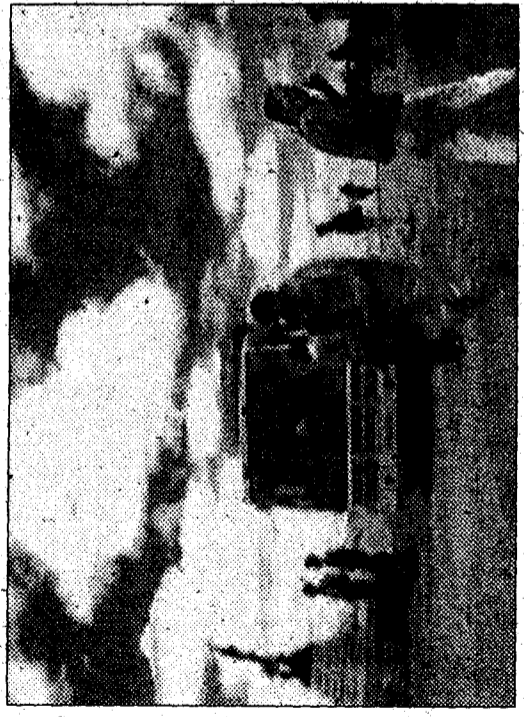


Autonomy: 'Neglected' Leh says it wants out...

ANURADHANAGARAH
LEH, JUNE 30

THE tourists are in town but the marketplaces are not bustling. For the last three weeks, frequent strikes and bandhs have brought life in Leh to a standstill. The shutters are down and the Buddhists are out on the streets. Led by the Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA), protests against the recently cleared Autonomy Bill in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly are growing louder and the demand for the status of a Union territory stronger.

While the spotlight is on Srinagar, the quiet movement in Ladakh is gaining ground. Tired of being treated as "second-class citizens", the Buddhists are now saying that they don't want to have anything to do with the state of J&K. The monks are spreading the word around the monasteries



Tourists throng the marketplace in Leh despite frequent bandhs

are holding meetings, the LBA is doing all the paperwork and the people's voice is growing stronger. The response to the last call for a bandh on June 19 surprised even

Ladakhis say, explaining why the movement has so much support despite the fact that it is tourist season.

Sonam Yerphel's bookshop does brisk business this time of the year. As the snow melts and the tourists come, Yerphel makes a killing before retiring for winter. The frequent bandh calls by the LBA have affected his cash inflow but he says it is all for a better tomorrow. Yerphel says: "We have educated youth but no jobs, remote villages don't have basic amenities. Life here is tough and the government hasn't done anything to make things easier for us. If strikes are the answer, then we are willing to put up with them."

Skeptot Dorje doesn't know how a Union territory status will make a difference in his village but nods vigorously when Yerphel explains the logic. He, like most other Ladakhis who are a part of the

movement, does not understand the issue well, but knows it is important.

Tsering Samphel, president of the LBA explains: "There is no homogeneity between the Kashmiris and the Ladakhis. Our language is different, our culture is different, our religion is different. We are not asking for anything unusual. The movement for a separate identity began long ago. We do not want to be a part of the J&K Government, more so after this whole autonomy thing began."

Initial protests resulted in the formation of the Hill Council in 1995, which was created specifically to look after the developmental needs of the region. It was a trade-off between the government and the LBA. The Union territory demand, which was first raised in 1974, was put on the backburner and the Hill Council was formed. "It was a substitute and we thought

it was a fair one," says Samphel. "But now things are different. The Hill Council is marginalised by the government and has to fight for everything. We are neglected and it is unfair."

Agreeing with Samphel, Hill Council chief executive Thupstan Chhewang adds: "It is simple. Autonomy means more domination. Everybody knows that Ladakh and more specifically the Leh region is neglected. We are given a step-motherly treatment. Something needs to be done and since the LBA has taken the initiative and we are fully supporting them."

While the present protest is mainly from the Leh district, Muslim-dominated Kargil district is also giving the Union territory issue a serious thought. While the Buddhist-dominated pockets in this district have already pledged their support to the LBA, the others are thinking about it.

... While displaced Hindus seek their share of Kashmir

AASHA KHOSA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 30

THE displaced community of Kashmiri Hindus have stepped up their campaign to secure 'homeland' within the Valley following the Farooq Abdullah Government's demand for greater political autonomy to the state.

Dr Ajay Chhangoo, leader of the Pannun Kashmir, premier organisation of the displaced community on Thursday warned Central leaders of dangerous consequences over "giving legitimacy to the NC's demands in preference for demands of minorities (of J&K) who have been demanding state's integration with the country".

He accused the BJP government of using "Kashmiri Pandits plight for securing votes in rest of the country.

Chhangoo asked the Central Government to explain why only importance was being given to separatist tendencies be it Hurriyat's demands or the National Conference-led autonomy campaign. He asked the Vajpayee government to explain whether it was willing under pressure from America, which is said to have favoured autonomy as a solution to

the Kashmir imbroglio. Chhangoo warned that if the minorities' point of view on J&K autonomy was ignored again, communities opposed to autonomy would be forced to seek external help in frustration".

Making the demand for creation of "Pannun Kashmir", a homeland within Kashmir Valley for all those who had upheld and wished to live within the ambit of the Indian Constitution, Chhangoo said

Pannun Kashmiris accuse Govt of pandering to Muslim sentiments by not spelling out its ideological stand on the autonomy issue

"our demand should also get the same consideration and support as the autonomy demands".

C L Gadoo, leader of the pro-BJP Kashmir Samiti told *The Indian Express* the confusion in the Centre over responding to the NC demand smacked of a gameplan. "We are shocked but I feel the consequences are not only for the Kashmiri Pandits and

minorities to bear but the entire country". He said the Samiti plans to launch an information initiative to educate Indians about the real designs of the J&K Government in asking for greater autonomy.

Accusing the BJP Government of pandering to the Kashmiri Muslim sentiments by not spelling out its ideological stand on the autonomy issue, Dr Chhangoo said, "autonomy is a gameplan of American interests and pan-Islamic elements and Government of India is willingly playing into their hands".

Gadoo, who enjoys proximity to senior BJP leaders said of late the community leaders had stopped interacting with either the Prime Minister or the Home Minister.

"The Prime Minister has been inaccessible to us while we don't feel like going to Advaniji ever since he has started openly patronising Dr. Abdullah and ignoring Kashmiri Pandits," Gadoo said. "We don't figure in their scheme of things and so the best thing for us to do is to arouse consciousness among the Indian public about the Kashmir gameplan."

In a hard-hitting statement, the Pannun Kashmir

has accused the government of India of misleading the country by giving an impression that the autonomy demand was within the ambit of the Indian Constitution. "NC wants to exclude J&K from basic parameters of THE Indian Constitution", Chhangoo said. Dr Shakti Bhan, leader of the women's wing of the Pannun Kashmir said the autonomy demand would create an 'independent' territory on the northern borders of India and nobody would be able to stop the balkanisation of the country.

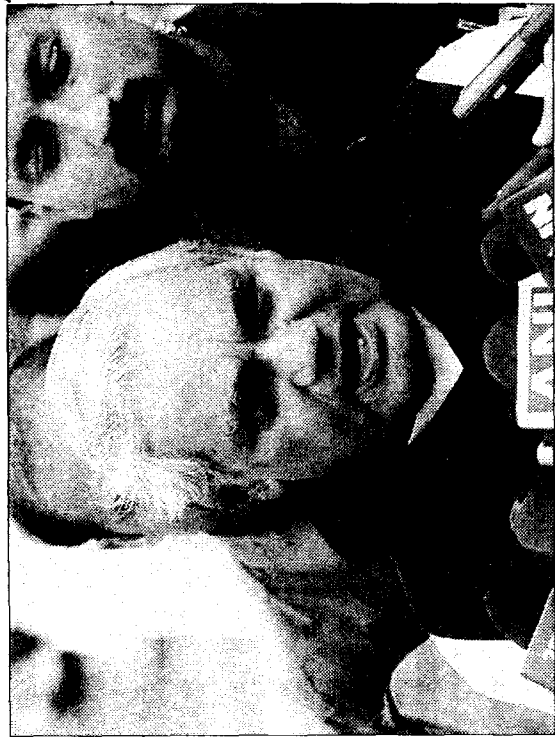
"NC is entrusting defence to the Indian Government but why should an Indian soldier feel motivated to fight for Kashmir when he cannot even live there". Dr Nancy Koul, another Pannun leader said efforts were afoot to unite different organisations of the displaced Kashmiris. The Pannun Kashmir leaders said a joint forum of Ladakhi Buddhists, Jammu students and displaced Kashmiris has been launched and a joint strategy for agitation over the NC's demand was being planned shortly.

Meanwhile in Jammu, a partial bandh was staged to protest the passing of the autonomy resolution by the National Conference Government in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly on Monday last, official sources said here.

INDIAN EXPRESS

1 JUL 2000

Vajpayee promises to take steps on J&K resolution



Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee talks to the media on his arrival from Portugal at Palam airport in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

M. Shakeel Ahmed

ON BOARD PWS SPECIAL AIRCRAFT 30 JUNE

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee said on Friday on board his special aircraft that whatever steps were necessary would be taken on the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly. In his first public comment on the controversial action of the state Assembly, the PM told reporters accompanying him on his five-day visit to Italy and Portugal that the resolution adopted was within the constitutional framework.

He said that on his return to the capital, the Cabinet would consider the resolution. "Whatever steps are required within the

Constitution will be taken," Mr Vajpayee said.

He sought to allay fears that the action of the Farooq Abdullah government in the state posed a threat to the country's security by asserting that the nation was strong enough to withstand any threat. The Prime Minister said chief minister Farooq Abdullah had assured him that the autonomy report will be discussed in the assembly, which had, however, passed a resolution on the subject subsequently.

"We were not informed," he said when asked whether the centre was surprised about the passage of the resolution which he came to know while away. — PTI

NDA to convene meet on autonomy issue

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 30 JUNE

A MEETING of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is to be convened soon for formulating a common strategy toward the National Conference-sponsored resolution on autonomy.

The need to hold the session is deemed necessary to ensure that the constituents of the ruling alliance speak in one voice on the highly sensitive subject. So far, different components of the ruling combination have spoken in different voices. BJP, which is unhappy with the NC, has preferred restraint. But Shiv Sena has gone to the extent of demanding the dismissal of the Abdullah government.

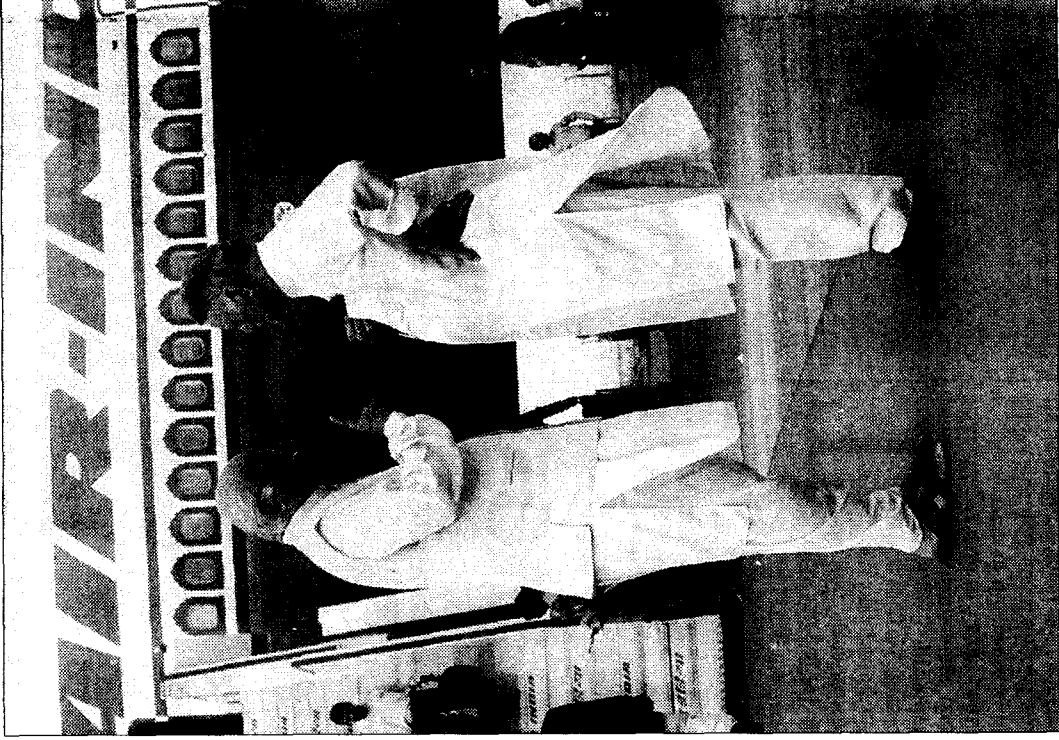
But the deliberations in NDA, whenever they are held, are unlikely to have any impact on the Centre's response, which is set to be a polite but firm "no" to the resolution. The Union Cabinet is going to take the position that restoration of the 1953 position would only deprive its people of the benefits of institutions like the Supreme Court, Election Commission and the Comptroller & Auditor General (CAG), sources said. It may be pointed out that accep-

tance of the NC-sponsored resolution will strengthen the executive, while depriving the people of the valley of the safeguards they currently enjoy as citizens of the country.

The difference between "strengthening the executive" and "empowering the people" can be useful for impressing upon Western capitals that New Delhi is sensitive to the aspirations for autonomy and that it is opposed to the form of autonomy that has been demanded, not the concept itself. To that end, the government will once again reiterate its commitment to implement the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission, which have been deemed to be adequate for solving the need for autonomy in the rest of the country.

The effort will ensure that the resentments in the ruling alliance over the action of Mr Farooq Abdullah in getting the resolution adopted is not reflected in the formal response of the Cabinet.

The resolution came as a shock to the government since Mr Abdullah had promised the Prime Minister during a meeting last week that the Assembly would merely discuss the resolution.



WELCOMING COMMITTEE: Union home minister L.K. Advani has a word with finance minister Yashwant Sinha as they wait for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's arrival from Portugal at Palam airport on Friday. PTI

AD-1
1/2

Ladakh Council adopts resolution seeking separation from J&K

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 30. Close on the heels of the autonomy resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Monday, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) today adopted another resolution seeking complete separation from the State. Immediately, the Nation Conference Government, headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah, described the resolution as "unconstitutional and illegal."

