

Khan writes to Modi, seeks bilateral talks

In 14 Sept letter, Pak PM also proposed a foreign ministers' meeting

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Pakistan's new Prime Minister Imran Khan has written a letter to his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, the Foreign Office said here on Thursday, seeking to re-start the bilateral talks on key issues "challenging the relationship" including on terrorism and Kashmir.

In the letter dated September 14, the cricketer-turned-politician, who became the prime minister last month, proposed a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Indian counterpart Sushma Swaraj on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York this month.

"Building on the mutual desire for peace between our two countries, I wish to propose a meeting between Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, before the informal meeting of the SAARC foreign ministers at the sidelines of the upcoming UN General Assembly in New York," Khan wrote.

Pakistan and India have



an "undeniably challenging relationship", he said, while responding to Modi's letter to him on August 18.

In the letter to Khan, Modi conveyed India's commitment to pursue "meaningful" and "constructive" engagement with Pakistan and emphasising the need to work for a terror-free South Asia.

Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Spokesperson Mohammad Faisal said on Twitter: "PM (Imran Khan) has responded to PM Modi, in a positive spirit, reciprocating his sentiments. Let's talk and resolve all issues. We await formal response from India".

In the letter to Modi, Khan wrote: "We, however, owe it to our peoples, especially the future generations, to peacefully resolve all outstanding issues, including the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, to bridge differences and



achieve a mutually beneficial outcome".

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief thanked Prime Minister Modi for his "warm greetings" and best wishes on his assumption of charge as the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The two ministers (Qureshi and Swaraj) could explore the way forward, Khan said, adding that the SAARC Summit in Islamabad "will offer an opportunity for you to visit Pakistan and for us to re-start the stalled dialogue process".

He also mentioned that India's former prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee contributed to make a positive change in relations between India and Pakistan. It is at least for the third time when Khan proposed a formal dialogue with India after winning the elections. First he made the proposal in his victory

speech in July followed by the first-ever address to the nation after taking oath in August.

Ties between India and Pakistan nose-dived following a spate of terror attacks on Indian military bases by Pakistan based terror groups since January 2016. Following the strikes, India announced it will not engage in talks with Pakistan, saying terror and talks cannot go hand-in-hand.

Amid heightened tension with Pakistan over Uri terror attack in which 18 soldiers were killed, India had pulled out of the SAARC Summit to be held in Islamabad in November, 2016. The summit was called off after Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan also declined to participate in the meet.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) Thursday expressed hope that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will reciprocate the offer of talks made by his Pakistan counterpart Imran Khan, saying dialogue was the only way out of the stalemate. Khan has proposed a meeting between Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and his Indian counterpart.