

Ahead of Prime Minister Modi's address to the UN General Assembly, where Pakistan's Imran Khan is expected to bring up Kashmir again, a look at what the two countries have been saying at the UN platform.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 27, the same day as Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan, who will speak after Modi.

This will be the first time since 2014 that Modi will take the podium at the UNGA; for the next four years (UNGA's 70th-73rd session, 2015-18), the Assembly was addressed by the late External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj. The UNGA has frequently served as a platform for India-Pakistan jousting, mainly over Jammu and Kashmir, in front of an international audience.

Five years ago, in 2014, there was a mood of hope — Modi had surprised everyone by inviting his then Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif for his first swearing-in, and Sharif had brought along a "message of peace". While Modi's government had cancelled the foreign secretary-level talks scheduled for that August after Pakistan's High Commissioner to India met with Kashmiri separatist leaders, there was still speculation that the two Prime Ministers could meet on the UNGA sidelines.

However, at the UNGA session, Sharif spoke of "violence and abuse of fundamental rights" in Kashmir, and the two PMs left without a bilateral meeting.

Five years on, Modi is back with a stronger majority, Article 370 has been abrogated, Pakistan has been making every attempt to bring international attention to Kashmir, and the ties between the two countries have nosedived.

Imran, who has been using inflammatory language in his attacks on India and Modi personally, is almost certain to focus his speech on Kashmir and India's alleged violation of human rights in the Valley.

In the speaking order, Prime Ministers speak before the External Affairs ministers, and that's how, India and Pakistan don't have fixed order of speaking at the UNGA.

Here's a summary of the UNGA addresses by Indian and Pakistani leaders over the past five years.

2014

Modi: "Friendship with neighbours highest priority"

The PM said India was prepared to hold bilateral talks, while reminding Pakistan of the "responsibility to create an appropriate environment".

"India desires a peaceful and stable environment for its development. A nation's destiny is linked to its neigh-

bourhood. That is why my government has placed the highest priority on advancing friendship and cooperation with her neighbours,” Modi had said.

“This includes Pakistan. I am prepared to engage in a serious bilateral dialogue with Pakistan in a peaceful atmosphere, without the shadow of terrorism, to promote our friendship and cooperation. However, Pakistan must also take its responsibility seriously to create an appropriate environment.

“Raising issues in this forum is not the way to make progress towards resolving issues between our two countries. Instead, today, we should be thinking about the victims of floods in Jammu and Kashmir. In India, we have organised massive flood relief operations, and have also offered assistance for Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.”

Nawaz Sharif: “We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir”

“Many generations of Kashmiris have lived their lives under occupation, accompanied by violence and abuse of their fundamental rights. Kashmiri women, in particular, have undergone immense suffering and humiliation,” Sharif said in his address.

“For decades, attempts have been made, both under UN auspices and bilaterally in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration, to resolve this dispute. The core issue of Jammu and Kashmir has to be resolved. This is the responsibility of the international community. We cannot draw a veil on the issue of Kashmir, until it is addressed in accordance with the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir,” he said.

2015

Sushma Swaraj: “Give up terrorism, sit down and talk”

In March 2015, there were back-to-back terrorist attacks on the Rajbagh police station on the Jammu-Pathankot highway and an Army camp at Maheshwar near Samba, followed, that July, by the attack on the Dinanagar police station in Punjab’s Gurdaspur district.

At the UNGA, Sharif proposed a new “four-point peace initiative”, and External Affairs Minister Swaraj responded that only one point, not four, was needed — and that was for Pakistan to stop terrorism against India.

“While on the subject of terrorism, I take the opportunity to share the challenges that we face in our ties with Pakistan... We all know that these attacks are meant to destabilize India and legitimize Pakistan’s illegal occupation of parts of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir and its claim on the rest of it,” Swaraj said.

“Let me use this occasion to spell out our approach clearly. India remains open to dialogue. But talks and terror cannot go together. Yesterday the Prime Minister of Pakistan proposed what he termed as a four-point new peace initiative. I would like to respond. We do not need four points, we need just one — give up terrorism and let us sit down and talk.”

Sharif: “3 generations of Kashmiris saw broken promises, brutal oppression” Sharif said:

“Since 1947, the Kashmir dispute has remained unresolved. UN Security Council resolutions have remained unimplemented. Three generations of Kashmiris have only seen broken promises and brutal oppression. Over 100,000 have died in their struggle for self-determination. This is the most persistent failure of the United Nations.

“When I assumed office... in June 2013 for the third time, one of my first priorities was to normalize relations with India... Yet today ceasefire violations along the Line of Control and the Working Boundary are intensifying, causing civilian deaths including [those of] women and children.”

2016

Swaraj: “Egregious abuses in Balochistan”

The year saw Pathankot terrorist attack, and then the Uri attack.

After Pakistan raised the killing of Hizbul commander Burhan Wani in July that year, Swaraj responded by criticising Pakistani abuses in Balochistan.