In a significant development, the 30-member general council of LAHDC passed a resolution unanimously seeking separation from J & K in the event of restoration of the pre-1953 position to the State. Interestingly, all the three members of the National Conference (NC) on the council supported the move. The resolution was moved by Mr. Rigzan Spalbar, council representative from Lama Yaru constituency and seconded by Mr. Tashi Choktan.

The resolution said "The adoption of the resolution in J & K Assembly on June 26 seeking restoration of the pre-1953 position has come as a rude shock to the public of Ladakh. This is mischievous and aimed at gradual secession of the State from the Union of India. Restoration of the pre-1953 position will not only endanger the nation's security and integrity but will pose a threat to very existence of distinctive ethnic cultural identity of Ladakhi's, Dogris, Pandits,

Gujjar and others ethnic minorities in the State. In the circumstances, I move the resolution demanding complete separation from J & K in the form of a union territory." The Congress(I)-dominated LAHDC has 30 members of whom four are nominated. Three members belong to the ruling NC.

Mr. K. B. Jandial, Director of Information told *The Hindustan* that the resolution was not on the agenda and the meeting was called for discussing the plan. The Deputy Commissioner of Leh, who is also chief executive officer and secretary of LAHDC, walked out of

Jammu bandh against autonomy: Page 14
Mufti's call for talks: Page 15

the meeting in protest. "It has no sanctity and is unconstitutional and illegal. It has not been recorded anywhere by the CEO," Mr. Jandial said.

The LAHDC came into existence in 1995 and is due for elections by the end of August. The LAHDC chairman, Mr. Thupstan Chhewang said: "We are not against autonomy to J & K but, in that case we want separation from the State as it will weaken the country's unity." He admitted that the resolution had not been on the agenda but the members demanded it. Kargil rejected the autonomous council in 1995 and decided to be part of Kashmir.

THE HINDU

1 JUL 2000

Bandh in Jammu, Ladakh against autonomy resolution

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, July 1. — Jammu was shut down for the third day today.

The region observed a total bandh, called by the Jammu Joint Students Federation, in protest against the autonomy resolution and in support of the region's demand for statehood. The JJSF is a constituent of the People's Initiative on Peace and Unity.

Ladakh too observed a complete bandh called by the Ladakh Buddhist Association, demanding Union territory status.

Various regional and national parties supported the bandhs. Massive demonstrations and rallies were held in the two regions.

A huge procession started from Jammu's Exhibition Ground shouting anti-Farooq and anti-BJP slogans. Effigies of the chief minister and copies of the autonomy report were burnt. The protesters demanded immediate division of the state into four parts, the sacking of Union home minister Mr LK Advani and the arrest of Dr Farooq Abdullah.

The Farooq Abdullah government today termed the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development



Dr Farooq Abdullah

Council's resolution in favour of a Union Territory status to Ladakh as "illegal". The issue is bound to generate much heat. Ladakh has already been witnessing strong protests against the autonomy move.

The government spokesman said the resolution was moved only after the Secretary Chief Executive Officer had left the meeting. A resolution moved and adopted in the absence of the Secretary CEO has no sanctity.

Addressing the rally in Jammu, JJSF president Mr Rajinder Jamwal said national parties have always ignored the genuine aspirations of Jammu and Ladakh regions. Successive governments have sup-

pressed the popular voice of discontent here to appease a section of elite Kashmiris.

In Ladakh, the LBA chief, Mr T Samphel, said Ladakhis would continue their agitation till their demand for Union territory status was conceded. Traffic stayed off the roads and all government offices reported thin attendance in Leh.

Shahtoosh ban: The Cabinet has approved, in principle, the proposal to ban shahtoosh trade. The decision flows from the ban on the trade at the national and international level. But the Cabinet will request the Centre to provide a one-time exemption for sale of shahtoosh stocks before the ban comes into force.

THE STATESMAN

2 JUL 2000

Thakre raises autonomy wall for PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 1. — As the Prime Minister took the first steps towards formulating the Centre's stand on Jammu and Kashmir's greater autonomy demand, the BJP today stuck to its opposition to the resolution passed by the Assembly.

The issue will be debated but Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee reportedly said the Centre would not accept a return to the pre-1953 status.

A day after returning from Europe, Mr Vajpayee went into a huddle with Mr LK Advani to work out the implications of

the autonomy demand. BJP chief, Mr Kushabhau Thakre, had a meeting with the two.

Mr Thakre expressed the party's opposition to the autonomy step and is believed to have referred to the BJP's campaign seeking abolition of Article 370. Earlier this week, he had described the autonomy resolution as a 'retrograde step'.

During the two-hour meeting, Mr Thakre said the resolution was an invitation to another partition. After the meeting, he said Mr Vajpayee and Mr

Advani had been apprised of the party line.

"This proposal is wrong and against national interest. It will open the way for the country's division and would not benefit Kashmir either." Mr

Thakre said the BJP would fight tooth and nail any move to restore the pre-1953 status.

Mr Thakre said the Supreme Court, poll panel and CAG's jurisdiction had been extended to the state over five decades and should not be reviewed. But it was for the council of ministers

to take the final decision.

Farooq regret: Mr Farooq Abdullah regretted the "propaganda" on autonomy, saying the package contained nothing to weaken Centre-state ties. Fears about autonomy were based on "misgivings and lack of appreciation of historical facts", he said in Srinagar today, adds PTI.

"We're not asking for the moon. If the Centre is not ready to restore our eroded autonomy, what else does it have to offer to the people of J&K?" he said. "I won't stay in power even for a second if that helps end the gun culture."

On page 10

- Read a palm, read J&K
- Jammu, Ladakh bandh
- UP CM may be axed

THE STATESMAN

• 2 JUL 2000

Three former PMs against dividing J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 1. Three former Prime Ministers today favoured devolution of power but strongly opposed any move to divide Jammu and Kashmir on the lines of religion, ethnicity or language.

While Mr. I. K. Gujral suggested that the 1975 Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord be made the basis of efforts to find a solution, Mr. V. P. Singh opposed any unilateral move on Jammu and Kashmir and favoured a negotiated settlement that would be binding on all concerned parties, and Mr. S. Chandra Shekhar criticised the Prime Minister and the Home Minister for saying the Government would consider the issue of autonomy.

Mr. Gujral and Mr. Singh were the main speakers at a panel discussion on "Peaceful solution to Jammu and Kashmir problem," organised by the Mahashya Bhagwan Dass Sarvodaya Trust here, while Mr. Chandra Shekhar delivered the inaugural address at a seminar on national security.

Warning that the statements of Mr. A. B. Vajpayee and Mr. L. K. Advani on the Centre discussing the autonomy issue would encourage similar demands in other States, Mr. Chandra Shekhar said the two leaders should have clearly stated that such issues were not negotiable. Without naming the ruling National Democratic Alliance, he said partners in a coalition should speak in one voice on important issues. Words such as accountability, transparency and the right to information might sound impressive but could not be applied to matters on national security, he added.

Making out a strong case for treating the present situation in the wake of autonomy resolution in Jammu and Kashmir as "our internal affair", Mr. Gujral emphasised that the people of Kashmir were as much part of Indian democracy as anyone else.

Emphasising that Article 370, granting special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was a guarantee of finality of accession of the State, Mr. Gujral criticised the parties who have been "expediency oriented" towards it. While favouring devolution of power to the State, he cautioned that it should be accompanied by safeguards for the people. "Some institutions like the Supreme Court and the Election Commission are safeguards of the people. We have to see that nobody transgresses these institutions."

Deriding self-proclaimed experts who carry solutions to any problem in their pockets, Mr. V. P. Singh favoured "earnest, wide and broad-based dialogue" to find a solution to the problem.

THE HINDU

RSS rejects J&K autonomy resolution

Rathin Das

Koba (Gandhinagar), July 2

HR 12 BT

PROCEEDING ON predictable lines, the two-day meeting of the RSS leadership described the autonomy resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly as fraught with dangerous consequences.

The meeting of the RSS Akhil Bharatiya Karyakari Mandal (All India Executive Committee) vehemently opposed the autonomy resolution and urged the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance Government to stop it from implementation.

Briefing newsmen after the conclusion of the meet at this village near the state capital, Joint General Secretary Madandasji said such a serious situation would not have arisen if Article 370 were abrogated earlier.

He said even before the autonomy resolution, Hindus had to leave the Valley and become refugees in their own country. The RSS spokesman said that the idea of two Prime

Ministers, two laws and two apex courts would not be acceptable.

The resolution on Kashmir autonomy observed that it would give encouraging signals

**'Even before the
autonomy resolution,
Hindus had to leave the
Valley and become
refugees in their own
country.'**

to separatist forces in the country, especially in the North-East. The RSS document stated that the autonomy proposal was not acceptable to the people of Ladakh and the Centre must reject the resolution.

Madandasji also said that dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah Ministry or removal of National Conference from the NDA were not demanded in the resolution, but these would be the viable options.

Besides the resolution passed on the Kashmir issue, a resolution was also adopted on what the RSS called the mischievous attempts of church leaders to defame the Hindu organisations.

It termed most of the incidents of atrocities on Christian minorities as fake and concocted. It said that a hue and cry over these incidents was raised to malign the Sangh and demoralise the Hindu society.

The RSS also wondered why the Government had become apologetic about the reported incidents of atrocities. "It is only when the victim happens to be a Christian, the tragedy becomes communalised," the resolution noted.

The RSS leadership observed that the policy of economic liberalisation had led to an increase in the rich-poor gap apart from increasing unemployment.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUL 2000

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TNP Autonomy Bazaar

On-board prime-ministerial press conferences have their uses. After the rigours of a trip abroad, where the PM and the accompanying press corps have to be on their best behaviour, the face-to-face is an excuse to unwind. The hacks are happy because a captive PM entirely at their disposal is a rare opportunity; they can rest assured that what they send home will hit the morrow's headlines. In the event, Atal Behari Vajpayee spoke about the J&K autonomy resolution which is anyway the hottest topic currently. However, what emerges from this on-board exercise is more confusion than clarity. On the J & K assembly resolution, Home Minister L K Advani had said last week that it was for Parliament to take a view. Mr Vajpayee — remember he's a tad out of touch with domestic politics? — makes no mention of Parliament. Further, the prime minister insists that the resolution will be considered only within the Indian Constitution. To the best of our knowledge, nothing in the state autonomy committee report or anything Farooq Abdullah has said till today, suggests that autonomy means going out of the four corners of the Constitution. So why this unrequired emphasis? There's also some amount of hair-splitting on what exactly Mr Abdullah told Mr Vajpayee when the former abandoned the autonomy session in Srinagar for a quick dash to Delhi. The prime minister submits he had no idea Mr Abdullah was going ahead with the adoption of the resolution. Mr Abdullah, on the other hand, has been quoted in a variety of media as affirming that Mr Vajpayee knew what was coming. Also that he, Farooq Abdullah, was known to play straight — someone who doesn't believe in fudging.

A politician who doesn't believe in fudging? Give us a break. In fact, the only inference all this quibbling allows is that a lot of people are playing a lot of games. Mr Vajpayee's problem is that he is at once party leader and head of government. In one role, he has to appease a BJP flock that is hostile to the idea of autonomy. In the second, he has to cast himself in the mould of statesman: reasonable and willing to go the extra mile. Mr Abdullah is in a similar bind. He upped the autonomy ante in response to his MLAs. Besides, he knew autonomy was his only weapon against talks between the Centre and the Hurriyat. Having taken the plunge, however, he would rather the ball stayed in centre-court. That way he can tell the people of the Valley that he did his best for them, and yet try and avoid the prospect of Jammu and Ladakh seceding from Kashmir on the question of autonomy. Indeed, following the autonomy moves, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council has formally demanded separation from the state. Unfortunately, in all this mess, it is the people of J & K who once again look like being taken for a ride. Autonomy, separation, azadi, these buzz words have been bandied about so much and in so many different quarters that soon they will cease to have any meaning. The more our politicians put off attending to the fundamental problem of alienation, especially in the Valley, the more likely a solution will elude them.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 JUL 2000

Resolution not a first step to secession, clarifies Farooq

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 2 JULY

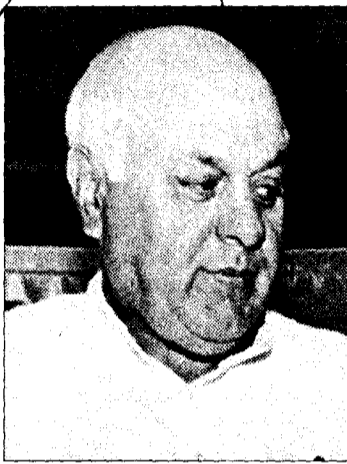
JAMMU & KASHMIR chief minister Farooq Abdullah continued to come under attack over the autonomy issue although he clarified that the resolution of the Assembly was not the first step towards secession of the state.

Mr Abdullah said in Coimbatore that the accession of J&K to India was "final and irrevocable" and called for building a consensus on the autonomy issue. "We do not want to secede from India and we are not for any confrontation with the Centre on the autonomy issue," he told reporters.

He sought to play down the radical nature of the resolution by making it appear as just another demand from states for more powers and a "true" federal structure.

The clarification did not save him from fresh attacks. The Congress said that it was against even a Parliament discussion on the resolution. At the other end of the political spectrum, the RSS accused the National Conference government of working for secession. It called upon the Centre to be ready to take all necessary measures, including dismissal of the Abdullah government, for thwarting his plan. RSS, which debated the matter at a meeting of its key decision-making body at Gandhinagar, took the view that the situation was not such as to warrant the use of Article 356 straightway.

Mr Abdullah was unlikely to get support even from the regional parties that have traditionally been in the forefront of the "power to the states" campaign. Today, almost all of them — Akali Dal, DMK, TDP and MDMK — said they disagreed with the content of the resolution.



Farooq: Playing defensive

The government itself has taken a lot of flak from the Opposition. On Saturday, three former Prime Ministers — Mr Chandrasekhar, Mr V.P. Singh and Mr I.K. Gujral — chose a seminar to accuse the government of being indulgent towards the Abdullah government.

The attacks are unlikely to cease since the government cannot turn down the demand for autonomy outright. Although the fate of the resolution is sealed, the government has to put up a show of reasonableness. It is aware that the support it has lately been getting from influential capitals in the dispute with Pakistan has a string attached to it. The solidarity with India over the question of terrorism is premised on the expectation that New Delhi would take steps to redress the grievances of Kashmiris, particularly the Muslim population in the Valley.

