

*Jehlum Post News Network/Srinagar/Jammu /Apr 08, 2015/Major opposition political parties and separatists groups in Jammu and Kashmir Wednesday slammed the move of Jammu and Kashmir government*

*to create separate townships for Kashmiri Pandit migrants in the Valley saying it will divide the people and pose security risks. While National Conference said the party was against any separate "homeland" within the Valley, separatists said creation of such settlements "is an Israeli ploy and RSS has take inspiration from that". "We don't believe in separate homeland and National Conference (NC) does not support it. Centre's decision is not important. It should be accepted by the people. What is the purpose if it creates differences among the people of the Valley," senior NC leader Ali Mohammed Sagar said. The reactions came a day after Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh asked state Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed for identifying land for creating composite townships for 62,000 displaced pandit families who had left the state at the onset of militancy in early 1990s. Sayeed had assured that the state government will soon acquire land for creating "composite townships" for them. NC spokesman said that the party was against any ghettos as they will be prone to attacks from militant groups. "Why do you want to create a spate of cantonment type colonies in the Valley?" the spokesman asked. JKLF chairman Yasin Malik said separatist groups have always appealed to Kashmiri pandits to return to the Valley. "We will not allow the government to build separate settlements for Kashmiri pandits. This is an Israeli ploy and RSS has taken inspiration from that. They want to create walls of hatred here, spread fire and divide the people," he told reporters.*

*"Every leader, including Syed Ali Shah Geelani, has always appealed our pandit brothers to return to the Valley and live under composite culture with their Muslim brothers. Even today, we see that when a pandit brother dies, his last rites are performed by Muslim brothers. "Many of the pandits are living and doing business across the Valley with ease. Why cannot the pandits return to their ancestral properties and settle there? We have no issues with that. But we will not allow the government to divide people in the name of security," he said. Hardline Hurriyat Conference termed setting up of proposed separate townships for Kashmiri pandits as "surrender by Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed before the Centre." "The surrender of Sayeed before Home Minister Rajnath Singh over setting up of separate townships for Kashmiri pandits is surprising and unfortunate," Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani said in a statement. The issue figured in Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which saw some ugly scenes with independent MLA Engineer Rashid storming the well protesting against the plans of the state and central governments. "We will not let Kashmir become another Gaza and Palestine. We will not tolerate separate townships for the pandit community in Kashmir," he said but made it clear that he would welcome the return of the community to their native places.*

*"Kashmiri pandits are welcome to return to their native places and live there peacefully with the majority Kashmiri Muslim community as they have been living for centuries, but we will not allow the creation of another Gaza within Kashmir," he said. Rashid had a verbal duel with the BJP members including Ravinder Raina who were in favour of the separate townships. "Kashmiri pandit community has every right to return to wherever they want to, they were forced to leave their house and the atmosphere is not right for their return to their native places as yet, so they need a secure place where they can live," Raina contended. Later talking to reporters outside the Assembly, Rashid said "...PDP led by Mufti Mohammed Sayeed is unfortunately acting as a facilitator in the grand plan of BJP brigade to communalise and polarise situation in the state." CPM leader and MLA Mohammed Yusuf Tarigami raised the issue during zero hour demanding that the government should take the Assembly into confidence. "Kashmir has already suffered many wounds in the past. The new government should refrain from inflicting fresh wounds by dividing the society," he said. Education Minister Naeem Akthar refused to give any direct reply to questions on the controversy and said, "bringing them back with honour and dignity, we owe that to them as a civilised and progressive society. We are incomplete without them. We will get them back with full honour and dignity." Agency*