

14 steps to peace: Pak-



By Waqar Gillani

LAHORE: The Pak-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPPFD) has recommended 14 steps to Islamabad and New Delhi to improve and strengthen bilat-

eral relations and six steps for the people of Jammu and Kashmir to settle their issues with Pakistan and India.

The Forum proposed that both Islamabad and New Delhi apologise to the Kashmiris for the atrocities that have been committed by both countries in Kashmir over many years. It also suggested that the countries apologise to their nations for committing human rights violations in Kashmir and both countries repeal anti-human rights laws

The Forum's peace measures were declared in a Friday meeting in Lahore where members discussed the current Pak-India peace dialogue process and what can be done to support peace measures.

Mr Hassan added that multi-participant discussions and negotiations needed to take place until a consensus was reached. Forum members said Pakistan and India should create a peaceful atmosphere in Kashmir.

The Forum observed that there was no real democratic government in both Kashmirs, Indian Held and Azad. The Forum demanded the right of self-determination for the Kashmiris.

Mr Hassan said the proposed steps had

already been raised in the recent PIPFPD convention in Karachi. "All proposals have been shared with the Indian chapter of the Forum, too," he said. "Pakistan must test the sincerity of the Indian government by raising its demands towards the peace process and on the Kashmir issue," one PIPFPD member said. He added that this was the time for Pakistan to do something to gain credit for strengthening bilateral ties.

Reportedly, Mr Hassan said the present formation of state-to-state dialogues between Pakistan and India followed the 1996 agreement. "The eight points of the Agra Summit were also prepared in the light of that agreement between the both countries," he said.

As per the agreement, national security and the Kashmir issue would be discussed at the foreign ministerial level. "Defence secretaries will debate the Siachen and Sir Creek issues and commerce and trade minister will discuss trade issues," he said.

The Forum announced the formation of a Pak-India Joint Committee to discuss the issue and arrange a peace rally on February 7. The Forum also announced that it would write letters to representatives of

political parties regarding their interest in the peace process at the Forum Chowk. The peace activist, Lahore City veteran journalist

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political parties members regarding their interests peace process at the Forum Chowk. The peace activities in Lahore. Chief Mubashar Hassan, Forum President Liaqat Ali and veteran journalist Aziz Mazhar.

Proposed steps for Pakistan and India: All prisoners held without charge should be released.

General amnesty should be declared for those who are in custody or are at large and are accused of crimes for political reasons. Judicial processes should be activated for other Kashmiries who are in custody in Kashmir or India. Tribunals to investigate missing persons should be set up.

Innocent persons who have suffered because of the actions of the state should be compensated. Actions under laws that permit detentions and trails without normal procedures and codes should be stopped.

All laws that deny justice in accordance with the United Nations Charter on Human Rights should be repealed.

National and international human

rights organisations and media should be allowed access to all parts of the former state. Passengers and goods traffic should be allowed across the Line of Control (LoC).

Visas and passports should be freely issued to citizens on both sides of the LoC.

Freedom of expression, assembly and association should be guaranteed in all the areas of the former state.

The size and presence of the security forces should be rapidly reduced throughout the former state. Those who have left Kashmir because of fear for life and property should be rehabilitated in their original abodes (because many of AJK people want to return to their homes).

The people of Kashmir should be encouraged to meet and develop a solution to the Kashmir issue that is acceptable to them, Pakistan and India."

Mr Hassan added that a successful composite dialogue will only result after India and Pakistan take measures to win the confidence of the Kashmiris for a genuine political. Suggestions for political parties and groups on the east and west of the LoC:

Keep in mind that the tragedies of the past have left a profoundly regret-

table legacy of suffering, the people will not forget those who have died or been injured, their sacrifices can best be honoured through dedication to achieving reconciliation, mutual trust, and the protection and vindication of human rights.

Commit to partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships.

Commit to resolving political and other differences through peaceful and democratic means and to creating conditions conducive for democratic and peaceful negotiations. Acknowledge that substantial differences exist on the continuance of the status quo and on the legitimate political aspirations of the participants, especially the right to exercise sovereignty over the whole or part of the former state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Recognise the difficulty of modifying historical and public stances on the issue. Understand the imperative of finding an acceptable solution, even though it may not be ideal, in the larger interest and to secure a durable peace in the sub-continent. Strive towards reconciliation and rapprochement.