The West, over the past one year or so, starting from the aggression in Kargil, has become more cognisant of Pakistan's role in fomenting secessionism in the name of Jihad. But it is also aware of the domestic dimension — namely, the aspirations for autonomy. This makes it difficult for the

Centre to turn its face against the resolution without making out a case for rejecting it. A peremptory rejection cannot bode well for the government which says it will engage the Hurriyat in a dialogue — an exercise the West seems to be looking forward to with interest.

The bind the government is in was visible on Sunday when Union defence minister George Fernandes refused to take a position either way on the resolution. Mr Fernandes was present when the NDA units decided to reject the resolution at a meeting here on Saturday evening. Ministers belonging to BJP also find themselves constrained to endorse the attack on the resolution by colleagues in the organisation.

On Saturday, party president Kushabhau Thakre decided to discard his trade mark restraint and reticence as he launched a scathing attack on the Abdullah government. Inside J&K, BJP is spearheading an agitation against the Abdullah government. The NC has not concealed its suspicion that the resolution adopted last week by the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council, demanding "independence" from Srinagar had been inspired by the Centre.

The issue has created a heavy workload for the government. In the next fortnight or so, it has to take many crucial decisions. It is obvious that the Cabinet will discuss the issue soon. The timing of an all-party meeting — another certainty — will also be decided soon. Then there is another vital question — should the resolution be brought before Parliament or tackled at the level of the Cabinet? This is not going to be an easy decision to take. Diplomatic compulsions may require the government to rationalise the inevitable rejection by blaming it upon the "sovereign will of Parliament."

I am not for confrontation: Farooq

By Our Special Correspondent

COIMBATORE, JULY 2. "Kashmir's accession to India is final and irrevocable," the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said here today.

Answering questions on the demand for autonomy, he said, "we never said we want to weaken the Central Government or that we want to secede from India." "We want true federalism within the framework of the Constitution and whatever we want is within the framework of the Constitution." He said there was "no true federalism" in India. States must have more powers as weak States could not help make a strong Central Government, he

said and pointed out that federalism was working very well in countries such as Australia, Canada and the United States. The State's autonomy had been taken away 50 years ago. "We want it restored. We have put up a document on the autonomy before the Centre and the time has come to discuss the issue."

Pointing out that he was not for any confrontation with the Centre, he spoke in favour of a cordial discussion. "Either we convince you or you convince us," he said and pleaded for a national debate.

Asked whether he would prefer a referendum on the issue, he said it was not required at the moment adding "we have placed the demand before the Centre. Let it discuss with

other parties and evolve a consensus."

After all it was for this demand that the late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi appointed the Sarkaria Commission and whose report was gathering dust, he said. To a question whether his views would trigger similar demands from other States, he said all the States were part of India and none wanted to get out of it.

When pointed out that the BJP was stoutly opposed to his demand, he said, "they were never in favour of it. They wanted abrogation of Article 370 itself." On the resolution passed by the Ladakh Council for secession from the State, he said the council comprised just two districts of which one supported autonomy.

More reports on Pages 14, 15

THE HINDU

- 3 JUL 2000

Initiate debate on autonomy: Farooq

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, JULY 3. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, demanded here on Monday that a national debate should be initiated on granting autonomy to the State, and added that a solution had to be found within the framework of the Constitution.

He told presspersons that the resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly in this regard was within the framework of the Constitution, and it followed the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission. The people of the State would not stop demanding autonomy even if Parliament rejected the resolution, he added.

Dr. Abdullah said the people aspired for autonomy to the State. The successive governments at the Centre had promised more autonomy to the State. Parliament also did so. The promises made by the Congress(I) government led by Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, and the United Front government at the Centre also did not materialise. The latter even included it in its election manifesto. Once in power, the United Front failed to fulfill the

promise, he added. To a question about reports that he had raked up the demand for autonomy to prevent talks between the Centre and the Hurriyat leaders, he said that such a rumour was "malicious", and alleged that Pakistan was supplying money and arms to them. "A section of the Hurriyat wants to give Kashmir to Pakistan. Another section wants complete independence from India," he added.

Dr. Abdullah said that States should be given greater autonomy. The concept of federalism with more powers to States had been working well in the U.S. and Canada. "We did enjoy that kind of power 50 years ago. We want that to be restored. The time has come for a national debate on autonomy," he added.

Referring to the objections raised by the Kashmiri pandits against the resolution, he said a member of his Cabinet, who was a member of that community, had supported the autonomy resolution.

He dismissed the criticism that the resolution was an attempt at "balkanisation" of the country, and added that Jammu and Kashmir would remain a part of India. The accession

treaty between the State and India was "irrevocable".

Ridiculing the criticisms by the Shiva Sena Chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray, and the RSS against the resolution, Dr. Abdullah said the RSS had advocated abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, and had been unleashing terror on the minorities, particularly Muslims. He expressed the fear that Muslims would be targeted by such groups in the wake of the resolution.

Condemning cross-border terrorism, he appealed for international pressure on Pakistan to put an end to its activities in India and Bangladesh. He hoped that Parliament would accept the resolution, and appealed to all political parties to start a debate on the issue of autonomy to States.

Dr. Abdullah was in Bangalore in connection with the opening of the second branch of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank Limited in the City.

A few persons holding black flags raised slogans against Dr. Abdullah soon after the function.

THE HINDU

4 JUL 2000

Govt set to reject J&K resolution

4/7 HPI
Farooq stance may derail
Vajpayee's devolution plan

'Rejection by
Parliament
won't deter us'

Jay Raina
New Delhi, July 3

THE VAJPAYEE Government has almost made up its mind to reject the controversial autonomy resolution that in effective terms, seeks a wholesale dismantling of the Constitutional arrangement to pave the way for restoration of the pre-1953 position in sensitive Jammu and Kashmir.

Amid mounting pressure from the Sangh Parivar, including the BJP, which feels that Dr Farooq Abdullah was virtually demanding a confederation of States in the garb of greater autonomy, the Government seems to be left with no option except rejecting "lock, stock and barrel" the Assembly resolution. Even an NDA ally, the Janata Dal (United) today said: "Both J&K and the country have come a long way since the 1952 Delhi Agreement. And, the clock cannot be turned back."

On his part, Dr Abdullah showed no signs of relenting on the autonomy demand. In a strong reaction to the RSS' tough posturing, he termed the Sangh as anti-Muslim: "I hope they never get a chance to rule India as there will be no India left."

The Chief Minister's diatribes against the RSS would only make things more difficult for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who seems to be keen to construct a broad-based political consensus on "greater" devolution of powers to J&K without reverting to the pre-53 status.

But, even to make that possible, the Centre would need adequate time to deliberate with alliance partners and other political formations.

Official sources said any discussion on the nitty-gritty of enhanced decentralisation would require propitious climate, as opposed to the current, highly surcharged atmosphere of attrition. "Such issues require careful considera-

tion and delicate handling, which might not be possible in the prevailing situation," they explained.

The Union Cabinet, which was to have taken up the autonomy resolution this Wednesday, would now meet on July 8, two days after the launch of Dr Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's centenary celebrations.

The Cabinet is also likely to be briefed by Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar on the preliminary findings of the Committee of

'Resolution at PM's behest'

SAMAJWADI PARTY President Mulayam Singh Yadav today alleged that the autonomy resolution passed in the J&K Assembly was brought at the behest of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Union Home Minister L.K. Advani.

"The political ambitions of Mr Abdullah may be the reason behind it, but the BJP was equally responsible for it (autonomy resolution), which is likely to encourage separatist forces in the country," he said.

UNI, Lucknow

Secretaries, which has just started the time-consuming exercise of studying the autonomy report in detail. Chaired by Mr Kumar, the Committee of secretaries, which met for the third time today, deliberated the issue for several hours.

Reliable sources said the Committee would need to dwell upon the subject over the next couple of months before finalising its recommendations. In the light of its terms of reference, the report appeared pre-meditated.

Its mandate was "to devise measures for restoration of autonomy consistent with the Instrument of Accession, Constitutional order-1950 and the subsequent Delhi Agreement-1952".

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah today asserted that the issue over the demand for autonomy for his state "will not end" even if Parliament rejected it.

"How should it matter if Parliament rejects it? We will continue to talk about it (autonomy). It will not end," he said.

He said the demand was a "people's aspiration" and it was Parliament which promised it. "It is not Farooq Abdullah who has promised. It was the great leader Nehru who piloted the bill in Parliament (on the subject)," he said, when asked what he would do if Parliament rejected the Jammu and Kashmir assembly resolution on autonomy.

Mr Abdullah stressed that he wanted a national debate and a consensus on the autonomy issue and added he respected the Constitution of India and was for a solution within the constitutional framework.

Reacting to a question about reports that he had raked up the demand for autonomy to put a spoke in the proposed talks between the Centre and the Hurriyat leaders, he said it was a "malicious rumour".

He made a scathing attack on Hurriyat charging that it was merely "Pakistan-made" and that its leaders were being financed and supplied arms by Pakistan.

"You think Hurriyat is a great panacea to India. Part of Hurriyat wants to give Kashmir to Pakistan. Part of them want independence from India. Go ahead and give them," he said.

"They (the Centre) must talk to them (Hurriyat)" to make the people of India "realise what Hurriyat is all about," Abdullah said.

Asked if the NC would continue to be part of the NDA, he shot back, "What is wrong in being in the NDA?"

PTI, Bangalore

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

4 JUL 2000

ERODE MEET A 'SAFETY VALVE'

BJP wants Cabinet to reject autonomy demand

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 3. The BJP has plans to counter the 'Erode effect' of the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's 'Tamil Awakening' rally yesterday, even as it continues to favour rejection of "autonomy" for Jammu and Kashmir as defined by the National Conference. Senior BJP leaders also believe that the "autonomy" demand by Kashmir will be rejected by the Cabinet itself, and will therefore not be placed before Parliament.

The Cabinet meeting is likely to be held on July 5, after which the Prime Minister and the Home Minister are scheduled to address separate public meetings in Calcutta and Mumbai in connection with the birth centenary celebrations of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, founder of the Jana Sangh. The two can then be expected to strongly denounce the NC's "autonomy" move.

The party has to do some balancing act to extricate itself from a rather sticky situation. Even as its ally in the North, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, demanded "autonomy" for Jammu and Kashmir, in the South, its allies, the MDMK and the PMK, were virtually saying the partition of Sri Lanka with a separate Tamil Eelam was a historical inevitability.

Today, the BJP vice-president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, said the Kashmir Chief Minister's concept of "autonomy" went far beyond any accepted idea of federalism. In fact, "he is confusing federalism with confederalism." He warned that Dr. Abdullah should not try to be "too clever" for the people of this country would arrive at a correct assessment of the sit-

uation. "We are totally opposed to the type of autonomy demanded by the National Conference," the BJP leader said.

The party feels that the Centre did not respond immediately by rejecting the demand as it did not seem the correct thing to do keeping in mind the fact that the Assembly had passed the autonomy resolution. It, therefore, required a formal consideration by the Centre. Given the stand taken by political parties across the spectrum, there was hardly any doubt that the idea would be rejected by the Cabinet.

As for the 'Erode effect', the party's Tamil Nadu national executive is being held in Tiruchi on July 8 and 9. At a public meeting on July 8, the BJP leaders can be expected to "deal" with the after effects of Erode — the attempt to make a hero of Mr. Prabhakaran, the main accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, and the support for a Tamil Eelam.

The party's view is that the Erode rally acted as a safety valve and the presence of the Union Home Minister had a sobering influence on parties all too eager to take up the Eelam cause. From the BJP's point of view, a positive aspect was that the MDMK and the PMK both reiterated that they stood with the Centre on its Sri Lanka policy and they even lauded the approach of the Vajpayee Government on this sensitive issue.

Nevertheless, the party is acutely aware that it cannot denounce autonomy in Kashmir and simultaneously play with secessionist politics in Sri Lanka. It must counter the 'Erode effect', and the enthusiasm for a Tamil Eelam displayed by its allies.

No to pan-Tamil Ideology: Page 14

THE HINDU

4 JUL 2000

'Cabinet decision a non-issue'

Anil Anand
New Delhi, July 4

HF-10
9-81 J&K

THE ALL Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has described the hullabaloo over the J&K Assembly resolution, which the Union Cabinet rejected today, as a 'non-issue' as far as the permanent resolution of the Kashmir problem was concerned.

"We in the Hurriyat attach more significance to the Vajpayee Government's approach on Kashmir and not what Dr Farooq Abdullah does, as the people of Jammu and Kashmir have lost trust in his Government," former APHC chairman Umar Farooq told *The Hindustan Times*.

He said the Hurriyat was not interested in any arrangement aimed at transfer or devolution of more powers.

The dialogue should focus on the core issues and not the grant of greater autonomy, which was "totally irrelevant" in the present context.

Mr Farooq said the APHC never attached any significance to the development as greater autonomy for J&K was never on its agenda.

There was nothing new in the theory propounded afresh by the Chief Minister, he remarked. According to him, Kashmir's autonomy has been systematically

eroded over the years.

Responding to the Cabinet's rejection of the Assembly resolution, Mr Farooq observed that the Kashmiris were clamouring for a permanent solution to the problem, which cannot be achieved through the autonomy route. "When we speak of a solution to the

Kashmir problem, our focus is on the entire State (including parts under Pakistan's occupation). The grant of autonomy touches only a fraction of the problem", he argued.

Hurriyat-speak

The Hurriyat leader further remarked that the APHC would favourably respond to any unconditional offer for talks by the Vajpayee Government provided the proposal reflected a genuine desire on the Centre's part to find a lasting solution to the festering dispute. "It is for New Delhi to reduce its ever-growing dependence on the armed forces and create a congenial atmosphere for a dialogue." Mr Farooq exhorted the Government to start on a positive note and express its willingness to address the core issues of the Kashmir problem. Such an approach would also help the Hurriyat to convince the people of Kashmir about the utility of engaging with the Centre.

Meanwhile, J&K Democratic Forum chairman Bhushan Bazaz has said that Dr Abdullah should have taken all regions of the State into confidence before raking up the autonomy issue.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JUL 2000

BJP likens autonomy demand to Pak's Kargil misadventure

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 4. — The BJP has likened Dr Farooq Abdullah's autonomy demand to Pakistan's misadventure in Kargil. It also criticised the J&K chief minister and his family for holding on to power despite failing to deliver the goods.

