

When Hawks like J.N. Dixit, Natwar Singh and Parnab Mukerjee appeared on the scene as National Security Advisor, Foreign Minister and Defence Minister respectively of the new Indian setup, the coming events started casting their ominous shadows. The guarded hopes generated by 6th January 2004 Declaration of President Musharraf and PM Vajpayee started receding and being converted into guarded disappointments.

Resultantly the recent Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi was fruitless with regard to the basic issue of Kashmir, which no honest person can deny, having bedevilled relations between the two countries since their very inception. The rest of the issues are normal routine issues of statecraft tackled by countries in their day-to-day functioning. The meeting can, therefore, rightly be described in proverbial terms of "they sat, talked and dispersed".

This is due to the conventional and uncompromising attitude of the Congress leadership about Kashmir. Indians do not realise that they being bigger in size, having more resources and power, and being in occupation of a major part of the state have a greater responsibility to achieve peace through a just settlement of the dispute. Pakistan and India cannot achieve normalisation without normalisation in the State based on justice and not with the presence of brute force of 8 lakh.

India has always exploited power disparity for the imposition of its own preferences on Pakistan. And this is what

# Indo-Pak talks

BY KHWAJA MUHAMMAD BASHIR BUTT

India is doing in the present composite dialogue. It has started its false bogey of cross border infiltration to refuse any meaningful dialogue.

This bogey is also meant to blackmail Pakistan and mislead the world. It is an irony and a gross travesty of facts for India to shamefully raise hue and cry of infiltration after having laid a 3-tier electrified, impregnable and impenetrable fence with Israeli electronic gadgets at a cost of 4 billion rupees - fraudulently laid despite vehement protests from Pakistan and also by misusing the ceasefire in flagrant violation of its cherished Simla agreement.

The statements issued by Natwar Singh before and after meeting his counterpart throw light on the Indian mindset to try to hush up talks on Kashmir after having attained their designs of LoC fencing, trade and other favourable objectives. (Singh is known to be a Nehruan specialist on Kashmir. He says he has satellite pictures of infiltration and unless it stops there can be no progress on Kashmir; however, he does not display the same.)

Singh rebuts the world perception that Kashmir is a flash point. He downgrades the Kashmir issue as a routine one like resumption of trade and cultural and tourist visits and release of fishermen. The Hindustan Times in an editorial en-

titled 'Talking shop' has said that not surprisingly there was no breakthrough on Kashmir.

The Kashmir Times, Srinagar, says in its editorial "Time to talk on Kashmir" that Kashmir would need a different approach because this is one issue which is not bilateral and needs the involvement and inclusion of peoples of divided J&K for its solution. Clearly no delaying tactic like the argument that it is a tricky case to be kept aside for the time being can absolve the leadership on either side. The Indian Express has described the pace of talks as movement of the proverbial tortoise.

Mr Kasuri on the other hand pleaded for flexibility and compromise. In New Delhi he told Doordarshan that there should be a reasonable timeframe. He queried, "can you say, no, it should be unreasonable". Talking to the BBC TV he said that history and the wars fought between Pakistan and India teach us that Kashmir issue cannot be side-lined and ignored.

On the other hand, Natwar Singh told ANI that Kashmir is not a hundred meter race. It is a marathon and we cannot fix a time. Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Pakistan's Information Minister, asked the countrymen not to have too much expectations from the dialogue process. From

our side there are no obstructions. Later, while addressing journalists at the Karachi Press Club, he said that "as long as we don't get fully disappointed from the Indian response, the doors of dialogue will remain open."

Progress can be achieved and disputes solved when both parties have the mind to solve, but when one of the parties is dishonest and does not want a solution, there can be no progress. This is true of the Kashmir dispute. Since the Indian case is based on fraud and force, they use all sorts of ingenuities and trickeries to avoid a meaningful discussion leading to a just solution.

They have been relying on all sorts of irrelevant and absurd excuses (like Pakistan's joining SEATO, CENTO, ECO, its military rule, its political system, Indian Parliament's resolution, constitution, public opinion, infiltration, so on and so forth) to deprive poor Kashmiris of their pledged right of self-determination and to avoid a dialogue on the issue. India was a constitutional part of British Empire but they abided by their commitment to leave India after WWII.

Parliamentary resolutions are not constitutional laws but only recommendatory in nature and are no excuse to avoid negotiations on a problem. Indian negotiators act on the principles "if you cannot convince others, then confuse them". In these precarious circumstances let us hope against hope for a positive outcome of the present dialogue process. Our brothers on other side must also realise their responsibility in the situation.

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