

The federal cabinet in its meeting, with Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf in the chair on Thursday, decided to implement the grant of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to India immediately, and directed the Commerce Ministry to act accordingly.

That showed that the earlier delay to consult representatives of industry and agriculture was mere eyewash. No consultations are known to have taken place, and no reports of any consultation were presented to the cabinet. Therefore, it went ahead with a decision that will lead to the destruction of the country's commerce and industry.

The two nuclear armed South Asian neighbours continue to avoid even talking about the Kashmir issue, let alone, solve it. India continues pursuit of its regional goals, which include maintaining its illegal occupation of Kashmir, and emerging as a major industrial power. Meanwhile Pakistan flounders in setting even its domestic affairs straight.

The government appears anxious to make some final commitment, especially after it itself acknowledged that it would complete its term. However, this term has little time to run, and this means that any decision would be best left to the government that will be elected in the coming general election. At the same time, it is difficult to see how any coming government can take a step which would have such damaging consequences for Pakistani commerce and industry.

It is also not possible to see how the country's commerce and industry, already so badly hit by loadshedding and already losing jobs at an alarming rate, would be able to sustain such a shock. It must not be forgotten that India is pursuing mercantilist aims, and wishes to increase further its trade surplus with Pakistan, which reached \$1 billion in the last fiscal year.

Instead of using the remainder of its term taking decisions harming the national interest, the government should work hard at persuading India that it must be willing to allow the only valid solution to the Kashmir problem. The government should remember that it must ensure that it follows the aspirations of the people, and that this includes keeping the Kashmir cause in the forefront of its relationship with India, which has never accepted its creation, and still actively seeks the reversal of the Partition.

Courtesy: Nation