

**'Why not have a joint Kashmir?'**

*\* PDP president calls for having 'dual currency' to encourage trade*

*\* Says LoC should be made 'irrelevant'*

NEW DELHI: The People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Indian-held Kashmir has called for unifying both Kashmirs and having a "dual currency" to encourage trade.

Speaking at an Indo-Pak conference on Sunday, PDP President Mehbooba Mufti said, "Can't there be any joint mechanism between the two Kashmirs? Why can't we have a joint council consisting of representatives from both sides?"

LoC: She said the Line of Control (LoC) dividing Kashmir should be made "irrelevant". She said the recent militancy-related incidents in IHK should not influence New Delhi's decision to withdraw troops from the disputed territory. "We know that the aim of any terror attack is to sabotage the dialogue process. The Lal Chowk attack should not influence the intention of the Indian government to withdraw forces [from IHK]," she said. The PDP leader said wars between India and Pakistan had only resulted in accumulation of security forces in IHK. Mehbooba said the peace process should be de-linked from terror incidents, adding that resumption of composite dialogue between India and Pakistan was the need of the hour.

The situation in IHK "has improved over the period of time and the people are turning to peaceful means to raise their grievances", she said. Mehbooba said India and Pakistan should engage themselves in a result-oriented dialogue, adding that Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Lone was killed because "he wanted dialogue". The PDP president urged the two countries to make a policy shift on Kashmir by reaching out to the people and practicing peaceful and democratic ways to build a new South Asia.

Mufti said that Kashmir would be the "first and the worst victim" if something happens to Pakistan. iftikhar gilani

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