



INDIA NEWS

EXTRACT OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER'S SPEECH IN PARLIAMENT (MARCH 5, 2008)

I want to begin by congratulating the people of Pakistan, who have showed that, like us, they want to choose the democratic path. I am sure the House will join me in conveying to them our warmest good wishes as they consolidate democracy in their country. A great daughter of Pakistan had to sacrifice her life in the process. We mourned with profound sadness the death of Benazir Bhutto. The people of Pakistan have paid their tribute to her memory in their own way.

I would like to assure the newly elected leadership there that we seek good relations with Pakistan. India wants to live in peace with Pakistan. The destinies of our two nations are interlinked. We need to put the past behind us. We need to think about our collective destiny, our collective security, our collective prosperity.

In their first pronouncements after the elections, the leaders of the main political parties in Pakistan have also spoken of their interest in developing close relations and working with us to bring about a durable peace. Indeed the dialogue we have resumed with the Government of Pakistan over the last few years was started when the late Ms. Benazir Bhutto and Shri Rajiv Gandhi were Prime Ministers. The most courageous steps to build peace were taken by Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and Atal Behari Vajpayee. We have continued the process with President Musharraf.

I have said before that I have a vision of the future for India and Pakistan. I believe that in both countries there is a consensus that we must have close and cooperative relations and a framework for enduring peace. I hope that the newly elected leaders in Pakistan can quickly move forward with us on this. I am sure that the House will want me to say that we would welcome this and meet them half way.

Islamabad
March 5, 2008