Dr Abdullah would be sidelined in national politics just as Pakistan got isolated at the international level after Kargil, the BJP general secretary in-charge of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Narendra Modi, said.

Dr Abdullah had tried to undermine 'the India first spirit,' and resorted to the autonomy plank only to gloss over his government's failure to ensure development in the state, he added.

During 25 years of rule by Dr Abdullah's family, the Centre had released Rs 1.5 lakh crore for Jammu and Kashmir. But the chief minister did not have the face confront voters during the Assembly polls next year. This why he was raising the autonomy demand, Mr Modi said.

51-8
A 57
"Dr Abdullah and his family want to be the sole champions of Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, he cannot accept a rival power centre," he said. Once, the J&K chief minister dear to the whole nation — he worked with leaders from all political parties — the



Mr Farooq Abdullah

Congress, the BJP, the Left and the Janata Dal. But his demand for greater autonomy, would leave him isolated. Even VP Singh had opposed his demand, Mr Modi said.

Dr Abdullah's claim that he could have been Prime

Minister had he been in Pakistan and his warning "don't push me to the wall" would see him forfeit the respect he used to command, Mr Modi said.

The BJP leader criticised the way the autonomy resolution was piloted in the Assembly, and said the chief minister had begun talking about the autonomy report only when he was cornered by his political opponents on lack of development in the state.

When the report was first placed during the budget session, 22 MLAs from the region, including some from the National Conference, opposed the move. Dr Abdullah then had to convene a special session of the Assembly in Srinagar and issue a whip, though the National Conference enjoyed a two-thirds majority in the House. This was gross abuse of arithmetic, he said.

This reflected the chief minister's shortsightedness. He should have realised that the autonomy resolution was against the will of the people of Ladakh, Jammu and even Srinagar, Mr Modi said.

THE STATESMAN

BJP: National consensus for rejecting autonomy demand

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 4

THE BJP today expressed satisfaction at the Union Cabinet's rejection of the autonomy resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, saying there was virtually a consensus in opposing the return of pre-1953 status for the State.

"We welcome the Cabinet's decision to reject the demand as it will put an immediate stop to similar demands from other quarters and check fissiparous tendencies," BJP vice-president J P Mathur said.

He said the Cabinet's rejection of the autonomy demand did not bar a separate discussion across the country on devolution of powers for all the States.

A number of senior BJP leaders said the Cabinet's decision without any further delay had prevented the opening up of a Pandora's box. With most other parties including the Congress opposed to the

autonomy demand, there was no need for any debate in Parliament on the issue," a party leader said.

Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's decision

ful purpose would have delaying announcement of the demand.

Some BJP officials said taken by the party a Sangh Parivar had had the Government, which appeared to be pro-confrontationist course.

The top brass of the party reportedly conveyed to the Government and the Home Ministry that the Government nor the Government should dilly dally on the matter. They only encourage the Government in the Kashmir Valley.

Meanwhile, Jammu Chief Minister Farooq Ahmad Khan Noon yesterday charged the Government, which came under pressure from a senior BJP leader, with only Muslim fundamentalism represented by the Government's Autonomy Resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

at soon after the Government realised that the benefits of the demand were unequal.

'Autonomy is balkanisation'

WELCOMING THE Cabinet's decision, BJP president Kushabhau Thakre on Tuesday said the Autonomy Resolution, if accepted, had the dangerous potential of sowing the seed of secessionism and ultimate balkanisation of the country.

In a statement here, he said the Indian Constitution strikes a right balance between regional aspirations and national integrity.

HTC, New Delhi

to summon the Cabinet without any further time-lapse drew support from many hard-line BJP leaders, who were upset that the Government had quickly rejected the demand.

They said since the Government's options on the issue were limited, no gain-

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JUL 2000

Voices from Kashmir

Autonomy is the Answer to Azadi

By MANOJ JOSHI

THE performance has been masterly. With the J&K legislative assembly as his prop, and a return to the pre-1952 status as his demand, Farooq Abdullah has taken the debate in Kashmir back from the proponents of azadi to the issue of autonomy. In the process, he has drawn a Lakshman rekha that both the Hurriyat and the Union government will find difficult to cross.

Kashmiri members were part of the constituent assembly that drafted the Indian Constitution that came into force in 1950. Its Article I declared the state an integral part of the Indian Union, though a temporary Article 370 conferred upon it a special status that was to be there till the state created its own constitution and assembly to legally define its relationship with the Union. At this time, the powers of the Indian Union in Jammu and Kashmir were limited to defence, external affairs, and communications. The state was ruled by an interim government of which the Sheikh was the Prime Minister and the Prince-regent Karan Singh the Sadr-e-Riyasat or head of state.

In 1951, elections were held to create an assembly to evolve a constitution for Jammu and Kashmir. Even as this constituent assembly was underway, New Delhi decided to clarify its relations with Kashmir. A delegation headed by Mirza Afzal Beg, including D P Dhar and Syed Mir Qasim arrived in Delhi and had intense talks with the Indian government. Later, Sheikh Abdullah joined his team and Pandit Nehru invited members of the opposition to participate in the talks.

The result was the Delhi agreement of July 24, 1952. The agreement enshrined the unique relationship of the state with the Indian Union and the exceptional powers its legislature had in comparison to those of other Indian states. The power of the President to declare emergency in the state could only be exercised at the request of, or in concurrence with, the legislature. The head of the state would be called the Sadr-e-Riyasat who would be nominated by the President only after a recommendation of the legislative assembly. Several other privileges of the state were yet to be defined since the state had not yet worked out its constitution.

Within a year, however, Ne-

and Abdullah fell out. Many Indian political leaders including Panditji and Maulana Azad began to believe that the Sheikh was working on his own agenda of creating an independent Kashmir. On the night of August 8th 1953, he was placed under detention and his deputy, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed, appointed Prime Minister in his place.

The third effort to deal with the vexed issue of Kashmir's relationship with India came in 1975. After more than two decades in custody, the Sheikh was confronted with a new situation. The Simla Agreement of 1972 indicated that India and Pakistan were close to an agreement on dividing the state. It was time for him to make his own peace with New Delhi. Negotiations between Mirza Afzal Beg and G Parthasarthy began in 1974 and culminated in the 1975

state's constitution of 1956 and even beyond the Nehru-Abdullah Agreement of 1952. Farooq's demand is part survival strategy, part continuance of the Abdullah family's enigmatic relationship with India and part anodyne for the bleeding Valley.

One great virtue of the proposals is to mark out clearly the territory between what the secessionists of the Hurriyat want and what the Indian state can concede. No Indian government can accept *azadi* or for that matter merger with Pakistan. Indian leaders from Nehru to Narasimha Rao have been inclined to give the Kashmiris all the usable autonomy they want. But the devil has lain in the details that have since been roiled by an insurgency which has taken the lives of thousands of Kashmiris and torn apart the social and political fabric of the Valley. But the core issue is not formal self-government, described by clauses of a constitutional or legal document, but concession to a sentiment, such as the one expressed in 1952 in the Sheikh's desire to retain the state's flag and describe the head of government as 'Prime Minister', even while accepting Indian sovereignty.

It is no one's case that the pre-'52 position is actually attainable. History like a river cannot flow backwards. The challenge is to finesse a solution that will be acceptable to the broad cross-section of opinion in Kashmir and the rest of India.

There is little to be gained from pinning one or the other side on the fine print of some agreement or document. There is also little point arguing or negotiating with those who claim that India is either undemocratic or anti-Muslim. Despite its flaws, India can provide far greater civil and religious freedom to the Kashmiri than either Pakistan or some utopian independent Kashmir. What is required is to determine the bottom-line of the Kashmiri sentiment and synchronise it with the ethos of the secular Indian state. Over the years, in his own erratic way, Farooq Abdullah has shown that he understands this problem, even if he alone has been unable to provide the solution. The Union government must now provide a tactful and sympathetic response to his autonomy demands rather than dismissing them casually.

IN BRIEF

- Farooq Abdullah has shifted the focus from azadi to autonomy
- The 1952 Delhi agreement re-affirmed the unique status of J&K
- The core issue is not self-rule but concession to the sentiment of autonomy
- It is futile to hold talks with separatists

agreement that the relationship between India and Kashmir would be governed by Article 370, whose key provision was that residuary powers remained with the state rather than the Centre. But at the heart of the agreement was an acceptance by the Sheikh that the Indian Parliament would have the power to make laws to prevent the activities of secessionists. New Delhi agreed that legislation that had been adopted by the state after 1953 at the instance of the Union government could be rolled back. The only subject where no compromise was effected was on the Sheikh's demand that the state have the right to address its head of government as Prime Minister and its head of state as Sadr-e-Riyasat.

Now, a quarter century later, the Sheikh's son seemingly wants the clock turned back, beyond the Beg-Parthasarthy Accord, the

Text of Cabinet decision H.D. 5 on J&K autonomy resolution 577

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. The following is the Union Cabinet's response to the resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir State Assembly on June 26, urging that the pre-1953 constitutional position in the State be restored:

The Government is committed to the promotion of federal harmony by ensuring a partnership of the Centre and the States as laid down in the National Agenda for Governance of the National Democratic Alliance.

The National Agenda for Governance of the NDA states in no uncertain terms that "there is a clear case for devolution of more financial and administrative powers and functions to the States." It further says that "suitable steps will be taken to ensure harmonious Centre-State relations in the light of the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission..." In the last two years, the Government had taken several steps in this direction.

The government reaffirms its commitment to continuing its endeavour to evolve a broad consensus on the implementation of steps for wide-ranging devolution of powers to the State that leads to efficiency in administration, acceleration in development and the fullest realisation of the creative potential of all sections of our people. The setting up of a Commission to review the Constitution is also a step in this direction.

In the above context, the Cabinet finds the resolution passed by the State Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir endorsing the report of the State Autonomy Committee unacceptable. The Cabinet feels that the acceptance of this resolution would set the clock

back and reverse the natural process of harmonising the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir with the integrity of the nation.

Most of the recommendations contained in the report of the State Autonomy Committee seek to reverse the application of constitutional provisions to the State of Jammu and Kashmir which may not only adversely affect the interests of the people of the State but would also tantamount to removal of some of the essential safeguards enshrined in our Constitution. Besides, the issue of restoring the constitutional situation in Jammu and Kashmir to its pre-1953 position had been discussed in detail by Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1974-75. It is noteworthy that the agreement signed after these negotiations had affirmed that "provisions of the Constitution of India already applied to the State of Jammu and Kashmir without adaptation or modification are unalterable."

The Cabinet urges the people and the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to join hands in the endeavour to address the real problems facing the State: to root out insurgency and cross-border terrorism and to ensure accelerated development. The Centre will continue to provide all possible assistance for attaining these objectives.

The cabinet, therefore, decides not to accept the resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on the report of the State Autonomy Committee. The Government is of the firm conviction that national integration and devolution of powers to States must go together. — PTI

THE HINDU

CENTRE FAVOURS MORE POWERS TO STATES

Union Cabinet rejects J&K autonomy resolution

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. The Union Cabinet has rejected as "unacceptable" the June 26 resolution (the so-called autonomy resolution) of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, though at the same time committing itself to a greater "devolution of powers" to all States. The Cabinet found the June 26 resolution unacceptable because essentially it was "a plea for restoration of the pre-1953" status to the State.

The Cabinet, which met this morning, was unanimous in its judgment that the June 26 resolution could not be accepted, fully or even partially, because it "would set the clock back and reverse the natural process of harmonising the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir with the integrity of the nation."

Interestingly enough, the Cabinet chose to detail its response to

Will NC pull out?: Page 13
Text of decision: Page 15

the June 26 resolution in a statement, released by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, at a press conference in the afternoon. Mr. Advani pointed out that the State Autonomy Committee report (which the June 26 resolution recommends) questioned the "very constitutionality" of the post-1953 developments, including the 42 Presidential Orders passed since then in exercise of Article 370 of the Constitution of India. If the SAC report were to be accepted, these Presidential Orders would be deemed, as per Mr. Advani's understanding, "illegal".

The Home Minister specifically pointed out that the Cabinet statement had noted that the 1975 Sheikh Abdullah-Indira

Gandhi agreement carried in it an implicit rejection of the option of wholesale restoration of the pre-1953 "constitutional situation" in Jammu and Kashmir. In particular, the Cabinet statement recorded that the 1975 agreement had affirmed that "provisions of the Constitution of India already applied to the State of Jammu and Kashmir without adaptation or modification are unalterable."

Striking a stance of reasonableness, Mr. Advani also noted that the 1975 agreement did concede that the State Assembly could request the Centre to rescind certain decisions and laws passed between 1953 and 1974, and that the Centre was obliged to "con-

sider sympathetically" any such request. But there was no scope, according to Mr. Advani, for rendering inapplicable the 42 Presidential Orders. The Home Minister's remarks underlined the irony that while the BJP was now professing itself to be not irrevocably committed to its demand that Article 370 be revoked, the SAC report suggested that this constitutional provision had become the sole cause for erosion of the State's autonomy.

The Cabinet statement insisted that "the Government is of the firm conviction that national integration and devolution of powers to States must go together." Nonetheless, the Cabinet talks of

its commitment to work for "wide-ranging devolution of powers to the States that leads to efficiency in administration, acceleration in development and the fullest realisation of the creative potential of all sections of people." In other words, the Cabinet posits a linkage between devolution of powers and certain expectations in terms of governance. Specifically about Jammu and Kashmir, the Cabinet wants the people and the State government "to join hands in the endeavour to address the real problems facing the State: to root out insurgency and cross-border terrorism; and to ensure accelerated development."

BJP happy, Cong. finds Govt. 'guilty'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. The autonomy resolution of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly may have been rejected unanimously by the Union Cabinet today, but the issue, it seems, will not simply go away as political parties have reacted differently to the manner in which the Government has dealt with the tricky issue.

While the BJP welcomed the decision and virtually warned the National Conference not to play with fire, the Left parties felt the issue, and not the resolution, ought to have been discussed properly, perhaps at an all-party meeting. The Congress(I), on the other hand, found the Government "guilty by association" with

the NC, and noted that others who had joined the "autonomy" demand were "all friends of the BJP."

The CPI's view was that the peremptory manner in which the Cabinet dealt with the issue would send the wrong signal to the State's people: that the Centre was not interested in discussing a possible resolution of the problem. Mr A. B. Bardhan, party general secretary, said the issue was not the resolution on autonomy as passed by the Assembly, but the serious one of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir. The CPI(M) politburo is expected to give its views tomorrow, but a spokesperson said the party favoured greater autonomy for the State within the framework of Article 370.

