

Tuesday, March 22, 2011

Peace agenda

Stable, peaceful Pakistan in South Asia's interest: Indian team

Delegates say resources must be diverted from defence to development

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ISLAMABAD

A twelve-member Indian peace delegation led by veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar arrived in Islamabad on Monday and planted a "Tree of Hope" at the Art and Craft Village near Shakarparian.

The delegation agreed that there is a growing realisation in not just the public at large, but even among the fanatic forces in India such as BJP that a stable and prosperous Pakistan is in the entire South Asian region's best interest.

They said a No-War pact was absolutely necessary if the region's peace agenda is to be seriously pursued. They opined that de-nuclearisation

was also necessary since the persistence of the status quo had destroyed developmental prospects for at least three generations of the region's people.

"We, the forces of peace and stability, have significantly defeated the forces of fanaticism and extremism," claimed Mr Janin Desai, an activist-journalist and national joint-secretary of Pakistan India Peoples Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD).

The delegation agreed that the realisation of peace between the nuclear neighbours was crucial for ending poverty, hunger and violence against women or other marginalised sections and exploitation of workers - not just home-based women workers in India and Pakistan but in all the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries.

Speakers lamented the ruin of peace prospects by the military and intelligence establishments of both countries

The delegation was joined by Seema Mustafa, a Delhi-based journalist, Jatin Desai, Ramesh Yadev, an Amritsar based social activist, Shahid Siddique, former member of the Indian parliament, Haris Kidwi, general-secretary of PIPFPD's Delhi Chapter and Dr Bhalchandra Mungekar, a member of the Indian Upper House (Rajya Sabha).

MNA Chauhdry Manzoor supported the idea that visa conditions between SAARC countries should be abolished. The delegation and the host civil society

organisations demanded that the SAARC members create a mechanism for the convention to end terrorism in the region. They also urged the SAARC countries to make the convention effective.

They lamented the ruin of peace prospects by the military and intelligence establishments of both countries, because of which valuable resources have literally been put to waste. They urged both the countries to cut their defence expenditures and divert those resources to social sector development and bring positive changes in the lives of people, especially the poor and marginalised.

The peace delegation is being hosted by some members of the Insani Haqooq Itehad, namely SUNGI Foundation, Strengthening Participatory Organisation, Aurat Foundation, Sustainable Development

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Policy Institute, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, South Asian Free Media Association and PIPFPD.

The pro-peace forces should foster greater awareness in the public, mobilise them and provide them with different platforms to raise their voices of friendly and peaceful relations. To positively influence and make the dialogue meaningful between the two states, it is necessary that people on both sides put pressure on their governments.