

## **Development in Indo-Pak ties important for sub-region: UN chief**

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**United Nations:** UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon today hailed the bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif, saying positive development in relations between the two countries is important for them and the sub-region.

"We are obviously very pleased that the dialogue took place. The positive development in India-Pakistan relations is important to both countries and to the sub-region as well," Ban's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric told PTI when asked about the meeting between the two leaders.

In their first bilateral talks in over a year, the two leaders met for nearly an hour in Ufa's Congress Hall in Russia on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit and decided to revive the stalled dialogue process and quicken the Mumbai attack case trial.

The two leaders focused their discussions mainly on terrorism, which India has been projecting as the core issue bedevilling Indo-Pak relations.

Asked about Kashmir not being mentioned in the joint statement issued after the Modi-Sharif dialogue, Dujarric said it is not for the UN to dictate what the two leaders discuss.

"It is not for us to dictate what the prime ministers of India and Pakistan discuss," he said.

Significantly, there was no mention of Kashmir in the joint statement or at the joint press briefing by Foreign Secretaries S Jaishankar and Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry.

In Pakistan, initially there was welcome of the meeting between Modi and Sharif, but later leaders and media in the country criticised the government over the absence of any mention of the vexed Kashmir issue in the joint statement.

Modi and Sharif had held bilateral talks in May last year in New Delhi when the Pakistan Prime Minister came to attend swearing-in ceremony of the Indian leader.

They came face-to-face in Kathmandu in November last for the SAARC Summit but only exchanged pleasantries.

Foreign Secretaries of the two countries were to meet in August last year in Islamabad but the talks were cancelled by India which protested the Pakistani envoy in Delhi meeting Kashmiri separatist leaders ahead of the parleys.

- PTI