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## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 11

# No talks for talks' sake, first set terms



AJAI SAHNI

**R**SS GENERAL Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale's remark that India should not "shut the doors" on dialogue with Pakistan has triggered predictable reactions. Every cycle of Pakistan-backed terrorism in India is eventually followed by debate over whether "talks" must resume, or whether negotiations merely give Islamabad diplomatic oxygen without securing meaningful change in behaviour or intent.

The problem, however, is not with talks *per se*. States talk even during wars. The real issue is whether dialogue is embedded within a coherent strategic framework, or whether it degenerates into the ritual of 'talks for talks' sake. India's history with Pakistan demonstrates overwhelmingly that the latter has been the dominant pattern. India and Pakistan have sustained one of the longest-running and least productive diplomatic engagements in modern history, from Tashkent and Simla to Lahore, Agra, Sharm el-Sheikh and the composite dialogue process. Pakistan has used negotiations tactically while sustaining strategic hostility through terrorism, proxy warfare and military coercion, with some of the most dramatic peace initiatives coinciding with active, often escalating, terrorism.

The proposition that "we must keep talking" is strategically meaningless unless accompanied by answers to harder questions. What are the objectives? What are the conditions? What leverage does India possess, and what is its understanding of Pakistan's strategic calculus? Above all, how do talks fit within India's larger security doctrine?

Following the Pahalgam massacre and Operation Sindoor, the Indian government publicly declared that "every act of terrorism is an act of war", while simultaneously describing Operation Sindoor as the "new normal". Such declarations are not rhetorical flourishes to be invoked in moments of outrage and quietly abandoned thereafter. If terrorism constitutes an act of war, then the sponsoring state is an active belligerent employing proxy instruments. If retaliatory military action constitutes the "new normal", India has ostensibly moved beyond the earlier framework of strategic restraint.

These formulations potentially represent a profound doctrinal shift. But doctrines cannot coexist indefinitely with contradictory impulses. If India now seeks renewed talks with Islamabad, the obvious question arises: How are such talks reconciled with the "act of war" doctrine? Has Pakistan ceased sponsorship of terrorism? Has there been any demonstrable dismantling of jihadi infrastructure? Has Rawalpindi abandoned proxy warfare? There is little evidence of such a transformation.

Indeed, the trajectory of Pakistan-

backed terrorism suggests adaptation rather than abandonment. Pakistan has repeatedly recalibrated its methods in response to Indian and international pressure. Large-scale attacks alternate with calibrated infiltration, targeted killings, narco-terrorism, radicalisation networks, drone-based weapons deliveries and ostensibly deniable local proxies. Tactical fluctuations are repeatedly misread in India as evidence of "peace opportunities" when they are often mere operational adjustments. Crucially, the absence of talks can itself constitute strategic communication. Refusal to negotiate signals that the adversary does not satisfy the minimum conditions necessary for meaningful engagement. No serious strategic community can treat negotiation as a virtue in itself. Negotiations are tools subordinate to policy. Where policy is absent, talks become theatre.

Critics also raise an uncomfortable question regarding Hosabale's remarks: Is any prospective outreach to Pakistan a sovereign strategic choice, or does it emerge under external pressure, particularly from the US? The distinction is critical. If talks emerge from a considered Indian assessment of national objectives, embedded within a larger strategy addressing terrorism, escalation management and the Pakistan-China axis, they may possess coherence. But if engagement is externally induced, security concerns are subordinated to external imperatives.

The Pakistan-China axis fundamentally alters the strategic environment within which any India-Pakistan dialogue must now be evaluated. Pakistan is no longer just a troublesome neighbour pursuing revisionist objectives through asymmetric warfare. It has become an increasingly integrated component of a broader Chinese regional strategy directed against India. Military cooperation, technological integration, intelligence sharing and coordinated geopolitical positioning have deepened steadily. Any engagement with Pakistan divorced from this larger strategic reality would amount to self-deception.

The central weakness of India's Pakistan policy has been the tendency to oscillate between rhetorical maximalism and theatrical diplomacy, without constructing a durable strategic framework. Periods of outrage produce declarations of resolve; external pressure generates calls for talks. What remains absent is clarity regarding desired end states and pathways to achieve these.