In the BJP's view, with the Cabinet having rejected the resolution, the issue would not be taken to Parliament, at least not by the Government. Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, party vice-president, hoped that the Chief Minister and NC leader, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, would not rake up the issue again. "He should understand and appreciate the Cabinet decision. That would be in the true spirit of democracy." His party colleague, Mr. J. P. Mathur, was more unsparing, saying "Dr. Abdullah was acting like the forces which brought about Partition along communal lines."

In a statement issued in Chennai, the AIADMK leader, Ms. Jayalalitha, demanded that the Government be

sacked" for raising an issue that could only endanger national unity and that the BJP had taken a too casual, free-for-all attitude towards an issue concerning the very integrity of the nation. Her view was echoed by the Panthers Party president, Mr. Bhim Singh.

The Congress(I) felt vindicated that the Cabinet had rejected the autonomy resolution but pointed out that the issue exposed many contradictions in the Government's stand. It could not be ignored that the NC was an "integral constituent of the National Democratic Alliance," Mr. Ajit Jogi, party spokesperson, noted, and that a partner in the coalition at the Centre "passed a completely unsustainable and untenable resolution."

RECEIVED

THE HINDU

5 JUL 2000

Cabinet rejects J&K autonomy demand

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 4. — The Union Cabinet today rejected the demand for greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, pointing out that its acceptance would "set the clock back".

"It was not just a question of autonomy or greater powers but a plea to the Centre to restore the pre-1953 status," Mr LK Advani told reporters. Though the home minister evaded questions on what would happen next, government sources said the matter had ended at least for now as far as the Centre was concerned.

Dr Farooq Abdullah met the Prime Minister before the meeting. "I think he anticipated the decision," Mr Advani said.

(The J&K chief minister termed the Cabinet decision as "unfortunate" and hasty, but scotched speculations that the National Conference would retaliate by withdrawing from the NDA, adds PTI.

(Two J&K ministers said the autonomy report would be taken up again in the Assembly and the central working committee of the NC would meet in Srinagar in a couple of days to review the future strategy, adds UNI.

The state law and parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pyare Lal Handoo, and the food and civil supplies minister, Mr Ajay Sadhotra, said the NC would

FAROOQ A PATRIOT: GEORGE

NEW DELHI, July 4. — Brushing aside questions about the continuance of the National Conference in the NDA, Mr LK Advani said: "Every political party in an alliance has its own views; it can try to persuade others." Mr George



Mr LK Advani

Fernandes told **The Statesman**: "He (Dr Farooq Abdullah) is a patriot. He will not do anything that will hurt the nation." Asked why the resolution was passed, he said: "Sometimes people become prisoners of their own decisions." He acknowledged that it was now difficult to prevent a discussion on autonomy.

"But there will be nothing beyond that," he said. — SNS



Mr Fernandes

■ Editorial: Coaxing Kashmir, page 6
■ More reports on page 8

fight to the last for autonomy.)

Mr Advani said while the Centre was all for devolution of powers, it wouldn't do anything that weakened the nation.

The Jammu and Kashmir resolution was not just a question of greater powers but a demand to revert to the pre-1953 status, Mr Advani said. Scrapping the jurisdiction of the Election Commission, Supreme Court and the CAG would mean "depriving the people of Jammu and Kashmir the rights available to the rest of the country."

The Cabinet held that most recommendations of the autonomy report sought to reverse the application of constitutional provisions to the state. This might not only affect the interests of the people of the state but was also "tantamount to removal of some essential safeguards enshrined in the Constitution."

The Cabinet felt that "acceptance of the resolution would set the clock back and reverse the natural process of harmonising the aspirations of the people of J&K with the integrity of the nation".

Mr Advani indicated that the Centre would not go for a debate in Parliament unless members demanded. "The decision (rejection of greater autonomy) was unanimous," he said.

The J&K resolution ques-

tioned the constitutionality of the steps taken after 1953. Mr Advani said 42 presidential orders had been issued by virtue of Article 370. "Now it is said that these were illegal."

Admitting that a highly-centralised polity had developed, Mr Advani said the Cabinet had referred to the National Agenda for Governance that provided for promotion of federal harmony by ensuring a partnership between the Centre and states.

"We feel that the Centre has become extra-strong," the home minister said. But there was no question of reverting to the pre-1953 status. Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi held negotiations in 1974-75. The agreement signed after the negotiations had affirmed that "provisions of the Constitution applied to Jammu and Kashmir without adaptation or modification are unalterable," Mr Advani said.

On Article 370, Mr Advani said the autonomy report had sought changes to ensure that it could never be used to extend any provision of the Constitution except those applicable in 1952. Asked about moves to repeal the Article, he said it was not part of the mandate.

Welcoming the decision, the J&K National Panthers Party president, Prof Bhim Singh, said he would sit on a one-day fast to demand the dismissal of the Farooq government.

STATESMAN

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11/11 Hope is collective

IF IT was Farooq Abdullah's purpose to derail the proposed process of conducting a dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders (even before it had commenced) by raising so much hype over the Kashmir autonomy report, then he has nearly succeeded in doing so. At least for the present. So much attention has been riveted on the report that issues relating to other aspects and actors in the Kashmir drama, including the Hurriyat, have been pushed to the background. The Chief Minister too has managed to keep up the pressure on the Centre by turning it into some kind of a *fait accompli* by having the autonomy resolution endorsed by the State Legislature.

In view of the voices of disapproval emanating from a wide spectrum of public opinion in the country, Dr Abdullah has sought to cut a figure of sweet reasonableness by urging a "national debate" on the subject. But such a debate should have preceded its adoption by the Assembly in the first place. The report has not even been adequately opened to public debate within the State. As a result, opinion formers in Ladakh and Jammu have since been voicing their own misgivings over the report's overall design. Such fears were also expressed through a resolution of the Ladakh Autonomous Council.

There are three factors that the Centre has to bear in view while formulating its position. First, no government can accept a report while overruling sub-regional apprehensions and aspirations — such as those voiced in Ladakh and Jammu. An autonomy plan must address their concerns as well. Second, the Centre also has to take into account the bearing of such a report on the overall federal structure of the Union. And most important, it is not a deal to be settled with one particular leader or party in the State — even if that happens to be the ruling party. It must evolve through a process of consultation involving all segments of the population. In fact, the rejection of the autonomy resolution by the Centre should now be turned into a starting point of such an exercise. Delhi must show that just because it does not accept Dr Abdullah's attempts to remain ahead of his rivals, it is not insensitive to the hopes and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

• 5 JUL 2000

Different strokes by Opposition on resolution

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 4

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OPPOSITION PARTIES reacted sharply, though differently, to the Union Cabinet's rejection of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Resolution endorsing the demand of Autonomy for the State.

The Congress asserted the Cabinet decision had vindicated its stand on the J&K Autonomy issue. Left parties felt the Cabinet had too abruptly "disposed off" the issue. The AIADMK wanted the imposition of the President's rule in the State following the passage of the "condemnable resolution".

Congress spokesman Ajit Jogi said the Vajpayee Government was guilty of "gross inconsistency of conduct on a vital and sensitive issue of national significance like J&K". He said the Government's conduct was not only deplorable but "is also a blatant and crude attempt to escape the Government's undeniable guilt by association since the unprecedented resolution was passed by its own integral constituent in the first place."

Criticising the "flip-flop-flip" performance of the Government, Mr Jogi said the Assembly Resolution was completely "unsustainable and

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untenable." In the immediate aftermath of the resolution, "both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister said the Resolution could be considered and discussed, even by Parliament". In yet another somersault, he said, the idea of consideration in Parliament was dropped and the Cabinet took up the issue and rejected it.

CPI (M) Politburo member Prakash Karat said his party maintained that, irrespective of the Cabinet decision, the issue of autonomy had to be discussed. He said "our party has always stood for giving greater autonomy to the State under Article 370."

CPI general secretary A. B. Bardhan said the Cabinet's decision was a "wrong way of disposing a national issue." He said this was not a question of rejecting what Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah was demanding or of accepting what the BJP had stated. This out of hand rejection could send a confrontationist signal.

Mr Bardhan said if the issue of autonomy was to be considered, it should have been discussed at an all-party meeting. Pointing at inconsistencies in the Government's stand, he said the Cabinet had rejected the Kashmir Assembly Resolution while Home Minister L. K. Advani was recently talking about a dialogue with Hurriyat leaders.

In Chennai, AIADMK leader Jayalalitha demanded dissolution of the J&K Assembly following the passage of the Autonomy Resolution. She said if the Centre did not act against the Farooq Abdullah Government, the demand for autonomy would spread like wild fire and lead to the country's fragmentation. The AIADMK leader accused the BJP-led Government of adopting a "free-for-all" approach towards questions concerning the country's integrity.

Her party was steadfast in its commitment to the country's integrity even though it favoured greater devolution of power to the states. Her party believed in the position: "We will not live as slaves, but at no time will we seek separation."

Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party president Bhim Singh said in the interest of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the Farooq Abdullah Government should be dismissed forthwith for free and fair elections. At the same time, he said, Statehood be granted to Jammu province, democracy to Kashmir and status of Union Territory to Ladakh. Mr Singh said the Department of Jammu and Kashmir should be shifted to the Prime Minister's Office to resolve the various problems of the State.

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Unfortunate, says Farooq ⁸⁻⁸⁷_{JK}

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. Before the Union Cabinet rejected the June 26 resolution, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah met the Prime Minister this morning and heard from Mr. Vajpayee the impending decision, which he later termed "unfortunate".

Nonetheless, the Chief Minister was unwilling to burn his bridges with the ruling National Democratic Alliance, just as the Vajpayee establishment was keen on pointing out the moderation of language and tone of the Cabinet statement. It is pointed out that the statement uses the mildest of expressions; there is not even "regret" or condemnation of the National Conference for getting the unacceptable resolution passed. The hope at the highest level of the Central Government is that the NC leadership would notice the firmness of the decision as well as the note of restraint and reasonableness in the Cabinet response.

It is believed that the somewhat hurried response of the Cabinet was decided upon yesterday evening, when the four senior members — Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Advani, Mr. George Fernandes and Mr. Yashwant Sinha — fortuitously met in their capacities as members of the executive committee of the National Defence Fund. The political judgment was

that there was a clearcut national consensus against the June 26 resolution, and that the Cabinet should swiftly move in, lest hawkish voices queer the pitch; the strident noises emanating from the BJP headquarters were most disquieting.

At this morning's Cabinet meeting, except Mr. Manohar Joshi of the Shiv Sena no one advocated a harsh response to Dr. Abdullah's "pre-1953" gambit. Though not a single Cabinet member spoke in favour "autonomy", there was a shared sentiment that Dr. Abdullah was the "best bet" and nothing should be done or said to alienate him. While the DMK and the Trinamool Congress were not in attendance, the Akali Dal as well as the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, felt that even if the "pre-1953" status was not agreeable Dr. Abdullah's political vulnerabilities should be kept in mind.

It is believed that Mr. Vajpayee struck out for a stance of reasonableness; the bottom line, as far as the ruling establishment is concerned, is that there was still room for negotiation between the Centre and the National Conference and other "Kashmiri" voices and that the quantum of autonomy was negotiable. The hope is that irrespective of the Cabinet decision, Dr. Abdullah would be able to engage the country in a lively debate about his party's preference for a certain constitutional arrangement.

THE HINDU

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Vicious Circle

BY J. N. DIXIT

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during the last decade and a half. Dr Abdullah has also been critical of the role of the Indian security forces in maintaining internal security and peace in the State. How this affects the credibility of the Government of India and how Pakistan can utilise this issue for its own purpose are obvious.

Equally important is the likelihood of important foreign powers and the international community accepting the autonomy proposals as the initial basis to evolve a compromise between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Pressure would be generated on India by powers like the US to accept the proposals as a basic framework which can be further improved to defuse the Kashmir issue, which in their minds, contain the seeds of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan.

An equally fundamental concern of our national security is whether India can afford to weaken its links and operational jurisdiction over J&K, given the hostile relations with Pakistan and the continuing spectre of militants from Afghanistan dominating, not only the Valley but also Ladakh, while intruding into Jammu. Acceptance of the proposals could also be a prescription for the trifurcation of J&K, with the Valley alienating itself from the Indian republic over a period of time.

The Government should not accept the recommendations for autonomy suggested by the State Legislature without essential modifications aimed at sustaining the political, jurisdictional and institutional links between the Union and the State.

The initial response from the Government should be that the autonomy proposals have to be discussed not only by the Cabinet and Parliament but all the State Legislatures. This is because any fundamental amendment to the Constitution involves the support of the State Legislatures also. Secondly, it should be suggested that the autonomy recommendations of the J&K Legislature should be considered separately by the people of Jammu and Ladakh. Any proposal for autonomy should have their endorsement also, as they are integral and important constituents of J&K.

In the meanwhile, we should immediately initiate diplomatic and political steps to inform the international community of the serious implications of any precipitate proposals of autonomy, while countering possible Pakistani moves on this crucial development in the J&K Legislature.

took this initiative as a reaction to the Centre's intentions of initiating talks with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, and that he wished to increase his credibility with Kashmiri public opinion by initiating action for autonomy (as promised by him during the last elections) are valid.

But there cannot be any doubt that what he has done is legitimate in terms of his political interests and keeping in view the credibility of his political party. By pushing the autonomy proposals he is also making amends to the setbacks which he suffered after aligning with the Congress in Kashmiri politics in the second half of the Eighties.

However, these proposals also do represent the aspirations of a majority of people in the Kashmir Valley. With Farooq Abdullah pushing this set of proposals, the Union Government should be prepared for the Hurriyat and other secessionist elements putting forward qualitatively higher demands for a separate political identity and status for J&K when negotiations are undertaken with them.

Besides, the people of Ladakh and Jammu are opposed to these autonomy proposals. All those who constitute an important part of the population of J&K and live in areas of strategic importance to India, cannot and should not be ignored while making any new constitutional arrangements relating to the State.

