

Pak - F.R - India

7



Search for peace

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Pakistan wants peace with India. Statements of the Indian Prime Minister, Prime Minister Jamali and President Musharraf's offers for dialogue and the on going confidence building measures could imply that the two inimical countries want to mend fences and wish to live in peace. But Delhi's stance on LoC infiltration has negatively affected the CBMs. Kashmir dispute is the only problem preventing normalization and peace between the two countries. But not withstanding the tunnel vision of official circles, efforts are on to find a way out. The visit of a Pakistani parliamentary delegation, followed by the visit of a three member JUP delegation led by Maulana Fazalur-Rehman to New Delhi, and the visit of 59 member Indian good will delegation are welcome peace initiatives by politicians and media men. The statements of the Indian Prime Minister before and after the visit of the Indian delegation urging peace and mutual development are significant. But it could come to a dead stop if Mr Vajpayee refuses serious dialogue to resolve the Kashmir issue.

The heart warming statements of Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav should help confidence building efforts at people's level. On arrival the Indian politician said, "we are here to convey a message of love and peace for Pakistan. We are here to tell the world that we are the same. We are not different". At the inaugural session of the Parliamentarian's conference Laloo called for demolishing the "Berlin type wall of hatred between the two countries. We are here to tell Pakistanis that that we do not bear ill will against them. This will be part of large scale efforts to end bitterness between the two countries. and further the peace process." Laloo rightly said that "no country could make progress without good relations with neighboring countries. Friends could

mir retards all efforts towards peace and good will. Indian rulers and the media will have to reconcile to the fact that confidence building measures will fail if the greed and the urge to continue to shackle Kashmir with brute military power continues. Mr Vajpayee has called for greater interaction to, "lessen the misconceptions and mistrust between us. Cooperation rather than confrontation is the answer to our common problems of development and poverty alleviation." He is the key personality who could do a lot to change confrontation into cooperation. Mr Vajpayee states that, "violence and bloodshed cannot provide any enduring solution. We can live together only if we let each other live". Great words indeed. Mr Vajpayee could make a start by ordering a ceasefire along the LoC, ordering the Indian Army back to the barracks, ending daily killings, beating and torture of the Kashmiri youth, freeing thousands of Kashmiris rotting in sub-human Indian jails, and a purposeful dialogue to solve the blood splattered Kashmir dispute.

Ram Jethmalani, former Indian Law Minister and chairman of the Indian Kashmir Committee, has expressed sincere warmth by stating that, "It was difficult for him to decide which side of the border he belongs to. My ancestors were from Sind," he said with some emotion. Jethmalani said that, "he would not oppose mediation on Kashmir. Mediation could be acceptable to India. There was no harm to invite a facilitator to negotiate on Kashmir. It did not matter if it were the United States, Russia, China or Iran. What did matter was that the problem should be solved". Jethmalani is confident that they all will support the Indian line on Kashmir. But these words would be more convincing if they came from Prime Minister

be changed, but it was impossible to change neighbours." He correctly warned of a, "great disaster if the two countries did not resolve their differences. The fate of the two countries could change beyond imagination if they became friends". He assured Pakistanis of working hard for, "creating an atmosphere conducive for talks on all outstanding issues." It is hoped that the Hindutva minded Hindu fanatics and Pakistani religious bigots and sectarian fanatics are listening. There is wisdom in bringing an end to the deep-rooted prejudice against each other, and start talking in real earnest. After the three day visit of 33 members of the Indian parliament and 26 well known journalists including editor of mass circulation daily Hindu, the tide of bitterness seems to be ebbing. To bring down the tide of suspicion and bitterness, follow up on what these eminent Indians stated and promised, is important.

Mr Vajpayee has called for "greater interaction to lessen the misconception and mistrust between us". But he has said nothing about how to do it. He has mentioned the outpouring of deep emotions of love from the Indian public for the two year old Noor Fatima, whose holed heart was repaired by brilliant Indian surgeons. Pakistan is sincerely grateful to Indian public for this expression of love and sympathy for a small Pakistani child. The sympathy and response of the Indian public for little Noor Fatima has evoked respect for the people of India in Pakistan. One wishes that these feelings overtake the prevailing suspicions and prejudices. But unless practical steps are taken, it amounts to emotional outbursts, sweet talk and nothing more.

