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## **Eagle's Eye: NATO, Pak to boost military coopn**

Now that the emergence of a nuclear South Asia is a reality, Pakistan, India as well as the rest of the world has to live with it.

Pakistan 's military chief General Ihsahn-ul-Haq met the top brass of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) during his first "historic" visit to the alliance & headquarters in Brussels.

He addressed NATO's Military Committee, the alliance's top military body, and met with the NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer and Chairman of the Military Committee Gen Raymond Henault, and discussed increasing military cooperation with NATO, as well as efforts to bring stability to Afghanistan, said a NATO statement.

"This is a historic visit. This visit is a tangible evidence of genuine efforts by both NATO and also by Pakistan to enhance and improve our military-to-military cooperation and in a number of areas of mutual interest," said Henault in his welcome address.



"Pakistan is important for the security of NATO but NATO is also important for the security of Pakistan," stressed Henault.

General Haq responded by saying that "it is historic in the sense that it is the first time that a joint staff chairman from Pakistan is visiting NATO headquarters. I am grateful for the opportunity given me to share my thoughts on mutual interest."

Pakistan and NATO have been steadily increasing cooperation since October 2005, when NATO launched a large operation to help aid victims of the devastating earthquake that struck the country.

The alliance has also opened several courses at NATO education facilities to Pakistani officers, including training in peace support operations, civil-military cooperation and defence against terrorism, noted the NATO statement.

Meanwhile, General Ihsahn-ul-Haq in his keynote speech at a conference in Brussels last week said: "Now that the emergence of a nuclear South Asia is a reality, Pakistan, India as well as the rest of the world has to live with it."

"As the NPT does not recognize Pakistan 's nuclear status, it would be unrealistic to expect us to sign the NPT in its current form." Commenting on the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement, General Haq said: "We feel strongly that the provisions of the deal, instead of being country specific, must provide a level playing field for Pakistan as well."

The London-based think tank South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SAASI)

organized the 2-day conference with the support of among others the Pakistani government. The theme of the conference was "Strengthened Export Controls: Pakistan 's Export Control Experience, Current and Future Challenges and Options" in which nuclear experts and researchers, military and government officials and think tanks mainly from Pakistan and Europe took part.

The two-day meeting concluded in Brussels Friday afternoon noting "now that Pakistan and India have declared themselves as nuclear weapons states, it would be in the larger interest of the international community and, consequently, non-proliferation, to find viable and practicable ways and means to accommodate both these countries rather than to continue to harp on a "cap, reduce, eliminate" mantra because that is not going to happen."

According to Maria Sultan, director of the SASSI, they are planning to hold their second international conference in New Delhi. The first was held in Brussels.

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