

## Delhi meet moots South Asian news agency to foster peace

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New Delhi, Jan 12 (IANS) Blaming the media for fuelling hostility between India and Pakistan, veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar Tuesday proposed a South Asian news agency to bridge the information gap between the two neighbours who stalled their dialogue in the wake of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.

“If I were asked to name one factor, the media is most responsible for creating bad blood between India and Pakistan,” Nayar told reporters at a conference held to map out the road for peace between India and Pakistan.



Intellectuals, journalists, artists and activists from India and Pakistan participated in the three-day conference that ended Tuesday with a call for the resumption of the peace process between the two countries.

“The Indian media carry mostly negative stories about Pakistan and the Pakistani media carry negative stories about India,” said Nayar, a former Indian high commissioner to Britain.

“The media of both sides demonise each other,” agreed Ved Bhasin, editor of Kashmir Times.

Nayar blamed international news agencies for presenting a distorted view of India and Pakistan to either side.

To bridge this perception gap, Nayar proposed a South Asian news agency that will be co-owned by stakeholders in five countries in the Indian subcontinent.

“Let’s see each other through each other’s eyes rather than anyone else telling us what to think of each other,” Nayar said.

Madeeha Gauhar, an eminent Pakistani theatre personality, stressed the role of culture and interaction among creative communities in promoting peace and friendship between the two countries. There should be more joint theatre and culture festivals, she said.

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, Pakistani rights activist Asma Jehangir, Hasil Bizenjo, a senator from Balochistan, former minister and diplomat Mani Shankar Aiyar, former foreign secretary Salman Haider were among those who participated in the conference.

The three-day conclave ended with a resolution laying out a roadmap for “sustained and durable peace” between the two countries.

The resolution asked the leadership of both countries to resume the dialogue process between the two countries and ensure that it remains uninterrupted despite twists and turns in their relations.

The resolution urged the leaders on both sides of the border to avoid “chauvinistic militaristic statements” and join hands to combat terrorism and address common challenges.

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