Some confidence building measures have been taken. High Commissioners have been appointed, Bus travel has started, Samjota Express may start soon and talks for the restoration of air links are due to start in the third week of August 2003. The meeting between Mr Vajpayee and Mr Fazlur Rehman was significant in the sense that leaders of two fundamentalist parties were able to sit together and talk without rancor. This was highly symbolic. The statements of some other members of the Indian delegation need to be considered by New Delhi. MP Zora Singh Mani said that the Hussainiwalla border crossing be opened and made fully operational. All visiting Indian delegates expressed the hope that their visit will accelerate normalization of ties. "We will see how we can contribute towards bridging the gap. It is the politicians of both countries who are at logger heads, while the people on both sides are longing for lasting peace." This statement is not wholly true. Pakistani politicians are also longing for dialogue and peace. Prime Minister Jamali and Foreign Minister Kasuri stress peace and dialogue with India on a daily basis. They reiterated this during their meetings with the Indian delegation.

But the on going violence and bloodshed in Kashmir for the last fifteen years, reveals the other side of the Indian official psyche. The Indian mindset and rigidity on Kash-

vajpayee, Deputy Premier LK Advani or external Affairs Minister Yashwant Rao Sinha. With no power such good will expressions lack substance and amount to pious platitudes.

It is worth mentioning that the Indian Kashmir Committee headed by Jethmalani has become a vibrant institution. General Pervez Musharraf fired Sardar Mohammad Abdul Qayoom Khan and dissolved a highly competent Kashmir Committee working under Mujahid-e-Awal. The huge Indian delegation came to Pakistan with the blessings of the BJP government and major Indian political parties. Members from BJP, Congress Party, the Communist Party of India (M), The Samajwadi party, the Rastriya Janata Dal (Laloo Prasad Yadav), The Telegu Desham Party, The Bahujan Samaj party and the Akali Dal could not have come without the permission and blessing of the central government and screening and briefing of RAW - the foremost Indian Intelligence agency. None of the Indian delegates made any commitments about Kashmir. It appeared that there was no consensus among them about the urgency of solving the Kashmir dispute. Jethmalani was more outspoken and said that, "President Musharraf is the person India must talk to, to modify its position on Kashmir". In Washington Jethmalani argued that, "If Musharraf is replaced, things in Pakistan will deteriorate with great implications for the security of India and the world".

Pakistani politicians in their discussions stressed the settlement of the core issue through dialogue. But none of them offered any new ideas or alternative to the Pakistani, "principled stand on Kashmir". Rigid stand on Kashmir will block progress for a reasonable settlement, as and when Indo-Pakistan dialogue begins. With rigid postures, success in a purposeful dialogue for peace will be impossible. India will have to give up "Atoot Ang" and J&K tied to the Indian Constitution. Pakistan will have to be flexible about the UN Resolutions. To mend fences the core issue of Kashmir can neither be side lined nor marginalized.

But how can you demolish the wall of hatred or find a durable solution of the Kashmir problem, with the 700,000 Indian troops erecting a wall of bayonets around and inside Kashmir? With Indian Army on the rampage and with the heavy toll of daily death of innocent Kashmiris, suspicion, anger and rage will persist. Eighty thousand Kashmiris have been killed by Indian troops, and thousands of Indian soldiers and officers have died in attacks and ambushes. It is time to acknowledge that Kashmiri armed resistance cannot be wiped by Indian bullets and bayonets. President Musharraf has offered ceasefire along the LoC, now India needs to stop atrocities and reduce its troops in Kashmir. There can be no peace between India and Pakistan, if there is war in Kashmir. We can only appeal and urge Indian leaders to read the writing on the wall, and start a purposeful dialogue for durable and enduring peace.