

Pakistan Left: New front to 'stem the tide of fundamentalism'

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LAHORE: Who could have thought that a social media group formed to better organise the recent Faiz Amn Mela would lead to efforts for uniting the Left-leaning groups, at least in the Punjab capital. But, the unexpected happened as the groups, trade unions and individuals part of the festival organising committee decided to further their joint struggle in the wake of fears of rising religious fundamentalism.

In the first phase, it was decided to keep the attempt confined to Lahore as, what Lahore Left Front (LLF) convener Farooq Tariq put it, a pilot exercise and expanding it to other areas in the later stages.

Mr Tariq says the rising religious fundamentalism, particularly the Islamabad sit-in staged by Khadim Rizvi-led fanatics and their apparent success in getting amended certain laws led the Left groups and liberals to think about working jointly before the fanatics sweep away all that has been gained through secular politics.

The LLF, he says, will organise joint activities on four main themes: to fight against growing tide of religious fundamentalism and terrorism, to help develop class-based organisations of working class in their struggle for a dignified life, to preserve democratic norms, and to campaign for the recovery of missing persons and for rule of law.

A meeting chaired by Mr Tariq the other day was attended by representatives of the Awami Workers Party, the Pakistan Mazdoor Kissan Party, the Brabri Party, the Pakistan Trade Unions Defence Campaign, the Communist Party Pakistan, the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab, the Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee, the Revolutionary Students Front, the Progressive Students Collective, the Peoples Solidarity Forum, the Feminist Collective, the Punjab Union of Journalists, the Railway Mehnat Kash Union and the Progressive Labour Federation.

A 17-member organising committee of the Front was also formed. It included Imtiazul Haque, Irfan Ahmad, Ghulam Mujtaba, Dr Ammar Ali Jan, Dr Sara Suhail, Abdul Ghafoor, Prof Asim Shujai, Haider Butt, Mohiba Ahmad, Sadeeq Baig, Iqbal Haider Butt, Khalid Bhatti, Rashid Rahman, Advocate Ilyas Khan, Mian Mohammed Ashraf and Awais Qarni.

Unlike in the past, says Mr Tariq, those though not believing in the Marxist ideology have also become a part of the endeavour to counter religious radicalism.

Taimur Rahman of the Mazdoor Kisan Party says it's continuation of the federal level efforts for unity. "In fact, we're to go down to town level cooperation, where actual activities take place, as a result of the national unification. However, formation of the platform in each town may be different."

He denies the attempt has anything to do with the revival of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA).

Prof Dr Rashid Ahmad says the need for Left narrative is increasing with the passage of time though class-based politics is on the decline in India and Pakistan.

“Only the Left ideology offers solutions to the contradictions we’re facing at international, national and provincial levels. Its narrative and analysis is relevant for most of problems facing the country though believers of this ideology are so far failing to effectively communicate the message to the masses.”Mr Rahman denies that the Left failed to effectively communicate with the masses and argues that all the three major winners of the 1970 elections – the Awami League, the PPP and the NAP – were proponents of socialism.

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P.S.

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