

## Demilitarize Kashmir, urge India-Pakistan peaceniks

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New Delhi, Jan 12 (IANS) Describing Kashmir as a “core issue” between India and Pakistan, peace votaries from both sides of the border Tuesday said the state, divided between the two countries, should be first demilitarized for a lasting solution.

“This (Kashmir) is a core issue (and) there must be a genuine and urgent effort to find solutions,” said a declaration issued at the end of a three-day joint peace conference that began here Sunday.

“Firstly, both India and Pakistan must jointly agree to de-militarize Jammu and Kashmir,” the statement said, stressing that India should repeal the special powers given to armed forces in the terror-riven state to fight militants.

They suggested that democratic institutions should be strengthened and an independent tribunal established “to ensure Article 370 is reinstated” in its “original form as a step towards building confidence and goodwill”. Article 370 provides special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

The conference saw Pakistani participants including advocate Aitzaz Ahsan, human rights activist Asma Jahangir, defence expert Ayesha Siddiqi and Balochistan senator Hasil Bizenjo.

From India, the conference was addressed by Kuldip Nayar, former minister and diplomat Mani Shankar Aiyar, former navy chief L. Ramdas, former foreign secretary Salman Haidar and Kashmiri leaders, including Yasin Malik, Sajjad Lone and Mehbooba Mufti.

The peace votaries said Kashmiris should be allowed “to live and work in Pakistan if they wish to”.

They also emphasised that interests of minorities in Jammu and Kashmir should be protected and opinions and aspirations of people in all regions of the state should be taken care of when working out solutions.

Read more: [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/demilitarize-kashmir-urge-india-pakistan-peaceniks\\_100302841.html#ixzz0cf4mzzr3](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/demilitarize-kashmir-urge-india-pakistan-peaceniks_100302841.html#ixzz0cf4mzzr3)

