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ISLAMABAD - Senate Chairman Nayyer Hussain Bokhari said on Monday that the exchange of Parliamentary delegations, as well as people to people contacts, would definitely strengthen relations and cultivate common interests between Pakistan and Iran. He expressed these views in a meeting with Hossein Sadiq Aabedeen, governor general of Fars Province, Iran, and his delegation at the Parliament House.

Bukhari said that Pakistan highly valued its fraternal ties with Iran as our relations were rooted in our historical, cultural and religious commonalities and we also shared commonalities of views on various regional and international issues.

The chairman appreciated Iran's timely assistance in difficult times to Pakistan. He said, "Whether it was the 1965 War or earthquake or floods, our Iranian brethren have always stood by their Pakistani brothers in times of need." He said that the visit of the Iranian delegation would enhance political, social and economic relations.

Bukhari told the delegation that President Asif Ali Zardari had visited Iran five times during his tenure as president and likewise the Iranian President had visited Pakistan twice.

The chairman said that it was very heartening to note that President Ahmadinejad had agreed to participate in the D-8 summit with a high profile delegation in Islamabad from November 19-22. He expressed his confidence that the events planned on the sidelines of the summit with distinct trade promotion focus would further energize economic ties within the D-8 members.

He said that cooperation between the two countries was on a positive trajectory and we should translate the gains of our excellent political relations for qualitative up-gradation in our bilateral economic and commercial relations.

The Chairman said that barter trade between Pakistan and Iran would be beneficial for both sides. Pakistan could sell wheat to Iran in exchange for fertilizer. "We should also ensure expeditious implementation of bilateral projects including rail, road and air linkage projects as well as the IP gas pipeline," he said.

He said that an improvement in road, rail and air linkages would go a long way in bringing the two countries together and proposed a direct air route from Islamabad to Mashad and other places to facilitate pilgrims.

Talking about the IP gas pipeline project, the chairman said that this project could help overcome Pakistan's energy crisis.

Bukhari said that Pakistan supported the Iranian position for access to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Hossein said that our bilateral ties were deep rooted and growing stronger with every passing moment and we shared a common brotherhood based on similarities in religion, history and culture.

He extended profound gratitude for Pakistan's support to Iran's view point vis-à-vis the nuclear program for peaceful use of energy. The governor said, "A huge potential of cooperation exists in various sectors like energy, agriculture, education and health, and we should utilize our expertise for the uplift of these sectors with each others' assistance."

Courtesy: Pakistan Today