There is no virtue in perpetual hostility. But the burden of demonstrating credibility for dialogue rests overwhelmingly on Pakistan's abandonment of terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Until India defines clearly what conditions justify engagement, what costs follow continued sponsorship of terrorism, and how negotiations fit into a broader doctrine confronting the combined Pakistan-China challenge, any return to talks would be just another iteration of a failed and exhausting cycle.

The writer is founding member and executive director, Institute for Conflict Management

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 11

# Don't bet on civil society in Pakistan



VAPPALA BALACHANDRAN

**O**N MAY 12, senior RSS leader Dattatreya Hosabale said that Pakistan's military and political leadership had lost India's confidence, and that it was time for "civil society to lead the way". He added: "The security and self-respect of a country has to be protected, and the government of the day should take care of it. But at the same time, we need not close the doors. We should always be ready to engage them in a dialogue." He said that trade and commerce and the issuance of visas should not stop, and that cultural affinities between the two countries work in favour of better ties between their civil societies. "Academicians, sportspersons, scientists and community leaders should come forward there, as their political leadership and military leadership have developed aversion towards India."

Pakistan has reportedly welcomed this call. Its foreign ministry spokesperson, Tahir Andrabi, told a press briefing in Islamabad on May 14 that "the voices within India calling for dialogue are obviously a positive development". However, my experience in service, and later, does not give me cause to believe that Pakistan's civil society has the clout to push its government towards better ties with India. Civil-society groups in the two countries are bound by the attitudes and policies of the regimes in power — this is especially so with regard to foreign policy.

The overarching power of the Pakistani armed forces makes it especially difficult for India-friendly people in the country's society to take initiatives to further contacts with their neighbour.

The intelligence-fundamentalist-bureaucracy-dominated nation, in fact, pays more heed to the diktats of foreign powers than to the advice of some domestic agents. The process began in 1950 when then-Pakistan PM Liaquat Ali Khan declared that the formation of new political parties in opposition to the Muslim League was "against the interest of Pakistan". The same year, speaking in Washington, he signalled America's growing role in Pakistan's power structure by saying, "If your country will guarantee our territorial integrity, I will not keep any army at all." In 1953, General Ayub Khan went further: "Our army can be your army." Such dependence weakened democratic institutions. Today, army chief Asim Munir dominates Pakistan's politics. Will he encourage meaningful civil-society outreach with India?

My first exposure to India-Pakistan

civil society dialogue came in 2010, when the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation invited me to a roundtable comprising representatives of the two countries in New Delhi.

Unable to attend, I sent a note advocating a "peace constituency" between the two societies — this was later published in an Indian national newspaper and endorsed by Pakistani human rights activist I A Rehman, who had attended the meeting.

I participated in their second conclave in New Delhi in May 2010, which was attended by senior Pakistani representatives like former foreign secretary Humayun Khan, former army chief General Jehangir Karamat, I A Rehman and former minister Sherry Rehman, a member of the National Security Committee of Pakistan's Parliament. All of them knew that I was a member of the two-person high-level committee appointed by the Maharashtra government to enquire into the systemic lapses during the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai.

During a private interaction with General Karamat, I asked him why Pakistan uses militants against India. I reminded him about the two highest level R&AW-ISI meetings in the late 1980s. At that time, General Hamid Gul had told his Indian counterpart that Pakistan was supporting terrorism against India as "it was afraid of its size", and that it was India's responsibility to instil confidence in a small country like Pakistan". Karamat's reply was typically evasive. He said that politicians from Punjab (Pakistan) were patronising militants to strengthen their political base, but was not clear why the powerful Pakistan army was not able to stop this practice, if it was convinced that it was wrong.

Sherry Rehman's paper, 'Reinventing Dialogue', submitted at the end of the conference, also reflected this chasm. Pakistan's "underclass of taxi drivers, shopkeepers, waiters and launderers is invested in a far more benign counter-narrative of authentic yearning for the neighbour that got lost in the fog of war". But authorities didn't display matching interest, she said.

Last year, the CIVICUS Monitor-World Alliance for Citizen Participation report on Pakistan affirmed the lack of heft of the country's civic society. There may be voices favouring reconciliation in Pakistan but they rarely shape state policy. As long as the army retains overwhelming control over Pakistan's strategic direction, people-to-people engagement is unlikely to be a potent force.

