

Kashmir can't be avoided in Indo-Pak talks: Germany

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Islamabad: Germany on Monday said that "deep issues" like Kashmir should be a part of the talks between India and Pakistan as dialogue is the only way to move forward, days after the cancellation of NSA-level talks over India's insistence that Kashmir cannot be on the agenda.

"There are deep issues like Kashmir which cannot be avoided in talks," German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said here during a joint press conference with National Security Adviser Sartaj Aziz.

Steinmeier, who arrived here last night from Afghanistan leading a delegation of German parliamentarians, said talks are the only way to move forward in the dialogue between the two South Asian neighbours.

He was responding to a question about escalation of tension along the LoC after Pakistan called off NSA-level talks set for August 23 when India made it clear that discussions on Kashmir and a meeting with separatists will not be acceptable.

The German Minister also asked Pakistan to step up campaign against militants and target them without any discrimination.

He encouraged Pakistan to continue to work closely with the Afghanistan government and the international community in the fight against terrorism.

"Close cooperation between neighbouring countries, namely between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a sine qua non for peace and stability ? terrorism does not stop at borders. The fight against terrorism has to be carried on in accordance with the rule of law and human rights," Steinmeier added.

Emphasising on the close ties between Pakistan and Germany, the Minister said that Germany has constantly been active in the energy sector in Pakistan, and its free-of-cost top class universities are increasingly becoming a popular destination for Pakistani students.

Steinmeier also opposed death penalty and urged Pakistan to halt executions which were started in December last year after a moratorium of about six years when Taliban attacked a school and killed 150 people, mostly children.

This was the third time Steinmeier visited Pakistan after two visits in 2007 and 2008 during his first tenure as Federal Foreign Minister.

- PTI