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The New

Muzaffarabad and Srinagar bus service

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The ensuing talks between India and Pakistan seem to be moving forward under a broad structured form. The relationship on the surface is making progress significantly towards taking on the challenges that have constrained the full-fledged co-operation so far. Noticeably, on the other side the common man and the leadership in Kashmir remain far away to experience the visible effect of the current peace proposals. To cap it all, the ground is swelling with discontent both in Pakistan and Kashmir. The government of Pakistan must reflect upon the situation and redress it. It literally is a crucial variant for the stability of the peace process. The majority of people, primarily the leadership of Kashmir must view it a very constructive conflict resolution effort.

It is incumbent upon the government of Pakistan to stay widely aware of the situation, as how their acts are being received and how they are being manoeuvred rather tempered to the knowledge of common man in the Indian occupied Kashmir. Learn by heart, that people constitute the backbone and have lain down their lives and sacrificed their dear ones for the freedom. Therefore, every development transpiring between India and Pakistan must be taken and conceived in its proper context. The general feeling charging in Kashmir acutely seeks for some clarification regarding the much talked "Bus service" likely to operate from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad. The government should define whether the under progress bus service is the part of the roadmap or an end of the roadmap.

India conversely, through its so-called Chief Minister, is determined to raise spectres and confusion that the releasing of the bus service shall be the final outcome of the struggle for freedom. Implying, thereby, that the cease-fire line is likely to be converted into the permanent border. In the related context, one must have observed that under a systematic arrangement designed to create a kind of euphoria about this bus service is underway. Sporadically, pro-Indian parties are holding processions and extolling the government of India, as if conceding a great deal of concession to the people of Kashmir and Pakistan by supposedly restoring the free mobility of the people from both sides of cease-fire line. However, it is not to be misconstrued that I imply to oppose the bus service initiative. Incredibly, the restoration of bus service will compensate scores of problems but not all. Subsequently, the subject is being made very confused, conflicting as well as has been added with enormous complexities into its context. The dimension

of these complexities can potentially sink the entire effort of goodwill to the bottom of animosity and distrust. This ingredient of distrust and animosity may lead to a hot-system reaction and, yet again, may direct to a perilous cycle of escalation.

To stick on to proper context of the initiative, the launching of the bus service from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad ought to follow the identical blueprint of Lahore peace process. The Lahore peace process, which was popularly known as "bus diplomacy" marked its launching ceremony by carrying the leaders of enormous importance from India to Pakistan significantly Prime Minister Vajpayee.

To achieve the substantive results, the launching ceremony of "bus service" must board the purposeful leaders from Indian occupied Kashmir to Azad Kashmir or if it begins from Azad Kashmir to Srinagar, it again should board the leaders of Azad Kashmir with out any prejudice. By starting the bus service with the leadership of either side will gather tremendous momentum towards helping the creation of peaceful atmosphere between India, Pakistan and Kashmiris. The following act will set in tone for political peaceful resistance and moderate the importance of violence. The leaders of both the sides of the cease fire-line can assimilate the real diversities of their own economic, social and cultural heritage and ethos. They can share and feel the effect of peace process. Taking off through this root will create a much more healthy conduct and perspective of flexibility towards accommodating each others' concerns. It will evolve a new transformation capacity into the attitude of the Kashmiris, who have invariably remained locked in suspicions against any peace process between India and Pakistan. Subsequently, people will glance over this peace process from an angle of goodwill. Such an occasion will mark a quantum leap forward in the bitter historical relations of India, Pakistan and Kashmiris that has separated them.

The bus service could potentially act as a political capital of creative development for unravelling the tangled situation. But disregarding the participation of Kashmiris from the peace process is placing a serious challenge, both morally and politically. Their non-participation denotes a profane conduct on the part of India and Pakistan. A prominent leader from the Indian occupied Kashmir MrYasin Malik (JKLF Chairman) has collected over a million signatures of people demanding an active partnership in the peace process. On the Azad Kashmir side, the same sentiment was reflective when Mr Sardar Ab Qyum Khan (former president) was immensely outrageous of the peace process, particu-

larly for sidelining them. The opposition leader, Mr Barrister Sultan Mehmood (former prime minister) was equally tempered for not taking them along with the peace process. The president of AJK held an all parties conference on 9th Feb, in which all major and small political parties, without any ideological reservations were present. The general consensus stressed on the principle demand that an active participation of Kashmiris must be made a reality, rather a mere slogan. Precisely, I have yet to come across with any person or leader from both IHK and Azad Kashmir, who is satisfied with this approach of keeping them away from the process. On these issues of critical disposition, we must accord a serious consideration. We are not like India. Our position is of a friend and brother and not vice versa. We must display our ability to maintain the distinction between India and Pakistan to the people of Kashmir. In this view, the present peace process, principally, should be observed from the perspective of collective effort by the people of Kashmir.

Experience at hand, of this mind-set facilitates us with a vivid example of breaking up of APHC. It dealt a severe blow to our strength. The other faction of APHC argues, that if Pakistan ignores us or does not feel our importance to be present there, or feels comfortable not including us with India, let us go for a while without them till conditions are created for a tripartite talks or as Pakistan argues to us. However, difference of opinion over what was necessary must not turn into differences as to what objectives were legitimate. In this context, the paramountcy goes first to the course of objective rather to difference of opinion. Hence, the alteration into the policy framework must not wade out into a variance of purpose.

It will be a unique, and politically immoral, example in the history of conflict resolution processes that a decision was reached with out the people to whom it was affecting most. The Kashmir history is one of the unpleasant histories of the world according to Dr Iqbal, "*oh morning breeze if you happen to pass over to Geneva, tell them that a nation was sold but was sold very cheap*". At the end of the Saarc Summit, both leaders assured to create a pleasant history that is possible only when they will encourage the people and engage them subsequently in the process. The shape of engagement could be a little different than they are demanding but their engagement is inescapably important. All of us must bear in mind that the relationship between conflict and justice is bi-directional. Injustice breeds conflict, and justice peace, prosperity, and long lasting friendship.

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