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Track II: Indo-Pak peace votaries to hold conference in Delhi

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NEW DELHI: Dialogue with Pakistan is not even a speck on the horizon as far as the Indian government is concerned, but some well known individuals and organisations from both sides of the border have taken upon themselves the task of restoring normalcy, or at least a semblance of it.

Advocating resumption of government dialogue between the two countries, these votaries of peace between India and Pakistan have decided to hold a conference in Delhi titled 'India and Pakistan: A Road Map Towards Peace'.

What may not go down well with many in India, the conference will also devote a session to the issue of Balochistan which found mention in the Sharm el-Sheikh Indo-Pak joint statement.

Announcing the holding of the conference, journalist Kuldip Nayar said on Thursday that despite declaring the peace process to be irreversible at one point of time the governments have gone back to pointing fingers at each other and that peace is now being held hostage to allegations and threats.

"It is with this in view that several organisations and individuals have joined hands to organise this conference. The idea is to get experts and activists who have spent their lives promoting peace on the same platform to map out a charter for peace and exert pressure on both the governments to pursue peace as an ideology and commitment to the development of India and Pakistan," said Nayar.

Former foreign secretary Salman Haider said that it's the people who can convince the governments that dialogue is the only way out. "If there is a public endorsement of this notion, it will encourage the two governments to again initiate the process of dialogue," said Haider.

Apart from Nayar and Haider, some other important participants in the conference are former PM I K Gujral and Rajinder Sachar. "Kashmir remains crucial to the peace process. Balochistan, which has found mention for the first time in a joint India-Pakistan statement, is also home to a secular struggle. There will be a session to discuss both the issues," said one of the participants.

The conference, to be held from January 10 to 12, will not only see peace activists and political leaders coming together, but will also give space to representatives from Kashmir and Balochistan. It will include discussions on crucial subjects like militancy, trade as an instrument of peace, Afghanistan, presence of NATO forces and climate change and its impact on Indo-Pak relations.

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