

India-Pak foreign secretary-level talks as per schedule: Sartaj Aziz

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Islamabad: Pakistan has said foreign secretary-level talks with India are "intact" and it was following the leads provided by India which has linked the talks, scheduled for January 15, to Islamabad's decisive action on the Pathankot terror attack.

"We are investigating the Pathankot incident while the foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan are intact," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's advisor on foreign affairs Sartaj Aziz said on Saturday at a function in National College of Arts, Lahore.

Aziz, however, did not mention the progress Pakistan has achieved on the leads provided by India.

"We are investigating the Pathankot incident," was Aziz's answer when he was asked by a reporter in this regard.

Replying to another question on the status of the foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan, scheduled for January 15 in Islamabad, Aziz said, "Let me tell you the talks are intact and will take place as per schedule."

On Friday, India had put the ball squarely in Pakistan's court, linking the fate of the talks to Islamabad's "prompt and decisive" action on the Pathankot terror attack for which it has provided "actionable intelligence".

However, Aziz's assurance about holding talks as per schedule was interpreted by many analysts in Pakistan as Islamabad's willingness to act on the information provided by India in a time-bound manner.

"Aziz's confidence about "Pak-India talks intact" can be interpreted to mean that Pakistan is serious about acting on the leads provided by India and may well lay hands on those suspected of being involved in the attack before January 15," a government official told PTI.

Earlier, Pakistan said it needed "concrete evidence" from India for acting against the terrorists it suspected of being involved in the terror strike at Pathankot airbase instead of leads suggesting the attack was planned and directed from here.

"We are expecting evidence beyond leads and information to proceed as per our law," Dawn quoted a foreign office official as saying after Sharif chaired a second meeting of his security aides on the Pathankot attack yesterday.

Soon after receiving the "leads" Pakistan had acknowledged that they had been shared and were being investigated.

Nawaz Sharif, who had then telephoned his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, had assured him of "prompt and decisive action" against those found guilty.

India has blamed on the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed for the Pathankot attack in which six terrorists were killed and seven security personnel lost their lives.

- PTI