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Islamabad seeks support to end strife

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PAKISTAN hopes that Malaysia will be able to use its influence to call on India to exercise restraint, reduce tension and find a solution to the Kashmir dispute.

This was conveyed by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's special envoy, Mian Abdul Waheed, who has been sent here to seek Malaysia's support in defusing the tension between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

"My mission is to enlist the support of the Malaysian Government to ask India to use restraint, reduce tension and also find a solution to the Kashmir dispute," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The envoy would call on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad with a letter from Sharif requesting for Malaysia's assistance.

Mian had earlier been to Oman. After Kuala Lumpur, he will leave for Japan to seek support to resolve the dispute.

In a bid to find a solution to the dispute over the Himalayan territory, Sharif has despatched envoys to several countries in West Asia, Europe and Latin America, he said.

"We are not seeking financial support from these countries," he said, adding that Pakistan is using its own resources in sheltering Kashmiri refugees.

Pakistan High Commissioner to Malaysia, Musa Javed Chohan, added: "We want peace, we want a dialogue ... we hope that Malaysia will use its influence to call upon India to use restraint and to enter into a dialogue".

"We are ready for third-party mediation," he added.

In May, India launched air strikes on its side of the ceasefire line against what it claims is a mix of Muslim separatist guerrillas and Pakistani troops.

Pakistan, in denying any involvement with the separatist movement in Kashmir, has in turn alleged provocation on the part of India.

India and Pakistani troops frequently engage in border skirmishes in Kashmir which has triggered two of their three wars since independence from Britain in 1947.

"We are fully aware that after the nuclearisation of the sub-continent last May, the situation does not remain the same as before.

"Although this has provided Pakistan with the deterrent to stop any enemy, we believe we have the full responsibility to not let the situation escalate to a point where things can get out of hand," said Mian.

He added that Pakistan has also asked for United Nations military observers and is "willing to have neutral observers to find out who is wrong or who is right".

He said that Pakistan is willing to accept neutral observers to ascertain if there has been infiltrators as alleged by India.

"We have also welcomed the United Nations Secretary General's proposal to send his representative to Pakistan which India has declined," he added.

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