Some of the remarks made by Dr Abdullah in the State Legislature will be utilised by Pakistan to reinvigorate its claims on J&K. Dr Abdullah has said that India has not fulfilled its promise of a plebiscite, that it is moving back from the assurances which it gave at the time of the State's accession to India, etc. These issues have also been part of Pakistani arguments on Kashmir, particularly

would have profound negative implications for the constitutional terms of reference governing the polity of India. Accepting these proposals would involve numerous amendments to the Indian Constitution. Even the three subjects of communications, defence and external affairs, suggested to be retained by the Central Government, cannot be managed without the Centre having responsibilities related to finance, commerce, taxation and so on.

The subject of defence will be prone to doubts in interpretation. Would the jurisdiction over defence be limited only to external aggression or would it also cover internal security? How will the jurisdictional role on defence be defined? How will issues of internal security in J&K be managed? To what extent can the Centre have an entirely separate type of relationship with one of its states in contrast to the relations with the other states as prescribed in the Constitution?

What these autonomy recommendations suggest in effect is the conversion of our federal system into a confederal arrangement. If these suggestions are accepted in their present form, there is every likelihood of other states desiring similar autonomy. It could be the North-East, or even other states, which feel that their growth is stilted because of excessive Central control over their affairs.

L. K. Advani is right, therefore, when he says that the matter should be considered by the Union Cabinet and Parliament. But this is not enough.

Farooq Abdullah has been criticised for pushing the autonomy proposals; that it is an act of political one-up-manship, a self-serving political exercise despite cautionary advice from the Central coalition, of which he is an ally. The criticism that he

THE JAMMU and Kashmir Legislature passed a resolution on June 25, demanding autonomy for the State. Instead of viewing this development with profound concern and trying to understand the implications of the autonomy proposals, endorsed by the National Conference majority in the Assembly, the response of the Centre has been ambiguous. The BJP has rejected the autonomy proposal. So has the Congress. The other political parties have given general endorsement, but they have been ambiguous in articulating their precise views.

First, these autonomy proposals have come up after progressive integration of J&K with India, politically, constitutionally and economically, with the support of the elected provincial legislators of J&K, over a period of 50 years. Secondly, the proposals have to be examined in the context of the Indian stand that J&K is an integral part of India. The autonomy proposals make the macro-level demand that J&K's status vis-a-vis the Union of India should be restored to what it was before 1953.

This status means J&K will have only a limited and more autonomous relationship with the Union of India compared to other States and the Central Government will only have jurisdiction over matters related to defence, external affairs and communications. All India services officials will not be posted to J&K. The State will have a separate civil service over which the Union Home Ministry would have no jurisdiction. Article 356, which empowers the Government to remove a State Government under specific circumstances, will be non-applicable to J&K. The Election Commission will have no jurisdiction in J&K and elections will be held under separate arrangements. Similarly, the Auditor and Comptroller General of India will not have any jurisdiction there.

All the other subjects of governance listed in the Central, concurrent and State lists, except the three subjects mentioned above, will fall exclusively within the jurisdiction of J&K. The State will have its own President with the title of Sadr-e-Riasat. The Chief Minister will be designated Wazir-e-Azam, in effect, as Prime Minister of J&K. All political decisions, orders and procedures which are in force at present but which are not in conformity with the Constitution applicable to J&K till 1950 should be repealed and made inoperative without exception.

If these recommendations are implemented, they



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BY ITS PEREMPTORY and outright rejection of the autonomy resolution by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature, the Vajpayee Government has shown an unseemly hurry to seal its fate, jettisoning the natural and more democratic course of taking it to Parliament for a thorough and substantive discussion on the complex autonomy-related issues. In fact, the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, himself had earlier indicated that the resolution would indeed be placed before Parliament. Apparently, the Government — under relentless pressure from within the BJP and the other Sangh Parivar outfits which in any case are ideologically committed to the scrapping of the Constitutionally-guaranteed special status for the State — found it politically expedient to short-circuit the process by taking advantage of the negative responses the National Conference regime's autonomy demand has evoked from most mainstream parties, whether within the ruling National Democratic Alliance or in the Opposition, not to speak of the vehement protests from the Jammu and Ladakh regions of the State.

The main, if not the sole, ground on which the Vajpayee Cabinet has rejected the resolution as "unacceptable" was that it sought to "set the clock back" by asking for the restoration of the pre-1953 Constitutional position for Jammu and Kashmir vis-a-vis the Centre, as envisaged by the State Autonomy Committee in its report which the Legislature had endorsed. In fact, the 'pre-1953' factor has proved to be the Achilles' heel, so to say, of the autonomy resolution, if the tenor of the criticism is anything to go by. The point that reversion to the pre-1953 status, whatever its rationale or merit otherwise, appears too unrealistic a proposition to concretise at this distance of time can be conceded. For instance, the idea of ousting the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Election Commission is open to question. But then, that cannot be an excuse for rubbishing the entire gamut of autonomy-related issues, so vital

for winning over the people of Kashmir who stand alienated. The Vajpayee Government, while strongly disapproving of the 'pre-1953' line, has failed to come out with a categorical and unambiguous re-affirmation of the nation's historical commitment to autonomy made at the time of Jammu and Kashmir's accession. The total absence of an assurance to honour that commitment, both in spirit and substance, cannot but send a wrong signal to the people of that State.

The official statement explaining the Cabinet's decision has of course referred to the 1975 (Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi) agreement; the Government invoked it only selectively to serve its objective of rejecting the pre-1953 line. What is crucial is that the 1975 accord reaffirmed Article 370 and vested 'residuary powers' in the State, apart from providing for a review, on request by the State Government, of certain categories of the Central laws extended to the State since 1953. Any autonomy package, to be consistent with the basic principles and spirit of the nation's obligation under the Instrument of Accession, has to recognise at the minimum the inviolability of Article 370 which sets Jammu and Kashmir apart from the other States in certain respects and areas. There can be no question of its claims to autonomy being equated with the case for greater devolution of powers on the States in the overall national context, although an effective implementation of the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations would certainly serve to narrow the gap between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest in the matter of sharing of powers with the Centre. Clearly, a credible autonomy package that upholds the spirit of Article 370 and the components of which are evolved through as wide a national debate as possible and, more importantly, involving Kashmiris of all the three regions is indeed the answer to the growing alienation of the people and the best insulation against the challenge of the secessionist campaign.

THE HINDU

6 JUL 2000

'WE WILL MEDIATE ONLY IF COLOMBO REQUESTS'

PM rules out restoring pre-1953 status to J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JULY 5. Ruling out the possibility of restoring the pre-1953 status for Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today indicated that the Centre was prepared to consider more "political and financial powers to the States".

In an informal chat with mediapersons at the Chennai airport after concluding his two-day visit here, Mr. Vajpayee said he had discussed the autonomy proposal with the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and explained that there was no question of going back to the pre-1953 status.

"If there are any demands which are to be considered by the Centre and if they demand more political and financial powers, there has to be a different method. But to talk of autonomy and to talk of going back to 1953 will never be accepted," the Prime Minister asserted.

'Not averse to discussion'

Asked whether Parliament would discuss the autonomy resolution, Mr. Vajpayee said, "if any member brings forward a motion, there will be a discussion."

Pointing out that the agenda of the National Democratic Alliance had promised more powers to the States, he said, "some concrete steps have already been taken in terms of financial resources. If necessary more steps will be taken."

Asked if he was hopeful of the National Conference remaining with the NDA, Mr. Vajpayee said: "It is for the National Conference to decide."

On the crisis in Sri Lanka, the Prime Minister ruled out any mediation by India between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. However, he said "a way has to be found" to solve the ethnic strife.

Referring to the allies in the NDA, especially those from Tamil Nadu, speaking in different voices on the Sri Lankan issue, the Prime Minister said: "I don't think there are any prob-



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, at the Chennai airport on Wednesday. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, and the State unit BJP leader, Mr. L. Ganesan, are also seen.

— Photo: N. Sridharan

lems which cannot be solved. I had a detailed discussion with various leaders and explained the policy of the NDA to the leaders. So, every problem will be solved amicably".

Before emplaning for Madurai en route to

Tirunelveli, Mr. Vajpayee was seen off at the airport by the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi. The MDMK general secretary, Mr. Vaidyanathan, accompanied the Prime Minister.

'No change in India's stand'

Our Coimbatore Special Correspondent writes:

The Prime Minister has made it clear that India would consider mediating in the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis only if invited by the two parties (Sri Lankan Government and the LTTE). "Then we will think over it. Otherwise not." Mr. Vajpayee was talking to reporters at the airport here during a stopover en route to New Delhi after inaugurating a wind power project at Kayathar in Tuticorin district.

Reiterating that there was no change in India's policy on the issue, he said, "we are for an amicable solution." The Government was already extending "moral support" (to the Sri Lankan people). "We want the unity and integrity of Sri Lanka maintained. We also want

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that justice should be done to the Tamils," the Prime Minister added.

He replied in the negative to a question whether there was a move to dissolve the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, which recently passed a resolution demanding autonomy.

In the present situation, was it not necessary for more delegation of powers to the States? "That is what we are doing and delegating more powers. We are implementing our manifesto and the States are becoming more powerful economically and politically." Questioned about a possible Cabinet reshuffle, Mr. Vajpayee pointed to the Union Minister for Power, Mr. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, beside him, and asked "do you want Ranga to be changed?" evoking peals of laughter.

THE HINDU

6 JUL 2000

WIDEN OUR OPTIONS

Talking to the Hurriyat is an option

FAROOQ Abdullah seems to have had at least two objectives in mind when he set in motion the debate in the Kashmir assembly on harking back to the past and seeking the degree of autonomy which prevailed in 1953, that is to say, Kashmir is on its own except for currency, foreign affairs and defence, that the head of the state should again be called Sadar-e-Riaysat and being the modest man that he is, he would like to be designated Prime Minister so that when he leaves his permanent residence in Prithviraj Road to see Atal Behari Vajpayee, the meeting can be billed as between two Prime Ministers. From that, it will be one short step to visions of joint press conferences on the lawns of Race Course Road, stirring faint memories of similar conferences on the White House lawns taken by American presidents with visiting heads of government. In a word, the malady is ideas of grandeur. The other is plain blackmail to see what more he can extract from New Delhi to cover up his colossal failures as chief minister. Also to head off any prospect of Delhi holding talks with the Hurriyat could not have been far from his mind.

On the practical level he may have had a case if he had something to show for the considerable latitude he has been given; the reality is that Farooq has wasted his opportunities and short of insisting at every turn that he wants Kashmir to remain in India, he has had no contribution to make. He also says he will remain a part of the NDA alliance; if he had a viable option he may have been tempted to chance his arm but he hasn't. Some time ago he ventured to do just that speculating how long it would have taken him to become Prime Minister of Pakistan if the state had opted differently. Clearly the chief minister of Kashmir is ambitious but ambition should be made of sterner stuff than throwing out the Kashmir Arts Emporium from Prithviraj Road and occupying the whole bungalow himself.

The Prime Minister has been wise to lose no time in scotching the mischief by an unanimous decision in Cabinet and this seems to have surprised Farooq who is left to mumble loyal sentiments and complaints that he has been misunderstood. On the contrary he is upset because he has been understood all too well. It is time India spoke to those who have better credentials to speak for the Kashmiri people than the incumbent and absentee chief minister. Farooq gets less than half a point, talking of the huge majority his National Conference enjoys in the assembly and comparing this to the fact that there have been no elections at all in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. There are better and more credible tests available to judge his popularity than elections held under close monitoring by the Indian armed forces. Farooq's son, an earnest and amiable young man, who is minister in Vajpayee's Cabinet, is again a manifestation of the dynastic principle of which Farooq himself is a beneficiary and which Sonia Gandhi may appreciate but it is not necessary to put all our eggs in this one basket. If the wishes of the Kashmiri people are relevant, and everybody says they are, than closer integration with the rest of the country, not moving further away is the way to go.

There is no harm in talking to the Hurriyat. The need is to widen our options, not restrict them.

THE STATESMAN

- 6 JUL 2000

Autonomy note raises more questions than it answers

Jay Raina
New Delhi, July 5

THE UNION Cabinet's rejection of the J&K Assembly's demand for greater autonomy has raised more questions than it has actually answered in a note explaining the Centre's stand.

Equating J&K with other states is not only politically erroneous, but also factually incorrect. A bone of contention between India and Pakistan since Partition, it has a Constitution of its own unlike other States of the Union. Its special status is sanctified under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution.

Moreover, the state's populace enjoys double citizenship rights—firstly as permanent residents (State Subjects) and secondly as Indian citizens. Jammu and Kashmir can be brought directly under the Governor's Rule—a mechanism not applicable to any other State—for six months wherein the Governor, besides carrying out all executive functions, has powers to legislate.

All the 42 Presidential Orders to which Home Minister L K Advani referred while announcing the Cabinet decision, were directly applied to the State.

These orders came into force by way of amendments to the J&K Constitution.

Another salient feature of the Constitutional arrangement in J&K is that its Assembly has a six-year term—a year more than other state legislatures—with

powers to legislate in large ambit of residuary area.

Also, the sheer geo-political importance of the state sets it apart from other regions, particularly in the context of the super-power vested interests. For this reason alone, the Centre's proposed application of a common devolution package to J&K along with other states of the Union sounds farcical.

Whatever might be the parameters of the planned devolution, still far from being worked out in totality, Kashmir deserves a separate and special dispensation. The decade-long militancy and the concomitant loss of blood on

Behind the News

either side has added a frightening dimension to the problem that, in itself, is unique in the history of the sub-continent.

Never mind Mr Farooq Abdullah's sordid record in non-governance, which has contributed amply to the prevailing chaos, the seemingly absurd autonomy-theatrics have exposed the credentials of all the principal characters in the game. The Vajpayee regime's flip-flop over the autonomy resolution, before the Cabinet consigned it to the dustbin, has put a question mark on its claim to a cogent Kashmir policy.

There is a long list of the naive components of the Centre's game-

plan: Overtures for a dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders behind Dr Abdullah's back; complete failure to foresee implications of the Assembly vote on the autonomy resolution; inability to rein in the irrepressible CM who is an NDA ally and finally the Cabinet meeting convened as a knee-jerk response to a situation crying for serious deliberation.

In fact, on the eve of the July 4 meeting, a team of senior bureaucrats burnt midnight oil to prepare a detailed note for the Cabinet's consideration. Originally, the issue was slated for a Cabinet discussion, first on Wednesday and thereafter on Saturday.

Finally, it was Dr Abdullah's action in going for the RSS' jugular—as a riposte to the Sangh Parivar's shrill opposition to the autonomy demand—that made the PMO advance the Cabinet conclave.

