

The news coming from Srinagar, last Wednesday, that Ittehad Force "fails to unite warring APHC groups" has been received as a message of despair in Azad Kashmir. The failure has been announced by Muhammad Yaseen Malik, Chairman Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front at a Press conference in Srinagar, Tuesday. He was flanked by Shabbir Shah, Mian Qayoom, and Maulana Shaukat Ahmad.

They and Sh. Abdul Aziz, are personified as inspiring spirit behind the unrelenting struggle of Kashmiris for achieving deliverance from Indian occupation. Yaseen Malik and Sh. Abdul Aziz were the active members of the united APHC till last September when the political conglomerate of 33 groups of different religious and political shades split into two groups distinguished as hardliners and moderates. The hard-liners stuck to their demands that India implements Security Council resolutions, holds tripartite talks to find a solution of Kashmir issue and accepts Kashmir as a disputed territory.

The moderates led by Abbass Ansari were prone to enter into first bilateral talks with India, carve out a solution acceptable to Kashmiris which could be basis for tripartite talks involving Pakistan. The priority in this approach was the Kashmiris wishes. Maulana

APHC's failure to unite

Kashmir

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BY ABDUR RASHID MALIK

The Nation

Umar Farooq and Professor Abdul Ghani Bhatt on the eve of their first round of talks with LK Advani BJP government's Interior Minister had said in Srinagar "they would not get dictation from India and Pakistan, they would give priority to Kashmiris interests.

"The two rounds of talks with LK Advani in the second one they also had 25 minutes chat with Mr Vajpayee, were exercises to create mutual confidence. These talks were general in nature with expression of wishes to restore peace in the state. They could only seek release of some political detainees.

APHC (A) did not flicker in their basic stand that solution had to be found to the satisfaction of India, Pakistan and Kashmiris. The surprising change of government in new Delhi interrupted but did not rule out the continuation of dialogue between APHC and New Delhi.

Meanwhile, flexibility overtures were made by Islamabad signalling sidelining of Security Council resolutions if India made a positive response

People were astonished to witness flickering moves by Ali Gillani.

to arrive at an honorable solution according to the wishes of Kashmiris. This flexibility posture lent support to APHC (A) to pursue dialogue process with India. Ali Gillani-led APHC continued opposing this honeymooning between its rival group and New Delhi.

Their internal bickering exposed weakness of their fundamental political stand. In the last week of July, Ali Gillani and Maulana Umar Farooq separately had meetings with Riaz Khokhar, Secretary, Pakistan Foreign Affairs Ministry in New Delhi. Abbas Ansari had already resigned as chairman of his group in a bid to facilitate the reunion of APHC. On return from New Delhi Maulana Umar Farooq assumed as a mediatory Chairman

APHC only to reunite the rival groups.

To strengthen Umar Farooq's efforts on 'Ittehad Force' comprising of Malik Yaseen, Shabbir Shah, Sh Abdul Aziz, Maulana Shaukat Ahmad and Mian Qayoom (Chairman Srinagar Bar Association) was formed. Ali Gillani first welcomed the reunion move.

In a weeks time people in Kashmir were astonished to witness flickering moves by Ali Gillani. One day he announced to form his own group of Jama'at-i-Islami (Jama'at-i-Islami Kashmir had already removed him from its cadre last September when he challenged the APHC) next day he was again elected President Jama'at-i-Islami Kashmir and third day he disassociated from the reunion efforts. This somersault of Ali Gillani shocked the Ittehad Force. Their failure was announced by Yaseen Malik with tears in his eyes at the Press conference.

"We are dissolving the Ittehad Force" Yaseen said. "I and my colleagues apologise to the unfortunate people of Kashmir who have given huge sacrifices for freedom" Malik

burst out in the Press conference singling out Ali Gillani as a "big impediment to the unity efforts." I had a lot of expectations from Gillani but I am disappointed with his approach" Malik added. He was one of dozens Kashmiris who launched armed struggle against Indian rule in 1988 but in 1990s he opted to pursue the goals through political means. Malik Yaseen elaborating his point of view remarked "Gillani is on a suicide path, by not uniting we are helping the imperial rule", we must unite.

If we don't it may lead to a civil war" Yaseen warned. India is skillfully playing with the wits of Kashmiri leadership through the bait of entering into dialogue with all the groups even with the militants but it is reluctant to concede their demand for allowing them to visit Pakistan and Azad Kashmir on the plea that Kashmiris are citizens of India.

It does not relish having any political or constitutional connection with the people of Azad Kashmir by implication recognising the LoC as a reality. Islamabad has also voiced its concern on the stark response India has given to the suggestion made by President Pervez Musharraf for setting a time frame for solution of Kashmir issue, and to the proposal for associating Kashmiri leadership in the dialogue process.