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Yasin Malik sceptical of road map to bring peace to Jammu and Kashmir

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He challenges Pandit protesters to prove their allegations against him

— Photos: Shanker Chakravarty



A speaker and protesters: JKLf Chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik addresses the India-Pakistan Conference — A Road Map towards Peace — in New Delhi on Monday. (Right) Kashmiri Pandits stage a protest against Mr. Malik.

NEW DELHI: The India-Pakistan peace dialogue was marred by protests during Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader Yasin Malik's address on Monday in the morning session on autonomy for Jammu & Kashmir and Baluchistan.

Kashmiri Pandits in the audience got up and demanded that Mr. Malik should not be allowed to speak, alleging that the leader was "responsible for ushering in the gun culture in the Kashmir Valley and involved in criminal cases." They said there was also an allegation of rape and murder of a girl.

Responding to their charges, Mr. Malik said, "I won't wait for a court trial. Hang me here if you can prove that I have raped and killed. Tell me when it happened. Give me the date."

Brief commotion

Commotion prevailed briefly while there was a standoff between the peace activists and the Kashmiri migrants till the police were called in.

Two protesters were briefly detained at the local police station, while some of them continued distributing pamphlets outside the venue, detailing their opposition to the JKLF leader, said Aditya Raj Kaul, founder of the "Roots in Kashmir." The conference soon got back on track after Mr. Malik finished his speech, punctuated by protests by what he called the "whipping boys of the intelligence agencies." He pointed out that the people of Kashmir had only known conflict since Independence as against peace in the previous thousands of years.

In his case, Mr. Malik said he resorted to armed struggle after the non-violent path was sabotaged. Sceptical of peace ever returning to the Kashmir Valley, he felt no decision would ever be taken to implement a road map for peace in the State.

People's Conference leader Sajjad Lone wanted the effort to restore normality in Jammu & Kashmir to begin with economic independence by ensuring seamless trade between both sides of the divided State. He proposed middle-of-the-road solutions because any extremist position would not be acceptable to at least one of the three sides in the dispute – India, Pakistan and the people of the State.

Climate change

From the Pakistani side, journalist Siraj Malik Akbar gave his views on Baluchistan and Jammu & Kashmir. The peace activists also discussed the impact of climate change on bilateral ties, especially in the area of water sharing. They said the Siachen Glacier issue must be resolved at the earliest and a second look taken at the Indus Water Treaty. Vandana Shiva of Navdanya spoke from the Indian side and Pakistan Labour Party spokesperson Farooq Tariq from the Pakistani side at the session chaired by peace activist Lalita Ramdas.

A session on trade as an instrument of peace was addressed by the former Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey, and Pakistani economist Akbar Zaidi.

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