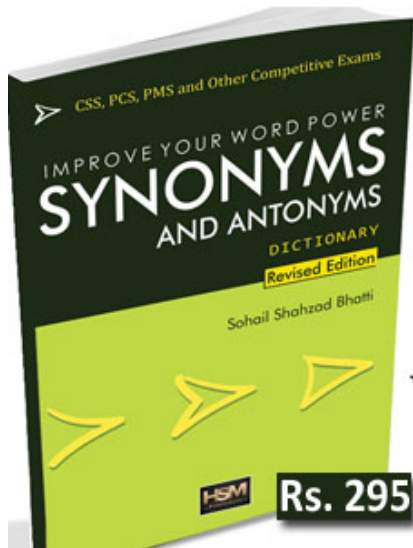


Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday addressed the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

The highlight of his more than 45-minute-long speech was intense criticism of India for its annexation of occupied Kashmir and the continued restrictions imposed in the region.

The premier began his wide-ranging, at times apparently extemporaneous speech by saying he feels honoured to represent Pakistan at the world forum.

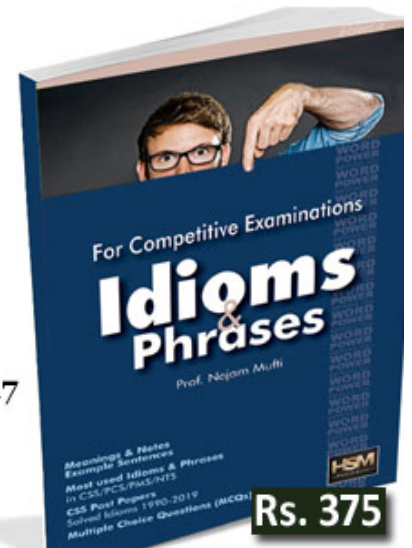
He said he would not have come to the UN if he did not feel that some “urgent issues” needed to be addressed.



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Kashmir oppression

The issue which the prime minister talked in most detail about was the oppression of the people of occupied Kashmir.

“When we came to power, we swore that we would try to bring peace.

“We went to fight the war on terror and we faced losses of (thousands of people).

“I opposed the war because in the 1980s we joined the struggle against the Soviets funded by western countries.

“The mujahideen were trained by the Pakistan Army and they waged the freedom struggle. The Soviets called them terrorists and we called them freedom fighters.

“In 1989 soviets retreated; the Americans packed up and left. Here we had indoctrinated them in jihad against foreign occupation and now that the US had taken over, we were supposed to tell them it’s no longer jihad.

“And so the US turned against us and it was a nightmare.

“Taliban were in Afghanistan, Al Qaeda was there; what did Pakistan have to do with it?

“When we came to power we decided we would dismantle what was left. I know India keeps alleging that these groups are there.

“I welcome UN observers, see for yourself.

“We now have a relationship with Afghanistan, Russia and then we wanted to mend fences with India.

“I have friends in India and I love going to India. So when my party came to power, we reached out to India and (said) let’s resolve differences through trade.

“(Indian Prime Minister Narendra) Modi said there were terrorist attacks from Pakistan. We said well we have attacks in Balochistan from your end.

“Unfortunately we didn’t make any headway. Our foreign minister was at the UNGA but they cancelled the meeting.

“Meanwhile a 20-year-old Kashmiri boy blew himself up at the Indian convoy. And India blamed us.

“We told him (Modi) if you have an iota of proof send it. They bombed us (instead), and we retaliated.

“We immediately returned the (captured Indian) pilot, saying that we do not want an escalation.

“Rather than taking that as a peace gesture, [Modi claimed that] he had taught Pakistan a lesson; that their jets had killed 350 terrorists.

“Complete lies. They just killed 10 trees of ours which was quite painful given that we are growing all these trees.”

The prime minister pointed out that Modi’s entire election campaign revolved around an anti-Pakistan narrative.

“In his election campaign, Mr Modi used words like ‘This is just a trailer. The movie is about to start’ and ‘I went into Pakistan and taught them a lesson’.”

