

**Let People Cross LoC Unhindered**

“... Islamabad’s keenness for an earlier opening of all entry points along the LoC becomes significant and must be seen as a gesture of Islamabad’s willingness to keep the peace process with New Delhi on course. India may, however, find the proposition rather difficult with the reported presence of many militant groups in Pakistan administered Jammu and Kashmir engaged in the massive relief and reconstruction operation that is underway. With many of these groups on national and international terrorism watch lists, India may demand guarantees from Pakistan to keep these groups from misusing the softening of the LoC. However, this should not become a reason for the two countries to continue the blockade of movement and connection of the people of Kashmir. At the same time, as the spokesperson for Pakistan’s foreign Office pointed out, the documentation procedure for Kashmiris must be simplified as an effort to encourage greater movement. The existing procedures are cumbersome and too complicated, as has been reported by traveling Kashmiris. The objective should be to enhance people-to-people contact that will ultimately improve the confidence levels between the two countries to settle their long-standing issues. The spirit that underlined the opening of the Muzaffarbad-Srinagar bus service on April 7 last year must continue to dominate the Indo-Pak efforts to neutralise their hang-ups over the Kashmir issue. Durable peace in the region will only come through a series of small steps taken in good spirit. Already measures are underway for the opening of Poonch-Rawalakot road and who can say that more such routes would be a reality in near future. More connections between the two divided Kashmir’s would definitely bring the people close and thus ease the tensions.”

**(Courtesy: Daily, *The Kashmir Monitor*, 11th April, 2006)**