My experience leads me to be sceptical of the suggestion that civil society contacts "will keep doors open for dialogue".

The writer is former special secretary, cabinet secretariat, who was part of the high-level committee to enquire into the 26/11 terror attacks

# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 11

### The fault line in India, US ties: America doesn't understand 'equal'



**U**S PRESIDENT Donald Trump's visit to China may not be remembered by posterity as much as Richard Nixon's famous trip in 1972.

But it has forced Indians to confront the parallels with what was hitherto considered the darkest chapter of the India-US relationship.

Nixon, like Trump, believed that resetting relations with China was in paramount American interest. Nixon, like Trump, led a White House and establishment that was instinctively unsympathetic to Indian concerns. And Nixon, like Trump, viewed the Pakistani military leadership through rose-tinted glasses. Nobody, not even ordinary Pakistanis, has ever celebrated a Pakistani military dictator more than Nixon or Trump.

But here is what matters: The relationship between India and the United States survived Nixon. It grew and flourished. The partnership is stronger than any one person, even an enormously consequential president. It is greater than any administration, any party, any geopolitical moment. It is beneficial for both and yet it is not definitional for either. We can live without it.

In the past, India navigated a hostile White House, a hostile establishment, and an indifferent American public. Today's position is better, even if the Trump White House returns to overt hostility from its current passive-aggressive demeanor. Large sections of the Washington establishment continue to value the bilateral partnership. People-to-people connections have deepened. And the business-to-business ties of investment, innovation and trade have already demonstrated their capacity to ignore and outlast shifts in capital markets or political fashion.

This is not to minimise divergences that are neither superficial nor personality-driven. A structural faultline has emerged in Indo-US relations. It cannot be gapped over. There are, in fact, three faultlines, not one.

India's energy security, its abiding concern in global affairs, is imperilled by American unilateralism and breathtaking double standards on sourcing fuel from Russia. Washington's search for detente with China removes the relationship's strategic ballast. And India has reformed its sense of self: It will, and it must, continue to refuse to play the compliant partner to whimsical Washington. These are serious, structural disagreements. They deserve to be named as such.

But we must also recognise the institutional convergences that persist, bilateral military-to-military cooperation. Strands of collaboration under the Quad's umbrella that Trump dislikes and Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Ambassador Sergio Goro seek to cleverly sustain. The INDUS-X defence ecosystem. The TRUST initiative for emergent technology and critical minerals and multiple supply

chain partnerships. All of these receive undiminished official energy, and will continue to do so. And hard words and the 90 per cent tariffs notwithstanding, a trade deal was eventually arrived at. The glue holds. Barely, but it holds.

We should think of this moment as an opportunity. The US-India relationship has always been sold as an inevitable strategic convergence. But until recently, it was something else: Two very different civilisational world-views cohabiting uneasily. What Trump's arrival did was strip away the diplomatic veneer.

New Delhi must respond with open-eyed diplomacy, not open-hearted sentiment. It must engage all strands of thought in the United States, a democracy almost as diverse and complex as ours. Trumpism may outlast Trump — both sides of the aisle asking, in more polished terms, the same uncomfortable questions the current administration has posed.

The truth is that this president has done us a favour. We can now rework this relationship on more honest, durable terms.

This cohabitation was in many ways an arranged marriage. The two countries were joined together by a panchayat of wise elders: P V Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Bill Clinton, Manmohan Singh, George Bush, and their generations. The arranged-marriage mantra is ceremonial first, compatibility later. For our two nations, the strategic relationship came first. Strategic convergence was supposed to follow.

It didn't. Our worldviews did not converge the way matchmakers anticipated. A philosophical gap, one rooted in our

respective democratic cultures, has persisted: India does not understand alliances, America does not understand autonomy.

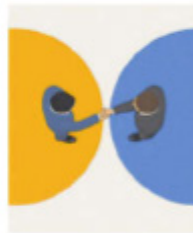
In any marriage, both partners change, compromise and build a partnership of equals. A relationship between two civilisation-states is no different. The White House cannot write the rules of marriage without co-opting India's distinctiveness.

Until Washington accepts that India is an ancient nation with its own immutable timeline and unalterable threat calculus, and not a junior supplicant seeking admission to some charmed circle, this relationship will oscillate between promise and frustration. The fact is, America does not understand "equal".

