

Indian officials try to create problems for Pakistani team at FATF meeting

ISLAMABAD: While the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has expressed satisfaction over Pakistan's efforts as well as plans against money laundering, India continues to raise questions about terror financing.

"The proceedings went well and almost all the FATF members appreciated measures taken by Pakistan and actions planned by it," sources told Dawn after the conclusion of a three-day conference in Sydney, Australia.

The sources said that India kept asking questions about the measures Pakistan had taken against Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and other such organisations. It demanded that the steps be made public.

The Pakistani delegation explained that all the actions recommended by the FATF had been taken and a compliance report submitted to its headquarters.

The delegation also made it clear that it would be the Pakistan government's decision whether or not to publicise actions taken against banned organisations and would not succumb to desires of any specific member.

Most other members seem satisfied with Islamabad's efforts against money laundering, terror financing

Pakistani officials also made it clear that they would not respond to verbal questions from adversaries but would be ready to provide comprehensive responses if written queries were submitted.

The sources said the Indian delegates then filed a total of 28 questions with the FATF, which were shared with the Pakistani delegation.

Pakistan assured the FATF that responses to the questions would be provided in the next review meeting scheduled to be held in Paris on Feb 17-18. All the questions raised by the Indian delegates pertained to actions taken to block terror financing.

The sources said that Pakistan also told the FATF that there was no need for amendments to anti-money laundering laws and the Paris-based financial watchdog accepted Pakistan's view.

While the action plan presented by Pakistan was accepted by the FATF as reasonable, the country would now follow up with implementation through strengthening of agencies and processes to combat money laundering and terror financing under international obligations.

The Pakistani delegation was led by Finance Secretary Arif Ahmed Khan and comprised representatives of the State Bank of Pakistan, National Counter Terrorism Authority, Federal Investigation Agency, Federal Board of Revenue and Financial Monitoring Unit.

An official claimed that the FATF had highlighted a few matters that were doable by May this year, but progress would need to be registered by February this year. A broader examination of the full compliance with international commitments will take place at another meeting in May, possibly in Sri Lanka or Australia.

Officials said the FATF had gone through the report dispatched by Pakistan last week before the review meetings with the Pakistani delegation involving questions and answers about the performance so far and the way forward. They said the FATF team appeared convinced over the steps and measures taken by the authorities to combat terror financing and money laundering in line with the UN resolutions.

The Pakistani delegation explained the implementation status of plans for various government agencies. Its report identified Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran borders as key routes for terror financing and money laundering and reported that a total of 4,643 suspected transactions had been identified and blocked since 2015, including 3,677 suspected transaction reports and 966 financial intelligence reports.

A total of 1,167 transactions were seized last year alone, including 975 STRs and 210 financial intelligence reports.

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