



## Pakistan optimistic on resumption of US aid after Trump orders 90-day halt



Visit of US businessmen not extraordinary and regular feature of bilateral ties, says FO spokesperson

Pakistan optimistic on resumption of US aid after Trump orders 90-day halt

Visit of US businessmen not extraordinary and regular feature of bilateral ties, says FO spokesperson

Pakistan has expressed hopes that the Trump administration would resume the assistance programmes under the US Agency for International Development (USAID) that has worked on a number of beneficial projects in diverse areas of the country.

This was stated by Foreign Office Spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan in his weekly press briefing on Thursday to a query as to how many areas in the country would be affected following the US president's executive order to halt all foreign assistance programmes. Khan said that FO has taken note of the executive order issued by the US President Donald Trump, pausing all foreign development assistance programmes for 90 days in order to assess their efficiencies and consistency with the US foreign policy.

"Over the years, USAID has worked on a number of beneficial projects in Pakistan in the areas of energy, education, health and narcotics control," he added. "We hope that these programmes will restart soon, and the two sides remain in contact on that."

About the visit of US "reputable businessmen" to Pakistan, he said the foreign ministry was not processing it, though such visits were a regular feature of bilateral relations.

He was referring to the recent visit of a US business delegation led by Texas hedge fund manager and a close associate of the Trump family Gentry Beach.

"US is indeed the biggest, most powerful economy in the world. As, we try to improve economic relations with all countries; the same applies to our relations with the United States," he added.

To a question related to ties between the US and India, Khan replied that it was totally up to New Delhi to decide on its ties with the US or other countries. He highlighted that Islamabad remained engaged with the United States at multiple levels and it looked forward to engaging and further solidifying and strengthening bilateral ties, "relations which remain very important for Pakistan, for the US and also from the perspective of regional stability".

The FO spokesperson, responding to a query related to Afghan nationals stuck in Pakistan after the suspension of US resettlement programme, detailed that almost 80,000 have been taken by various countries and around 40,000 are still present in the country.

He confirmed that the FO received Trump's executive order on January 20 regarding the suspension of the United States Refugee Admission Programme. He expressed hope that the programme would be restarted so that the remaining Afghan refugees could be resettled in the US as per commitments given by the US government.

Meanwhile, Islamabad reiterated that it had sufficient proof of terrorist groups in Afghanistan using the US left-behind weapons for terrorist activities on its soil, reminding the Kabul administration of its responsibility to act against such groups.

About the boat capsizing incident in Morocco, he said the foreign ministry was coordinating the repatriation of 22 Pakistani survivors.

After "thorough investigations" the said individuals would be returned to Pakistan in batches as the first batch had already arrived via two flights in Islamabad on the day.