He said that at the time, Pakistan chalked it up to just “politicians making statements” and that they would get back to the normal relationship with India post-elections.

The premier said that India did not respond to Pakistan’s overtures following Modi’s re-election as prime minister and soon it was discovered that India was trying to push Pakistan into the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to bankrupt the country.

“That’s when we realised that there was an agenda and that agenda became obvious on the 5th of August when India went against 11 United Nations Security Council resolutions which say that Kashmir is a disputed territory and the people of Kashmir have the right of self-determination,” he said.

“They went against the Simla Accord — which is about sorting out our differences through bilateral means.

“They actually went against the Indian Constitution. Illegally, they revoked Article 370 which gave Kashmir the special status and [stationed] an extra 180,000 troops there,” said Prime Minister Imran, providing the backdrop to India’s actions in Kashmir.

He said that the total number of security forces in Kashmir are 900,000 and they put eight million people of occupied Kashmir under curfew.

He said that the answer to how anyone can do something like this lies in the RSS ideology followed by Modi.

“Now I must explain what RSS is. Modi is a life member (of RSS).

“It is an organisation inspired by Hitler and Mussolini. They believe in racial purity and superiority. They believe they are an Aryan race.

“They believe in the ethnic cleansing of Muslims. They believe a golden age of Hindu rule was stopped by Muslims and then the British occupation.

“What kind of people bring in 900,000 troops for eight million people? These are human beings,” said Prime Minister Imran to applause from the audience.

“What comes with Aryan superiority is arrogance and it makes people commit mistakes and do stupid, cruel things like what Modi has done.

“It is arrogance that has blinded Modi. Has he thought about what will happen after the curfew in Kashmir is lifted?

“What will he do? Does he think the people of Kashmir will quietly accept the status quo?”

“(Nearly) 100,000 Kashmiris have died in the past 30 years because they were denied their right of self-determination. Eleven thousand women were raped.

“The world hasn’t done anything.

“What is going to happen will be a blood bath. The people will come out.

“Has he thought it through what happens then? Has anyone thought what happens when there is a bloodbath?

“What do you think they (Kashmiris) will think of the way they have been boxed in?”

He noted that even pro-India local leaders were taken out of Kashmir as part of the crackdown and 13,000 boys were picked up and taken to unknown locations.

“What will the people do then? [They will] take to the streets. The soldiers will then shoot them. They have already used pellet guns.

“And so Kashmiris will be further radicalised. There will be another Pulwama. And they (India) will blame us.

“They are already blaming us. They said we have 500 terrorists lined up to go in.

“Why would we send 500 terrorists when there are 900,000 troops?

“There will only be further cruelty on Kashmiris. It will give them the excuse to chant on the mantra of Islamic terrorism.

“The whole world then turns away.

“How do we (Pakistan) benefit from further increasing cruelty on the people of Kashmir?”

Prime Minister Imran said there is no other narrative left for India. “Whatever happens we will be blamed.

“What does Modi think the 180 million Muslims of India are thinking? Aren’t they watching these Kashmiris stuck in?

“Don’t you think they too will be radicalised? Then there will be blame on us again.

“What about the 1.3bn Muslims watching this who know this is only happening because they are Muslims? What do you think they would think?

“What would the Jews of Europe think if 8,000 Jews were stuck. Are we children of a lesser God?

“Among the 1.3bn (Muslims) someone will pick up arms,” he said, citing the analogy of a Hollywood film.

“Muslims will become radicals because of this, not because of Islam. Because they see no justice.

“I have pictured myself locked up for 55 days. There are rapes, soldiers going into rooms.

“Would I want to let this humiliation continue? I would pick up a gun.”

“You are forcing people into radicalisation,” he said, addressing the Indian leadership.

“This is one of the most critical times. There will be a reaction to this and Pakistan will be blamed.

“Two nuclear countries will come face to face.

“Before we head there the UN has a responsibility; this is why the UN came into being in

1945. You were supposed to stop this from happening.

"I feel like we are back in 1939 [when] Czechoslovakia was annexed.

"Is the international community going to appease or stand up for justice or humanity.

