

Kashmir Media on Indo-Pak Relations Is it a Retreat?

“The fervour and enthusiasm, that we had seen in early stages of Indo-Pak peace process, is not found now. President Musharraf has even declared that there would be no further negotiations unless there is an agreement on the opening of Srinagar-Muzaffarbad road. All this has created an atmosphere of disappointment, which has been a general feature of Indo-Pak relations”, concludes the Srinagar based urdu daily *Uqab*, in its Editorial page analytical article.

Excerpts

The peace process had led to significant developments

“When the Indo-Pak peace or reconciliation process began, both countries had shown such zeal and earnestness, that it seemed to be certain that half a century old bitterness and dislike would be gone, disputes would be settled and a new chapter of friendship and reconciliation would begin. But during the last few days, higher echelons of the leadership of both countries have issued statements that give the impression that something has happened that has made the whole process of reconciliation doubtful or so to say, uncertain.

If we make a survey, the major development after the peace process began was that Pakistan did not create any obstacles’ in India’s project of fencing the LoC. India completed the process of fencing. It was the significant step of cease-fire on LoC that proved helpful in smoothing the path for negotiations or reconciliation. India accepted Kashmir as a dispute and resolved to settle it with Pakistan though negotiations. Pakistan declared that both countries should adopt a flexible attitude and deviate from their old stands, in order to resolve Kashmir, India supported this. Pakistan (say, Musharraf) deviating from the stand of plebiscite, made certain proposals for resolving Kashmir. India’s response was that India would consider the proposals, if presented formally. There were negotiations on the restoring of Srinagar-Muzaffarbad bus service, there were differences over the kind of travel papers (to be used by passengers), and these differences still remain.”

Both countries have reverted to their old stands:

“Meanwhile, Pakistan’s President-Musharraf gave a ‘hard’ statement on Kashmir, in which he rejected the option or view of independent Kashmir and called it a trap laid by India in order to sabotage plebiscite. After that, the Indian Foreign Minister, issued a

statement in which he said that 'Kashmir is the corner-stone of the secular structure of India and therefore, there could be no compromise on Kashmir'.

Thus, the atmosphere of negotiations once again became 'polluted' or 'vitiating'. It seems the negotiating process has got stuck up at some point in such a way that both countries 'retreated' to their old positions. It is very much known that behind-the-scene negotiations on Kashmir were going on and many proposals were being discussed. Many world powers have been exerting pressure on both countries for resolving the problem. It seemed that the negotiations were going ahead".

Pakistan nursed the 'cause' of independent Kashmir:

"But now it seems neither is any behind-the-scene effort leading to a result nor is the external pressure proving effective, and negotiations don't seem to be going towards a positive direction. As far as Musharraf's rejection of independent Kashmir option is concerned, it was surprising for the people of Kashmir, because it was Pakistan that had been 'nursing' this solution. At this moment, the movement for independent Kashmir is much more powerful in Pakistan.

The greatest proponent of independent Kashmir, Maqbool Bhat spent most of his life in Pakistan, and the initiation of militancy in Kashmir was managed through the services of Aman-ullah Khan (JKLF leader). If the option of independent Kashmir is rejected, Kashmir becomes a border dispute between India and Pakistan. Then, it becomes a bilateral issue. No doubt even UN resolutions had deleted or ignored independent Kashmir option. But as a result of that, UN resolutions do not have that relevance, as these had. It is difficult to find out why Musharraf felt the need to reject this solution at this time".

(Daily Uqab, Srinagar, Kashmir, January 18, 2005.)