The rejection resolution the meeting adopted was technically unanimous. But distinct viewpoints found expression in the course of the deliberations—a section of the Ministers even seeking clarifications on the covert contacts with the Hurriyat.

The positions taken by ministers who spoke on the issue ranged from moderate to extreme. While a few sought tough action against Dr Abdullah, others wanted an honourable way out for the Chief Minister.

The formulation that eventually found acceptance was in tune with the middle-path proposed by Mr Vajpayee.

Centre's Veto 9-10

It would have been fanciful to expect New Delhi actually to green-signal the Farooq Abdullah-inspired autonomy resolution. Yet, few expected the 'No' to be quite so swift or resounding. The government's quick as a flash decision came even as newspapers were attributing a variety of thoughts and statements to its ministers, including Prime Minister Vajpayee. First, L K Advani all but endorsed the proposal. Then Mr Vajpayee said it would be considered within the ambit of the Constitution. Sundry other ministers went along with the idea, while the BJP and the RSS denounced it from every available platform. So, what seemed in the offing was a ministerial committee on Kashmir followed by at least a semblance of debate in Parliament. In the event, all formalities have been dispensed with. The only argument for this course can be that emotions were running high and to let the matter fester would have been knowingly to invite trouble. Agreed, the resolution aroused passions on all sides. However, it is hardly democratic not even to put it up for debate. More so, in view of the suspicion that dissenting views were expressed at the cabinet meeting. Ironically, Mr Advani emerged from the meeting advocating devolution of more powers to the states. Surely, this is stretching credibility, considering his government's big brotherly approach towards a resolution officially adopted by a state assembly.

It is nobody's case that when Farooq Abdullah put the controversial resolution to vote, he was driven purely by a desire to do justice to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Far from it. He had his own reasons to railroad the resolution through the special autonomy session. He was conscious of the National Conference's declining importance in the Valley and, secondly, he wanted the focus shifted from the Hurriyat. The Farooq gauntlet left the Vajpayee-led government with two options. Spike the resolution and allow the state government to harbour anti-Centre feelings or, more tactfully, seize it as an opportunity — both to examine where things went wrong in J&K and to get an understanding of the current ground situation in the state. An imaginative government would have done the latter because this is the way simultaneously to pacify a disgruntled state government and open up a channel of communication with the common people. This road is no doubt strewn with difficulties. Far too much has happened between 1953 and now for the clock to be entirely turned back. During this time, Jammu and Ladakh have grown closer to the point of view held by New Delhi. And yet, it is also a fact that J&K enjoys special status under Article 370 of the Constitution. As long as this position remains, we cannot put J&K on a par with other states. That would also be to overlook the alienation among the people — without addressing which it is not possible to tackle militancy and such other problems. Had the Vajpayee government at least made a beginning with the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations on Centre-state relations, there might have been some takers for its claim about devolving powers.

Dealing with the autonomy demand

By Badri Raina

The attainment of a self-respecting and concrete devolution of powers back to the State has the potential for realigning the mass of Kashmiris behind a refurbished democratic politics.

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'MAINSTREAM' POLITICAL forces which have been largely responsible for the mess in Kashmir, directly or indirectly, since 1947 are busy expressing pseudo-nationalist chagrin at the happenings in the Assembly. Their political bankruptcy is underlined by the fact that the louder they have been on behalf of the nation-state, the more their practices have eroded possibilities of voluntary allegiance to the Union. More particularly, where the demand for devolution of powers from the other parts of the Union are recognised, however reluctantly, as issuing from a Centre-State problematic, such demand in Kashmir is quickly dubbed communal, even when articulated by the National Conference whose secular commitment to the Union has been repeatedly proven. After all, whereas the National Conference has never yet asked to secede, it was the entirely Hindu-majority State of Tamil Nadu that did so in the 1960s. Indeed, at the present juncture as well, the centrist forces might be well advised to worry more about the likes of Mr. Vaidya and Mr. Ramdoss. At the Erode gathering, photographs of LTTE chief Prabhakaran more freely flaunted by their cadres even as the Union Home Minister was holding forth on the need to preserve Sri Lanka's integrity.

'Mainstream' forces have to date only spewed knee-jerk, panic reactions to the mere mention of autonomy rather than engaged in any analysis of the Kashmir Assembly document. The notion of autonomy in itself seems anathema. It is then legitimate to ask what concrete alternatives they have up their sleeve. Any such alternative must, of course, be underpinned by the particular understanding these forces have of the nature of the problem in the first place.

Take first the RSS and its affiliates. Its most recent pronouncement about trifurcating Jammu & Kashmir lets the Hindutva cat out of the bag, and not for the first time either. The suggested division is informed straightforwardly by a communalist perspective. The accession of Muslim-majority Kashmir to India under the aegis of a National Conference-led popular movement has always presented a problem to Pakistan and the RSS. As mirrored complementaries, the Muslim League and the RSS have conceived of nationhood along

back to the State has the potential of realigning the mass of Kashmiris behind a refurbished democratic politics. The simple way of conceptualising the moment is to think that if answers have to be found with India and the Indian Constitution as the given, can either the National Conference or the Kashmir Assembly by sidelined?

In that context, Dr. Farooq Abdullah's enunciation as in a recent TV interview deserves the closest attention. His argument that the Assembly document is a starting point where nothing else existed is suggestive that a *modus vivendi* can emerge once the problems and the Document is addressed. Even the National Conference must know that if there be any aspects to the Document that may seem tainted with a sectarian emphasis, or such others that make the demand for the abrogation of the jurisdiction of key institutions of the Indian state, such texts have little chance of finding acceptance, either at the level of the state or of even the more secular and democratic segments of the political class. There ought, therefore, to be the faith that if the moment were indeed to be seized with imagination and empathy, that if negotiators on all sides — Ireland is a close parallel — were to make he enlightened efforts to rise above particular, fractious interest, a transparently participatory process of negotiation can lead to formulations that can transform not just the State of Jammu & Kashmir but yield a federal fruit for the Indian state as a whole. And, as part of that visualisation, I see no reason why federated possibilities cannot be worked out internally within the State of Jammu & Kashmir as well, taking care that the principles of internal devolution in no shape or form are coloured by sectarian considerations.

Politically, were the BJP more than the Congress to embark on such a creative course the qualitative enrichment of Indian democratic practice would acquire a new, lasting impetus. The moot question here is whether the BJP, now after the experience of state power, has the independent conviction to do so, and the will, thereby, to undergo its own enrichment as a political force. There is both everything to lose and everything to gain.

(The writer teaches literature at the Delhi University).

Instrument of Accession, to Article 370, to the Delhi Agreement of 1952, and later, the Accord of 1975, and whose rhetoric about secularism in the Valley never ceases, has much to answer for beginning with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in 1953, the Congress has never known what to do with the expanding Muslim intelligentsia in Kashmir except to deny them any real stake in nation-building as components of the "mainstream" political class. Consigned to repeated quisling rule, denied both trust and Central employment, brutalised through inflictions of cronied "electoral" facade, their agony seems entirely lost on the Congress. Ask the Congress if it has any new ideas, other than instituting "development" in the State and integrating the Kashmiris emotionally, and it has none. As to the third-frontiers, they are too busy enjoying the fruits of "coalition" to be reminded of whatever principles they might once have espoused.

There, however, is no getting away from hard realities. Unlike many other princely states, Kashmir did not merge with but acceded to the Union under specific terms and conditions. That specific reference, despite decades of hypocrisy, evasion, coercion, remains alive in the hearts and minds of Kashmiris. With the brutal desecration of the franchise of 1987, that reference yielded to the impulse to get away altogether from India, indeed from both India and Pakistan. In piloting the Autonomous resolution now after the exhaustion and the ravages that Kashmiri people have suffered over a decade, the National Conference, whatever be its "motives" — and who does not have motives, pray — has seized the moment, and, at one stroke, ejected from agenda and debate both independence and merger with Pakistan. One can hardly overstate both the political significance and possibilities of the turn of events. Those who know will also tell you that after the collapse of the dream of "azadi" the attainment of a self-respecting and concrete devolution of powers

religious lines. It suits both equally to suppose that Muslims in India are at heart Pakistanis, Kashmiri Muslims in particular, and to propagate that the 'Kashmir problem' has no other dimension.

The RSS/BJP opposition to Article 370 may appear to belie the above inference. Yet, a politics which seeks to trample over the specific history of accession and the specific contractual obligations flowing therefrom, and which demands a coercive 'integration' of the territory, especially the suspect Valley, is only another expression of the more blatant form of communal distrust. The abject compromises that the BJP has made over the last two years to capture and retain state power, including, ironically, taking on board the National Conference as well, have now led the governmental BJP to political incoherence. Mr. Advani can neither express fresh allegiance to the abrogation of Article 370 nor openly uphold it; he therefore cannot but place the BJP's eggs in the Opposition's basket. Given the continuing 'nationalist' overlap between the BJP and the Congress, Mr. Advani knows that Parliament will say no. The Central Government would then escape the onus either to deliver on the issue or to be politically at risk.

Such a procedure would then underscore the 'nationalist' conclusion that every mischief in Kashmir is Pakistan's doing, that cross-border terrorism is the issue, that enhanced militarism is the need of the hour. In the meanwhile, if the BJP can please the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, by making overtures to the All-Party Hurriyat Conference whose components desire either merger with Pakistan or independence from both India and Pakistan, why so be it. And if such a course, in turn, makes nonsense of the BJP's partnership with the NC who wish Kashmir to remain a part of the Union and whose cadres continue to be slaughtered by the 'enemy' part of whose patronage sits among Hurriyat ranks, why such is life.

The Congress having been party to the

THE HINDU

7 JUL 2000

J&K DEMAND CANNOT BE IGNORED: LEFT

'Autonomy, devolution separate issues'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 6. Two days after the Union Cabinet rejected the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly resolution on autonomy while promising greater "devolution of powers" to the States, the Left parties today accused the Vajpayee Government of "deliberately" mixing up Srinagar's demand for autonomy with the larger question of devolving more powers to the States. They said it was an attempt to distract attention from the main issue.

By mentioning the two things in the same breath, it was stated, the Government was trying to make out as though devolution was a substitute for political autonomy. Moreover, it was an "insidious" way of clubbing Jammu and Kashmir with other States, ignoring its special status guaranteed under Article 370.

Devolution of financial and administrative powers was a general issue and should not be "confused" with the specific case of Jammu and Kashmir, senior Left leaders said. They argued that irrespective of the controversial resolution, there was a case for giving the State much greater autonomy than it now enjoyed thanks to the steady "erosion" of Article 370 over the years.

Even as both the CPI(M) and the CPI distanced themselves from the autonomy resolution which, according to them, amounted to putting the clock back and was therefore unacceptable, they maintained that this did not mean the "core" issue should be swept under the carpet. And, the "core" issue was that Jammu and Kashmir's demand for greater autonomy had a "specific historical background", the CPI(M) politburo member, Mr. Sitaram Yechury, said.

This, he explained, was very different from the general demand of almost all States for a more federal structure. Apart from the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission, several State Governments and political parties, including the CPI(M), had made several proposals over the years for devolving more powers. Successive Central Governments, however, had ignored these and the BJP itself

had not been particularly enthusiastic about the idea. The CPI general secretary, Mr. A. B. Bardhan, objected to the Government's attempt to link the larger issue of Centre-State relations with that of greater political autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir within the framework of Article 370.

"The issue of autonomy for Kashmir stands on a different footing, and though devolution of powers to States is a long-standing demand and should be addressed with all seriousness it should not be mixed up with the Kashmir problem," he said.

The "history" of Kashmir's accession to India could not be "wished away" and so long as Article 370 remained a part of the Constitution there was no escape from the obligations which it imposed on the Centre vis-a-vis Srinagar, he pointed out.

Focus now on NC meet; Centre prepared for the worst: Page 14

The two communist parties cautioned against "attempts" to "equate" autonomy with separatism and said it was precisely this mindset that had alienated the people in Jammu and Kashmir. In a federal democracy, the States had the right to demand political space and to term it separatism was a "dangerous doctrine", a CPI(M) leader felt.

Left leaders pointed out that even on devolution of financial powers, the Vajpayee Government's record had been far from encouraging as only recently it issued an ordinance amending the terms of the eleventh Finance Commission so that it could "encroach" on the rights of the States given under Article 275. There was a temptation in Left quarters to suspect the Government's motive in talking about financial autonomy at this stage, and it was seen as a "deliberate" attempt to divert attention from the Kashmir question.

In Srinagar, the senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, charged that both the Centre and the State Governments were playing with the sentiments of the people who, he maintained, wanted something "much beyond autonomy".

THE HINDU

27 JUL 2000

Cong., Left criticise Govt. on autonomy

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 5. The Vajpayee Government's handling of the autonomy issue came under sharp attack from the Opposition today with the Congress(I) pointing to the 'contradictions' in the National Democratic Alliance over it and the Left saying that the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly resolution should not be mixed up with the larger question of autonomy for the State within the framework of Article 370.

The Congress(I) charged the Government with speaking in different voices and creating confusion. The party spokesman, Mr. Anand Sharma, said the "mishandling" of the issue by the Government had led other States to make similar demands. In fact, he would not put it past the Government to have actually orchestrated these demands.

The CPI(M) said the rejection of the resolution by the Government did not put an end to the issue. While the party was opposed to a return to the pre-1953 status for Kashmir, envisaged in the resolution, it supported the case for autonomy.

"The reality is that even within the ambit of Article 370, there has been a steady erosion of the rights of Jammu and Kashmir", the party's politburo said calling for restoring the autonomy that had been eroded.

The 1975 accord between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah could be the basis for giving autonomy, it said adding that the party also stood for regional autonomy for Jammu and Ladakh within the State. The upshot of the

CPI(M)'s position was that the Government "cannot evade" the issue, and that it must take steps to address the problem after taking all political parties into confidence.

The CPI(M-L) criticised the "panic reaction" to the resolution and said that Jammu and Kashmir had the "right to demand autonomy and be heard". It pointed out that even if the demand was seen to be unreasonable there was nothing wrong in discussing it. "What's wrong in discussing autonomy with the elected Government of the State when the Centre is prepared to negotiate with even pro-Pakistan voices calling for nothing short of outright secession," it asked.

'VHP must not represent Hindus in talks'

PTI reports:

The CPI(M) politburo member, Mr. Prakash Karat, has said the VHP and Bajrang Dal should not be allowed to represent Hindus in the proposed dialogue with Christian leaders arranged by the National Commission for Minorities (NCM).