"If a conventional war starts between the two countries, supposing a country seven times smaller is faced with a choice to surrender or fight to the end.

"When a nuclear country fights till the end it has consequences far beyond the borders.

"This is a test of the UN. You are the one who guaranteed the Kashmiris the right (of self-determination).

"This is the time not to appease but to take action."

He said the very first action that India needs to take is to lift the curfew in occupied Kashmir and then release all detained prisoners.

"And then the world community must give the Kashmiris the right of self-determination," the prime minister stressed.

'Humans facing huge catastrophe'

The first issue addressed by Prime Minister Imran in his speech was climate change. "So many leaders spoke about climate change but I feel there is a lack of seriousness (to tackle the issue).

"Perhaps some of the leaders who can do a lot do not realise the seriousness of the situation. There are a lot of ideas but they are nothing without funding," said the premier, who was not reading from a paper.

He noted that Pakistan is in the top ten list of countries who are most affected by climate change.

"We depend on our rivers and 80 per cent of our water comes from glaciers. The glaciers are also in India in the Himalayas, Karakorum and the Hindu Kush.

"If nothing is done, we are scared humans are facing a huge catastrophe.

"In my country where I came into power in KP we planted one billion trees and plan to plant 10bn to counter global warming effects.

“One country cannot do anything, it has to be a combined effort of the world.”

He said the countries contributing to greenhouse gas emissions must be pushed and the UN must take initiative.

Money laundering ‘devastating developing world’

Prime Minister Imran said the second issue he was speaking about is even more critical — that of illicit financial flows.

“Every year billions of dollars leave the poorer countries and go towards rich countries, siphoned off by the ruling elites of the western world.

“This is devastating the developing world. It is impoverishing them. The rich-poor gap is growing because of them.”

He regretted that the seriousness with which money from drugs or terror financing is treated is not accorded to money laundered from poor countries.

“How will we help [our] 200 million people when we are just using all of our money for debt servicing? We could spend the money lost on our human beings.

“We do not have the money to spend millions on lawyers. We need help from the rich countries; they must show political will.

“How can poor countries spend money on human development?

“Unless the rich countries intend to build walls to stop economic refugees from coming in, there must be a deterrent.

“Corrupt elites must not be allowed to park their money (abroad). Why do we have these tax havens?

“Why shouldn’t rich people pay taxes? Why are they legal, these secret accounts?

“Sooner or later there will be a crisis if the rich keep getting richer and the poor poorer.

“I hope the UN takes a lead on this. The IMF and ADB must find a way.”

‘Islamophobia is creating divisions’

Addressing the prevalence of Islamophobia, Prime Minister Imran said it has grown at an alarming pace.

“Islamophobia is creating divisions, hijab is becoming a weapon; a woman can take off clothes but she can’t put on more clothes.

“It started after 9/11 and it started because certain western leaders equated Islam with terrorism.

He questioned the use of the term ‘radical Islamic terrorism’ saying: “There is only one Islam.

“What message does this (the term) send? How is a person in New York going to distinguish between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims?

“This radical Islamic terrorism used by leaders has caused Islamophobia and has caused pain for Muslims.

“In European countries it is marginalising Muslims, and this leads to radicalisation.

“Some of the terrorists were from marginalised Muslim communities. We Muslim leaders have not addressed this issue.

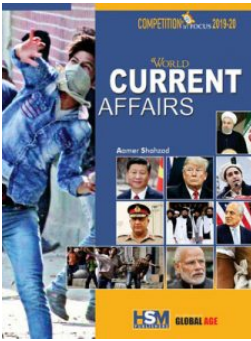
“The basis of all religions is compassion and justice which differentiates us from the animal kingdom.

“The Muslim leaders all became moderates and our government coined a phrase ‘enlightened moderation’.

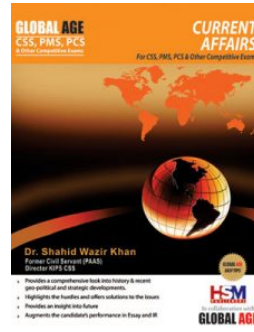
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