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[Back](#)

[Front Page](#)

## Call to resume dialogue

Special Correspondent

*Three-day meet aims at drawing up a road map for peace between India, Pakistan*

— Photo: PTI



**PEACE INITIATIVE: (From right) People's Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti, the former president of the Supreme Court Bar Association of Pakistan, Aitzaz Ahsan, and the former Union Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, at the India-Pakistan conference in New Delhi on Sunday.**

NEW DELHI: A call to resume dialogue between India and Pakistan resonated on the inaugural day of a three-day conference here on Sunday. It is aimed at drawing up a road map for peace between the two countries.

The former Pakistan Law Minister Iqbal Haider, the former Union Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar, journalist Kuldip Nayar and Peoples' Democratic Party leader Mehbooba Mufti were united in urging both governments to resume the dialogue, suspended since the Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008.

In the absence of the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, who organisers said facilitated visas for many Pakistani civil society activists, Mr. Nayar inaugurated the conference. It is slated to deliberate on several contentious issues ranging from autonomy for Jammu & Kashmir and Baluchistan to a joint mechanism for checking militancy.

Mr. Nayar set the tone for the day, calling for immediate resumption of dialogue.

Ms. Mufti called upon New Delhi not to be deterred by the recent spate of militant attacks in J&K and continue with the withdrawal of security forces.

A less heavy-handed approach in the State would set the tone for a Indo-Pakistan dialogue which must be initiated, she said.

Academic Kamal Mitra Chenoy also felt it was time for both sides to begin talking about the unresolved issues.

Mr. Aiyar felt both countries should not only begin talking to each other but also create a mechanism that will not shut down.

Mr. Haider said that in the backdrop of global warming, it was time the two countries at least resolved the Siachen dispute. The glacier, he said, was being subjected to environmental degradation due to occupation by troops from both countries.

While civil society activists will deliberate on confidence building measures to infuse trust between the two countries, Kashmiri Pandit activists plan to protest the presence of “separatist” Kashmiri activists at the conference on Monday.

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