Minister of India–particularly after his actions in the Indian Occupied Jummu and Kashmir (IOJK) and unrelenting hostility towards Pakistan. This rare exchange of greetings and desire for peace indicate a slight change in the direction of the wind. This development was preceded by an agreement between the DGMOs of the two countries according to which strict observance of the ceasefire along the LOC as well as the resumption of dialogue between the two Water Commissioners to resolve the water dispute would continue.

[COVID-19: Indian variant detected in UK](https://nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2021/covid-19-indian-variant-detected-in-uk)

Pakistani Foreign Minister, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, referred to these developments as both countries heading towards a positive trajectory of ties. Even PM Imran Khan and COAS General Bajwa, in their discourses at the Islamabad Security Dialogue, had emphasised the importance of a peaceful coexistence with India for the sake of sustaining economic prosperity. Simultaneously, they clarified that the first step had to be taken by India.

Nobody in their right mind can take an issue with the desirability of peace in the region in view of its correlation with security and economic progress. The example of European countries coming together after World War-II by burying their hostile past and forming the European Common Market, which later assumed the nomenclature of EU. The EU is now a force to be reckoned with in terms of its economic strength and political clout in the management of international relations.

Our region also has enormous potential for economic progress and shared economic prosperity which, unfortunately, remains hostage to never-ending hostility between Pakistan and India. SAARC also remains hamstrung in achieving its objectives due to the enmity between the countries, both of which are nuclear powers that cannot afford any military confrontation. Therefore, it is absolutely essential for both of them to resolve irritants–especially Kashmir since it surely is a nuclear flash-point.

[Punjab reports 62 death, 2732 newly infected COVID-19 cases in last 24 hours](https://nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2021/punjab-reports-62-death-2732-newly-infected-covid-19-cases-in-last-24-hours)

The Pakistani leadership has repeatedly clarified their willingness to normalise relations with India as a deliberate and rational choice. Continued hostility between the two, along with ever-increasing spending on defence, is scuttling the ability of both the countries to change the fate of millions who are living below the poverty line.

India has to realise that it can neither afford to remain adamant upon achieving its objectives in Kashmir nor can it suppress the freedom movement there with the barrel of the gun. As far as the UN is concerned, Kashmir is a disputed territory. The UNSC unequivocally reiterated that the Kashmir dispute needed to be resolved in accordance of the principles of the UN Charter and the relevant UN resolutions. It was the strongest ever repudiation of the Indian narrative of the situation in Occupied Jummu and Kashmir being an internal affair. The UN Human Rights Commission, in its reports, has highlighted the blatant violation of human rights in the Occupied Jummu and Kashmir, along with other international human rights organisations.

[Astronomers detect lowest frequencies from enigmatic fast radio bursts to date](https://nation.com.pk/16-Apr-2021/astronomers-detect-lowest-frequencies-from-enigmatic-fast-radio-bursts-to-date)

Realities cannot be suppressed or changed by any means. Therefore, the Indian leadership needs to revisit its policies regarding Kashmir and its relations with Pakistan. They owe it to their own, as well as the people of the region, to ensure peace and security so that economic progress can be made in the entire region. Since India, particularly the Modi government, is the architect of the current situation, it has to take the first step towards defusing it as rightly emphasised by PM Imran Khan and COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa.

PM Imran Khan, since assuming office, has kept peace with India on his priority list. His initiative was a result of his considered opinion that continued hostility between the two countries was inimical to interests of both the countries as well as the entire region.

While one must welcome the recent gestures of bonhomie between the two countries, the hope is that the process will be reinforced and carried to its logical end through confidence building measures and it will not be allowed to be derailed by unimaginative indiscretions, as has been happening in the past. It is not impossible to resolve disputes and conflicts provided there is a political will to do so.