Dialogue is open to all, says Mehbooba

The Centre's move to appoint an interlocutor for Jammu and Kashmir on Monday was welcomed by all mainstream political parties in the Valley, but separatists remained muted to the dialogue offer "awaiting a formal invitation."

Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, whose party pledged to initiate a dialogue with the Hurriyat under the 'Agenda of Alliance' agreed to by the BJP, said: "A political process was necessary. I hope stakeholders in Kashmir take up the opportunity, move a step ahead and enter the dialogue process. It is open to all with no conditions on any side."

"The representative (former IB director Dineshwar Sharma) has credibility and was involved in the dialogue process in the North-East for a long time," Ms. Mufti said.

Welcoming the initiative, former Chief Minister and National Conference working president Omar Abdullah said, "The acceptance of the political nature of the Kashmir issue is a resounding defeat for those who could only see use of force as a solution."

Congress unimpressed

J&K Pradesh Congress Committee president G.A. Mir said his party "won't welcome the move until the Centre names the stakeholders and makes the road map for dialogue public." Parties like the CPI (M), the Peoples Democratic Front and the Democratic Party Nationalist welcomed the move.

Sources in the separatist camp said there would be "a joint stand" and "a formal response" to the Centre's move. "...However, neither has there been any formal invite nor a move in this direction so far. No one knows the contours," a separatist leader told *The Hindu* .

END

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