“In our midst, there are nations that still speak the language of terrorism, that nurture it, peddle it, and export it. To shelter terrorists has become their calling card. We must identify these nations and hold them to account. On 21st September, the Prime Minister of Pakistan used this podium to make baseless allegations about human rights violations in my country. I can only say that those accusing others of human rights violations would do well to introspect and see what egregious abuses they are perpetrating in their own country, including in Balochistan. The brutality against the Baloch people represents the worst form of state oppression.”

Sharif: “Will share with UN proof of India violating human rights”

“A new generation of Kashmiris has risen spontaneously against India’s illegal occupation — demanding freedom from occupation,” Sharif had said. “Burhan Wani, the young leader murdered by Indian forces, has emerged as the symbol of the latest Kashmiri Intifada, a popular and peaceful freedom movement, led by Kashmiris, young and old, men and women, armed only with an undying faith in the legitimacy of their cause, and a hunger for freedom in their hearts... I would like to inform the General Assembly that Pakistan will share with the Secretary General a dossier containing detailed information and evidence of the gross and systematic violations of human rights committed by Indian forces in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.”

2017

Swaraj: “We produced scholars, doctors, engineers. You produced terrorists”

The year saw Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was in Pakistan’s custody, sentenced to death by a Pakistan’s military court and India approached the ICJ.

In one of her most scathing speeches, Swaraj said: “On Thursday, from this dais, Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi wasted rather too much of his speech in making accusations against us. He accused India of State-sponsored terrorism, and of violating human rights. Those listening had only one observation: ‘Look who’s talking!’

“India and Pakistan became free within hours of each other. Why is it that today India is a recognised IT superpower in the world, and Pakistan is recognised only as the pre-eminent export factory for terror? We produced scholars, doctors, engineers. What have you produced? You have produced terrorists. Doctors save people from death; terrorists send them to death.”

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi: “UN must send Inquiry Commission to Kashmir

Prime Minister Abbasi spoke of the “heroic and popular struggle” of Kashmiris “to rid themselves of India’s oppressive rule”, and India’s use of “massive and indiscriminate force” to suppress them. “Pakistan demands an international investigation into India’s crimes in Kashmir. We ask that the United Nations Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights send an Inquiry Commission to occupied Kashmir to verify the nature and extent of India’s human rights violations... To this end, the UN Secretary-General should appoint a Special Envoy on Kashmir. His mandate should flow from the longstanding but unimplemented resolutions of the Security Council.”

This was also the year when Pakistan’s Representative to UN Maleeha Lodhi flashed a picture of an injured Gaza girl, falsely alleging that she was a victim of pellet guns in Kashmir.

2018

Swaraj: “Pakistan glorifies killers”

Although Pakistan got a new PM Imran Khan, the verbal duel continued and India cancelled the meeting between Foreign ministers after agreeing to them.

After Pakistan’s foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi accused India of involvement in the 2014 Peshawar

school attack, Swaraj responded: “We are accused of sabotaging the process of talks. This is a complete lie. We believe that talks are the only rational means to resolve the most complex of disputes. Talks with Pakistan have begun many times. If they stopped, it was only because of Pakistan’s behaviour.

“Time and again, Pakistan accuses India of human rights violations. Who can be a greater transgressor of human rights than a terrorist? Those who take innocent human lives in pursuit of war by other means are defenders of inhuman behaviour, not of human rights. Pakistan glorifies killers; it refuses to see the blood of innocents.”

Foreign Minister Qureshi: “Will never forget Samjhauta attack, Peshawar attack”

Qureshi had said that Pakistan would “never forget the mass murder of more than 150 children in a Peshawar school [in 2014], the terrible Mastung attack [in July 2018] and many others that have links with terrorists supported by India... (as well as) the terrorist attack in India against Samjhota Express carrying innocent Pakistanis”. He said that Pakistan had in its custody “a serving Indian Naval officer, Commander Kulbhushan Yadav, who has provided us with the most incriminating evidence by accepting that he, on the instructions of his government, financed, planned and executed acts of terrorism and violence in Pakistan”.

Qureshi also raised a UN report on alleged human rights violations in Kashmir that India had rejected: “Pakistan welcomes the recently released report by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. It vindicates our position. No longer the excuse of terrorism can be used to continue to systematically oppress the Kashmiri people.”

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. In the context of the United Nations General Assembly, consider the following statements-
1. It is the only major part of the United Nations system, in which all member states have equal representation.
 2. The General Assembly may make recommendations on any matter within the scope of the United Nations, except in matters of peace and security under the consideration of the Security Council.
 3. All 193 member nations of the United Nations are represented in the General Assembly which makes it the only UN body with universal representation
- Which of the above statements is/are correct?
- (a) Only 1
 - (b) 2 and 3
 - (c) 1 and 3
 - (d) All of the above

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. In the context of the recent dispute of India-Pakistan, the forthcoming United Nations General Assembly meeting is very important for both countries. Analyze the above statement with the help of prior examples of the use of this platform by both countries.
- (250 Words)

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 9 Sept. is 1 (b)