New Delhi is not holding its breath. As the old order dissipates, India is neither dismantling nor defending it. Foreign policy and strategic autonomy have visibly been very hard work and yet an imperative. To be fair, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his team are rearranging the pieces rather well. India has discovered a new and appropriate proximity and distance to the US, deeper strategic intimacy with the EU, recalibration with Beijing — while engaging Moscow in a dynamic world.

The India-US partnership will endure. It survived Nixon; it will survive Trump. But whether it matures is a different question entirely. The answer depends on one thing alone: America deciding to accept India on mutually agreeable terms. The Trump White House doesn't understand the question. Perhaps its successor will need to find the answer.

The writer is president, Observer Research Foundation



# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 15

• GEOPOLITICS

### What Russia-China ties mean for India's security

In 2025, 32% of Russia's total trade value was with China. With the US also trying to woo China, New Delhi will have to work on new strategies



**EXPERT EXPLAINS**

**RAJAN KUMAR**

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Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Wednesday. AP

**Russian President Vladimir Putin** arrived in Beijing on Tuesday, less than a week after US President Donald Trump concluded his three-day visit. Although such high-level engagements in quick succession are extremely rare, these visits underline China's emergence as a central hub of global diplomacy. Washington seeks to alleviate its strained ties, while Moscow aims to secure Beijing's sustained economic support and preserve its strategic relevance in global geopolitics.

The US, China and Russia are systemic players and the nature of their interactions is central to the global order's stability and future direction. Therefore, Putin's visit to Beijing is significant not merely for bilateral reasons. But can the Russia-China partnership pave the way for a military alliance?

**History of bilateral relations**

Historically, Russia-China relations can be understood in three phases: the imperial period, the Soviet period, and the post-Soviet period. Russia and China have interacted as civilisational states for centuries. They share a long border of roughly 4,300 km, and their relationship has largely been tranquil.

However, there were periods of episodic conflicts and hostility. For instance, Chinese literature often refers to the 19th century as a "period of humiliation" in which European powers, including Russia, forced China to sign unfair treaties.

The establishment of the Communist regime in China in 1949 enabled strong cooperation with the Soviet Union, culminating in the famous Treaty of Friendship in 1950. But the ideological affinity was short-lived, and soon differences emerged over the correct interpretation of socialist ideology, regional geopolitics, and global influence.

China also expected the Soviet Union to provide nuclear technology, which the latter refused. These developments led to the famous Sino-Soviet schism of the 1960s, cul-

minating in armed clashes in 1969.

This provided the US with an opportunity to realign its policy toward China. Then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's famous "ping-pong diplomacy" (referring to a series of friendly table tennis matches between Chinese and American players in 1971 as a symbolic gesture of goodwill) thawed Cold War ties and paved the way for US President Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to Beijing.

Washington, Beijing, and Islamabad forged close ties during this period, jeopardising India's continental security and destabilising regional geopolitics. Now, President Trump seems to be pursuing a similar policy of establishing close ties with Pakistan and China.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China's Jiang Zemin and Russia's Boris Yeltsin signed the Strategic Partnership Treaty in 1992. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping added new dynamism to Russia-China relations when they declared a "no-limits" partnership in 2022, just before the onset of Russia's war with Ukraine.

**Political and economic cooperation**

Russia and China have deep economic and political ties and complement each other in several respects. Putin and Xi have met more than 40 times; in fact, Putin has

**Power of Siberia**

The 3,000-km cross-border Power of Siberia 1 pipeline transports natural gas from Eastern Siberia directly to northeastern China's Heilongjiang province.

The proposed 2,600-km Power of Siberia 2 pipeline stretches from the Arctic gas fields of Yamal to China through Mongolia.

visited China more than 20 times, while Xi has visited Russia 11 times.

China is the leading player in commerce, technology and finance, while Russia thrives on its energy and defence exports. Russia needs market, technology and capital, while China needs energy and defence products.

Following Western sanctions, Russia has become heavily dependent on China. The Russian economy would have collapsed without China's support from 2022. Russia's total trade value was about \$700 billion in 2025, of which about \$228 billion (or 32 per cent) was only with China.

