

Independent foreign policy, Qureshi links it to economic stability

KARACHI: Pakistan cannot articulate independent foreign policy without economic stability, the Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said here Monday.

Delivering a lecture on "Strategic Importance of Economic Diplomacy for Pakistan in the 21st Century" at the main campus of IBA, Karachi University Enclave, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi said the country's foreign policy could not be de-linked with internal policy.

"As we are passing through difficult economic situation, the government is putting all its efforts to get economic stability. "Our objective is to have independent foreign policy but it can only be articulated with economic stability."

Shah described how the 21st century is different from the old times, saying that Borders have become fluid. Communication is instantaneous and free flowing. There are a multiplicity of actors and interests within the State, interacting constantly with actors and interests outside of it." Emphasizing the importance of economic diplomacy, he said in one word it is 'opportunity'.

He said that the imports curtailment was short term measure to minimize current account deficit but economic stability could only be achieved through increasing exports and government was focusing on it and striving for ease of doing business and public private partnerships.

He said that peace and stability in Afghanistan would play a catalyst role to explore new markets in central Asia and African countries for boosting exports.

He also discussed about the economic challenges of the current account deficit and falling exports that Pakistan's economy is facing. He said that his office has made a conscious determination to place Economic Diplomacy in front and center of Pakistan's diplomatic agenda. According to him, the foreign ministry has made concerted efforts to reorient diplomatic efforts towards addressing national needs. During the lecture, he mentioned that Pakistan secured over US\$10 billion to overcome balance of payments crisis, and secure oil supplies on deferred payment basis.

Replying to a question on a situation of Chinese province Xinjiang, he said that there was no need to highlight all issues publicly; Pakistan knew its responsibility as Muslim country; adding that we supported Kashmiris' freedom movement because India kept violating UN resolutions instead of implementing them.

He said that Pakistan through its effective foreign policy had changed narrative on Kashmir and now international media was openly criticizing India on its atrocity in Kashmir, projecting the so-called shining India as intolerant country.

He appeared optimistic on Pakistan's diplomacy on Kashmir issue, saying that: "Things will change but we have to show patience and remain persistence in this regard".

He also mentioned that Pakistan will no longer fight wars for other countries and will maintain its stance for peace which is why even to India's aggression, Pakistan reacted with responsibility and restraint, but also resolve.

Foreign minister said that security situation in Pakistan had improved and year 2019 was considered as the safest year. Therefore, UK, Norway, USA and others after recognizing the facts have updated its travel advisory for Pakistan, he maintained.

Moreover, he said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was keen to promote tourism and for the purpose, the government liberalized its visa policy, issuing on arrival visa to 50 the citizens of 50 countries and opened online visa facility for 175 countries; adding that they were encouraging investments in tourism and service sector.

While talking about the future, he said that Pakistan must climb up the global value chains by upgrading technology, leveraging young talent, and by capitalizing on the export related opportunities that CPEC will create. A large number of students, diplomats, corporate heads and others attended his lecture.