

## India, Pakistan discuss Sir Creek, maritime boundary

India and Pakistan have inched one step closer to an 'amicable' resolution of their dispute over the Sir Creek marshland in the Rann of Kutch by exchanging maps marking their respective positions and discussing the delimitation of the maritime boundary on the basis of a joint survey.

'The two sides discussed the delimitation of the maritime boundary as well as the delineation of the boundary in the Sir Creek in the light of the results of the joint survey,' said a joint press statement Friday at the end of the two-day talks between India and Pakistan in Rawalpindi.

'They exchanged maps/charts showing their respective positions on the delineation of the boundary in the Sir Creek and delimitation of the maritime boundary,' the statement said.

The talks were held in a 'cordial and friendly atmosphere' with the two sides expressing 'satisfaction at the successful completion' of the joint survey of Sir Creek and adjoining areas.

Surveyor General of India Major General M. Gopal Rao led an eight-member Indian delegation during talks with the Pakistani team led by Additional Defence Secretary Rear Admiral Tanveer Faiz.

Competing claims by both sides continue to shadow negotiations over the issue. India asserts that the Sir Creek boundary lies in the middle of the channel whereas Pakistan claims that it is on the east bank.

The 60-mile long estuary in the Rann of Kutch separates India's Gujarat from Pakistan's Sindh province.

The two sides will try to build on 'convergences' in approach and sort out contentious issues relating to Sir Creek for an 'amicable settlement of the issue'.

The Indian delegation also called on Pakistan's Defence Secretary Kamran Rasool.

The second joint survey of Sir Creek by hydrographers from India and Pakistan, which formally began in January, was conducted on land and off the coast to verify the outermost points of the coastline based on the principle of equidistance. The survey was completed around mid-March.

Last year, after a meeting in Havana between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, the two sides agreed to verify the outermost points of coastlines of both countries during the joint survey with regards to the equidistance method.

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