For key technologies, Russia now depends heavily on China. Chinese automobile, telecom and electronic companies have captured a high share of the Russian market. Russian technology firms rely heavily on semiconductor and industrial electronics from China. They are also collaborating in aerospace, satellite navigation, advanced materials, and industrial artificial intelligence. Before the Ukraine war, Russia's gas supply was mainly to European states, but after the sanctions, it has gone mainly to China. Also, trade between the two countries takes place in local currencies of yuan and ruble, reflecting the accelerating de-dollarisation of bilateral trade.

**Outcomes of Putin-Xi summit**

The Putin-Xi summit is being con-

sidered more productive than the Trump-Xi meeting, because it issued a joint statement and signed more than 40 agreements encompassing energy, technology, investment, transport, space, digital and cultural cooperation.

Both seek to develop robust bilateral ties immune from global volatility and Western pressure. Without naming the US, they criticised its unilateral and hegemonic policies, and pledged to work for a "multipolar" world order and democratisation of global institutions. The summit reinforced their determination to deepen strategic cooperation to preserve their interests and counterbalance the Western hegemony.

**Are they headed towards a military alliance?**

Although Russia and China are not natural allies in terms of common culture, ideology, political regime, or racial affinity, the fact that both view Washington as a structural rival has brought them closer. In the lexicon of international politics, an alliance is a formal agreement in which two states commit to supporting each other against external aggression.

There are concerns that Beijing and Moscow are headed towards a military alliance, but this can be a liability and comes with twin fears of "entrapment" and "abandonment".

A state fears being dragged into unwanted conflict and abandoned during a crisis. China does not want to get entangled in Russia's conflict with the West. Similarly, Russia does not want to get embroiled in China's conflict with the US over Taiwan.

So, while their cooperation would intensify, they are unlikely to forge a formal military alliance in the near future. Trump's visit to Beijing has precluded such a possibility in the short term, if it existed at all.

**Implications for India**

Russia's growing cooperation and dependence on China has serious ramifications for India's security. For the last two decades, New Delhi has pursued a twin strategy to maintain balance: cultivating a security partnership with the US and by maintaining strong ties with Russia.

These diplomatic options, however, are dwindling as both Trump and Putin are trying to woo Xi Jinping. New Delhi will have to work on alternative strategies as it can no longer rely on the US for its continental security and balance. At least, not while Trump is in office.

## GS 2: INDIAN POLITY

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE: 15

#### • LAW

## Why world's richest cricketing body is not covered under RTI Act

Amaal Sheikh  
New Delhi, May 21

THE CENTRAL Information Commission (CIC) this week held that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), India's principal cricket governing body, is not a "public authority" under the Right to Information (RTI) Act and cannot be compelled to disclose information under the law.

The order came in a case filed by a Delhi resident who had sought to know under what authority BCCI selects players to represent India, why governments provide stadiums and police security to what is technically a private association, and whether the government exercises any legal control over cricket administration in India.

The CIC noted that BCCI does not fall within the ambit of a "public authority" under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act and dismissed the appeal filed in 2018, after the

Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports said that information sought was not available.

#### The legal framework

Section 2(h) defines a "public authority" as "any authority or body or institution of self-government established or constituted" by the Constitution, laws made by Parliament or state legislatures, or government notifications. It also includes bodies "owned, controlled or substantially financed" by the government, including NGOs financed by public funds.

Article 12 of the Constitution defines "State" to include the government and Parliament of India, state governments and legislatures, and "all local or other authorities" under government control. Since then, courts have expanded this through judicial interpretation.

The National Sports Governance Act, 2025, which provides that sports bodies re-

#### Supreme Court ruling

- The constitutional foundation for the CIC's reasoning lies in the 2005 judgment in *Zee Telefilms Ltd v. Union of India*.

- In that case, a broadcaster had challenged BCCI's control over telecast rights, arguing that the Board should be treated as "State" under Article 12.

ceiving grants from the government would be treated as public authorities under the RTI Act to the extent of utilisation of those funds. Since BCCI receives no such grants, it falls outside this statutory extension.

The Lodha Committee had recommended bringing BCCI under the RTI. In 2018, the Law Commission also recommended that sports bodies performing public functions be brought within its ambit. But none of this translated into binding law.

