

MADRID: PRESIDENT MASOOD KHAN ADDRESSED THE PRESTIGIOUS ELCANO ROYAL INSTITUTE



Madrid; July 14: Peace in South Asia is not possible without a lasting solution of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, said Sardar Masood Khan, President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir while addressing the prestigious Elcano Royal Institute here.

Speaking on Security Challenges in South Asia, President Masood Khan said that

South Asian security faced many challenges and risks including nuclear and conventional race, terrorism and extremism, poverty and

economic underdevelopment, climate change, and fair distribution of waters, but the most daunting challenge was non-resolution of the Kashmir.

The President said India's posture of non-engagement of Kashmir and its systemic violations of human rights in the Indian Occupied Kashmir are fraught with most serious risks for peace and security in South Asia.

The President said that Kashmir could be a trigger for a wider and more disastrous conflict in the region, as in the past it has been the cause of war – *cassus belli* – for four wars between India and Pakistan.

Sardar Masood Khan clarified that the Kashmir dispute is not about secession of a province of India like Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Assam or Bengal, but the right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir who never became part of India. "They have yet to exercise their will under the auspices of the United Nations", he said.

In the meantime, and instantly, he demanded that the ongoing massive violations of human rights in Kashmir should come to an end, emphasising that, despite severe restrictions, international human rights NGOs had gathered damning evidence of killings, bringing, rape and enforced disappearances in Kashmir. These crime are being committed everyday with impunity, he said.

Responding to a question, Sardar Masood Khan said that Kashmir Pandits had not been "ethnically cleansed" from Kashmir by Kashmiri Muslims. In fact, there are historical bonds between Pandit and Muslim communities. The exodus of Pandits was, he said, masterminded and executed by Indian occupation authorities to demonise and paint Kashmiris as bigots and terrorised. "Nothing could be further from the truth", he said adding that the State of

Jammu and Kashmir had diversity and all segments would live harmoniously once the Indian occupation is termination.

For a way forward, Sardar Masood Khan suggested a proactive role by the UN in resolving the Kashmir dispute, resumption of engagement between India and Pakistan, demilitarisation of the Indian Occupied Kashmir, elaboration of nuclear and conventional confidence building measures, strengthening of regional cooperation, and a better use of the additional space created by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Masood Khan said that India should stop using waters flowing from Jammu and Kashmir as a weapon of war. The Indus Water Treaty, he said, should be implemented faithfully and fairly; and waters should benefit all.

Elcano Royal Institute, enforced disappearances in Kashmir, India and Pakistan, Indian Occupied Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmir dispute, President Masood Khan, Security Challenges in South Asia, Shanghai Cooperation Organization