An earlier CIC bench in 2018 held BCCI to be a public authority and directed it to appoint Central Public Information Officers and disclose information under Section 4 of the RTI Act. The Madras High Court later set aside that order and remanded the matter for fresh consideration, which subsequently resulted in this latest order.

#### What the CIC said

**ON REGISTRATION OF BCCI: BCCI does**

not meet the definition of "public authority" under Section 2(h) of the RTI Act. It is a society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975, "a private association of individuals which has obtained legal recognition through registration." The CIC said the Act does not cover all entities "merely because they are registered under a statute".

**ON CONTROL OVER BCCI: Citing a 2013 SC ruling, the CIC found that BCCI's internal structure does not reflect governmental control.** Office bearers are elected internally under its own rules, no government nominee sits on committees, and government approval is not required for decisions.

**ON FINANCING: BCCI generates its revenue independently.** It rejected the argument that use of government-owned stadiums or police deployment during matches amounts to substantial government financing.

## GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

### THE HINDU PAGE: 1

# Ebola crisis: India-Africa summit postponed

Decision taken after consultations regarding 'the emerging public health situation on the continent'

New dates for summit, its associated meetings will be communicated in due course, says MEA

Last such summit was held in 2015; it had also been delayed by one year due to Ebola outbreak

Kalol Bhattacherjee  
NEW DELHI

The Ebola public health emergency in Africa cast its shadow on India's diplomatic calendar on Thursday, with the Ministry of External Affairs and the African Union announcing the postponement of the India-Africa Forum Summit-IV that was scheduled to take place here on May 28 to 31.

In a joint statement, the MEA and the AU hinted at the Ebola crisis, saying that the decision was taken in view of the "evolving health situation in parts of Africa". The last such summit was held over a decade ago, and had also been postponed by a year due to an Ebola outbreak.

Consultations were held between the Indian go-

vernment and the Chairperson of the African Union and the African Union Commission regarding the "emerging public health situation on the continent", the MEA and the AU said in their statement.

"Following these consultations, the two sides agreed that it would be advisable to convene the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit at a later date," they added.

There were several other Africa-related events to be hosted by the Indian Council of World Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations that have been cancelled, though some African delegates have arrived in New Delhi.

New dates for the Summit and its associated meetings "will be finalised through mutual consulta-



Health concern: India has pledged to help governments of African nations to deal with the Ebola crisis. AP

tions and communicated in due course," the MEA said. The cancellation of the summit is being viewed as a setback to India-Africa ties, though officials insisted that the decision was taken in the best interest of all stakeholders.

India expressed "solidarity with the peoples and Governments of Africa" and pledged to help them in dealing with the crisis with an "Africa-led" approach.

Earlier, the African Union had called for "collec-

## Big cat meet in capital also put on hold

NEW DELHI

In the wake of concerns over the Ebola virus, India has postponed the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit that was scheduled in New Delhi on June 1. The First IBCA Summit was scheduled in conjunction with the Fourth India-Africa Forum Summit as several African countries host big cats.

While the Ebola outbreak is affecting a number of African countries, it is important to underscore that pandemics and public health emergencies require collective international solidarity and cooperation," the spokesperson, Nuur Mohamad Sheekh, said in an email response to *The Hindu* on Monday. That came a day after the World Health Organization declared that the Ebola outbreak in the

Responding to queries from *The Hindu* earlier this

week, a spokesperson for Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, had said the fourth India-Africa Forum Summit would provide an opportunity to work on "future pandemics" and response mechanism.

## 'Collective cooperation'

While the Ebola outbreak is affecting a number of African countries, it is important to underscore that pandemics and public health emergencies require collective international solidarity and cooperation," the spokesperson, Nuur Mohamad Sheekh, said in an email response to *The Hindu* on Monday. That came a day after the World Health Organization declared that the Ebola outbreak in the

DRC and Uganda was "a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC)".

Mr. Youssouf had earlier expressed deep concern about the Ebola virus disease, vowing that Africa would "overcome" this latest public health challenge through "unity, coordination and collective action."

The fourth India-Africa Forum Summit was planned to be held between May 28 and 31, after a gap of nearly 11 years. Indian officials have blamed the COVID-19 pandemic for the long gap since the last such summit was held in 2015.

Former Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, Gurjit Singh, expressed confidence that the summit would be held once the latest health emergency stabilises in Africa.