"The NCM's attempt to arrange discussion between Christian church leaders and the VHP is not right," he said while inaugurating a nation-wide stir against attacks on minorities.

"The NCM should not conduct discussions with these perpetrators of violence against the minorities."

Stating that the Sangh Parivar outfits did not deserve to represent the Hindu community or philosophy, the CPI(M) leader said, "Hindu masses in general are not communal. Hindu

philosophy is not hostile towards other religions".

Accusing the BJP of using power to propagate communalism, Mr. Karat said leaders of minority communities must unite to resist the "persecution against minorities".

V.P. Singh for dialogue

NEW DELHI, JULY 5. The former Prime Minister, Mr. V.P. Singh, today disapproved of the Centre's outright rejection of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly autonomy resolution saying the BJP-led Government should initiate a serious dialogue with all concerned, including the Hurriyat leaders to find an amicable solution.

"Certainly there is a case for more devolution of power than that is existing today. Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, and Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, maintaining status quo on the issue will not lead us anywhere," he told presspersons.

Devolution should also mean devolution to the region. "I am in favour of devolution of power up to the village level." On reports about trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir on religious lines, he said this would not be in the overall interest of the country.

The former Prime Minister said a review of Centre-State relations was due for long and there was a need to go beyond what the Sarkaria Commission had suggested and the states should be given more powers.

6 JUL 2000

Some members of Cabinet questioned Kashmir policy

Anand K. Sahay
New Delhi, July 6

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BESIDES REJECTING the controversial Jammu and Kashmir Assembly resolution on autonomy, members of the Union Cabinet appeared to have questioned the very basis of the Kashmir policy being pursued by the Government.

When they met last Tuesday to deliberate over the situation in the Valley, Cabinet members reportedly wanted to know why overtures were made to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference for a formal dialogue, without first discussing the matter in the Cabinet.

While there was no response from either the Home Minister or Prime Minister, the general feeling within the Cabinet was that the Centre's moves vis-a-vis the Hurriyat had, in effect, provoked the National Conference Government into passing the resolution on autonomy, causing a veritable political storm in the country.

When asked whether the government would even now persist with the policy of establishing dialogue with the Hurriyat, a Cabinet source snapped, "How is this possible in the light of what has happened? And what was the point of it to begin with? ... We should have foreseen that such a step would create needless complications."

Behind the News

Just a few days ago, on returning from Europe, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had said that the Hurriyat track would be pursued even after the passage of the autonomy resolution.

United States President Bill Clinton, during his visit to India, had noted in an interview to ABC World News: "In the long run, I think what really matters - in terms of an ultimate resolution -- is that the people of Kashmir feel that their legitimate interests are being addressed in some formal fashion."

Asked about America's Kashmir policy, the President said, "The Kashmiris deserve to have their own concerns addressed."

L. DAD

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 2000

9.5 Scrap Article 370: RSS chief

NEW DELHI, JULY 7. The RSS chief, Mr. K.S. Sudarshan, has asked the Government to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which gives a special status to Jammu and Kashmir and impose President's rule in the State.

"We believe it is time the mistake of not scrapping this Article was rectified," Mr. Sudarshan told Zee TV in an interview to be telecast on Sunday. "The Article was inserted in the Constitution to please Sheikh Abdullah and he misused this autonomy and worked for the separation of Jammu and Kashmir from India. He even faced the charge of treason

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and his wife was at the centre of the whole thing," Mr. Sudarshan said, according to the transcript of the interview made available by the TV network.

On the issue of construction of a Ram temple at Ayodhya, Mr. Sudarshan said this could be done only in three ways. "Either the Government should hand over the disputed site to the Ram Janmabhoomi trust, which seems impossible or some legislative provision be made, but with cases dragging in courts it also does not seem likely," he said.

The only other option was for the Muslims to relinquish claim

to the place, Mr. Sudarshan said. The RSS chief said it would be easier to convince the Muslim leadership about the non-existence of a mosque at the site and that such a piece of land was unacceptable for a Muslim place of worship under Islam.

This way the issue could be sorted out, he said and asserted, "Ram Mandir will be made. No one can stop it." On the attacks on Christians and allegations against some Hindu organisations in this regard, Mr. Sudarshan said this was designed to defame his organisation. — PTI

Economic policies flayed: Page 13

THE HINDU

- 8 JUL 2000

Farooq, BJP in shadow-boxing pact

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 8. — Dr Farooq Abdullah and senior BJP leaders have struck an informal deal according to which they will criticise each other's stand on the autonomy issue without precipitating the crisis.

According to BJP's calculations, the National Conference would not leave the NDA coalition. As the BJP president, Mr Kushabhau Thakre, said: if two brothers quarrel, one should not be thrown out of the door.

Some BJP leaders say Dr Abdullah has committed to the

DHINDSA QUEERS AUTONOMY PITCH

CHANDIGARH, July 8. — The Akali Dal's member in the Union Cabinet, minister for sports Mr Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, today queered the pitch for the Centre, strongly voicing his party's commitment to the controversial Anandpur Sahib resolution. He said the resolution would form the basis for the "Punjab Case", being prepared for presentation before the review panel.

"We stand by the Anandpur Sahib Resolution ... I personally didn't oppose the Jammu and Kashmir Resolution in the Cabinet meeting. However, the J&K Resolution talks of separate Supreme Court, EC and a Prime Minister for that state. This is not in agreement with our resolution," he said. — SNS

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani that he would speak in favour of the issue

because of political compulsions, and that he has reconciled to the Centre's rejection of

the autonomy resolution.

That explains Dr Abdullah's continued diatribe against the Vajpayee government and the RSS on the autonomy issue.

The RSS's demand that the NC be expelled from the NDA was more to appease its rank and file than to create problems for the NDA coalition, a BJP leader said.

Following Dr Abdullah's strategy, the BJP too has attacked the autonomy demand. Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, said: "We don't understand the concept within the territorial integrity of the country."

THE STATESMAN

9 JUL 2007

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Who's the real representative?

The NC and Farooq have championed the cause of India under trying circumstances



Manoj Joshi

The past few weeks have been tumultuous even by Farooq Abdullah's standards. He is after all the man who has been slugging it out in the boxing ring of Kashmiri politics ever since the death of his father, the legendary Sheikh Abdullah. Knocked down many times, he has managed to beat the count, re-enter the ring and rejoin the slugfest. Farooq's use of the autonomy resolution to flatten his All Parties Hurriyat Conference opponents was a vintage performance from the man who cut his teeth fighting Indira Gandhi and the Congress in the early 1980s.

Though bloodied by a sucker punch by his own team — the BJP — Farooq remains the undefeated champion of Kashmiri politics.

It is great disservice to place Farooq and the National Conference at par with the Hurriyat. The NC and Farooq have championed the cause of India under the trying circumstances in which the political discourse of the Valley has been dominated by the AK-47.

The National Conference was the special target of Pakistan-backed militants and scores of unarmed NC cadre were executed or assassinated by the militants in the 1989-1996 period.

In contrast, the Hurriyat emerged in 1994 after the militant groups were contained by the Indian security forces after a bloody campaign that took thousands of lives.

The real force behind the outfit was, and remains, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami Kashmir which controls the most powerful Kashmiri militant group, the Hizbul Mujahideen. No one should have doubts that the real aim of the Hurriyat is to promote Jammu and Kashmir's merger with Pakistan.

There is another point that needs to be stressed. The Hurriyat can bring Srinagar to a halt through a call for a hartal, but they lack the clout to silence a single militant gun.

Indeed, all its leaders live under the shadow of the assassin's bullet, killers who operate on the orders of those who control the Hurriyat. No one knows this better than Yasin Malik, the JKLF leader who tried to set up his outfit as an independent political force after declaring a unilateral ceasefire in 1994.

Barring the Jamaat-e-Islami, the outfit's constituents' influence does not extend beyond Srinagar. The blunt fact is that in a free and fair election, Farooq and the NC would most likely wipe out the Hurriyat from the face of the Kashmir Valley.

No matter what the government apologists say, Farooq's demand for a return to the pre-1953 position was meant less as a final demand than as a starting point for a negotiated settlement. After the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah in August 1953,

New Delhi rammed through a number of decisions by presidential orders that can be said to have legal, though not moral sanction. The Beg-Parthasarthy Accord of 1975 that led to the release of the Sheikh and restoration of a National Conference government in the Valley agreed to review them.

There is another important angle that needs to be considered. In pitching for 1953 as the cut-off point, Farooq is addressing a sentiment.

The roots of Kashmiri rebellion do not lie in any history of deprivation or oppression. India has been generous with money and its no one's case that the Kashmiri Muslim's religious rights have been proscribed by India.

But Kashmiris have lacked a

The average Kashmiri wants an end to violence and a return to Kashmiriyat values



Amitabh Mattoo

Who or what can help bring peace to Kashmir? The National Conference led by Farooq Abdullah, or the All Party Hurriyat Conference? If popular appeal in Kashmir is a criterion, then there are leaders within the Hurriyat who could potentially become a force of peace and stability. Real peace, it must be clear, can only be brought about if India wins the two wars that it is fighting in Kashmir: the war for the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people, and the proxy-war that Pakistan has unleashed there.

The Indian people must realise

to the state, as of the firm belief that if autonomy has to be delivered to Kashmir, then the National Conference is certainly not the right instrument through which the people of Kashmir can be empowered. Now that the drama is over, the real peace process can take over.

Let us face facts. Today, the ordinary Kashmiri is a deeply-hurt person. For more than one decade, he has faced a systematic assault on his pride, his sensibilities and his dignity. The average Kashmiri wants an end to violence, a return to the values of Kashmiriyat, and a restoration of his dignity. Who represents the Kashmiri? No one. Every Kashmiri represents himself or herself and he is, tortured by the experience of the past years, unwilling to delegate easily his voice to any political leader. Alas, the National Conference, once easily the most important force in the valley, is now a shadow of its past, and its credibility is at a nadir. Even this last gush of idealism has not done much to revive its fortunes.

And yet there are important leaders within the Hurriyat who still carry weight, credibility and are not seen to have compromised themselves in the manner in which politicians do so easily these days. These leaders can become a powerful channel to the people of Kashmir, an important instrument through which a genuine and meaningful dialogue can be carried out. And, eventually, through sustained negotiations, a deliverable political and economic package can be worked out.

What should be the basis of such a dialogue? A genuine peace process must not be based on political conditionalities, but a commitment to common values: non-violence, democracy, pluralism and the rights of minorities. The Hurriyat is an umbrella, which has covered under it a diverse group of leaders with different ideologies. It is time that the umbrella is removed and individual leaders begin to take their own decisions on the basis of their political philosophies and convictions.

It is time especially for the younger leaders to decide whether they should continue to be dictated by those who are still caught in a time warp, and who are out of tune with the realities of the modern world. Now is the time for them to take a stand. History may never again give them such an opportunity.

The nation too must realise that empowering its people in Kashmir, and entering into a dialogue with those outside the mainstream, will not erode the unity of the Republic. Secessionism and separatist tendencies grow only when people feel a loss of control, and feel disconnected from the power and policy structure. Decentralisation of power is the only mechanism through which real democracy can flourish and is the recipe for good governance in the 21st century.

(Amitabh Mattoo teaches at the School of International Studies, JNU, Delhi)

IN BLACK AND WHITE

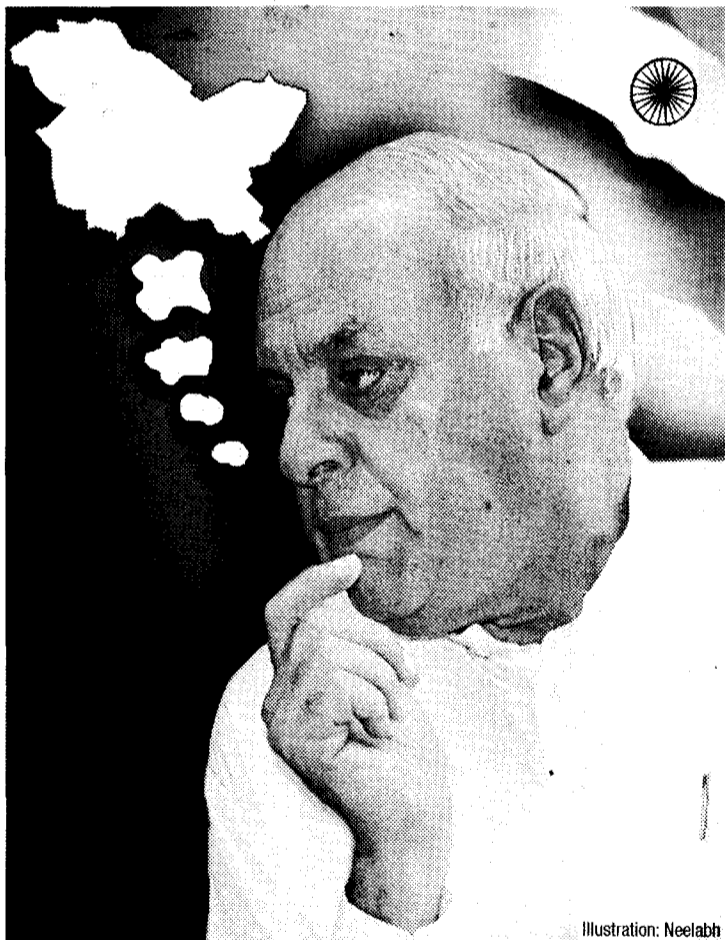


Illustration: Neelabh

sense of fulfilment that comes from the feeling that they are in control of their own destiny.

In pushing for autonomy, Farooq Abdullah sought to address this sentiment, rather than allow the secessionists space to dictate the discourse. New Delhi's careless rejection of the Assembly resolution has heartened the militant proponents of azadi and their supporters in Pakistan. New Delhi may have rejected Farooq's demand for autonomy, but they have not clarified just how they will deal with the Hurriyat. Indian public opinion, which seems to have backed New Delhi's parsimonious response to Farooq, is unlikely to be more generous when confronted with the Hurriyat's anti-India demands.

(Manoj Joshi is Political Editor, The Times of India)

that Pakistan's designs can be defeated with ease, as in 1947 and in 1965, if Kashmiris join in the fight against the forces of violence and obscurantism. It is critical, therefore, for New Delhi to make peace with its own people in Kashmir, hundreds and thousands who have been killed and displaced over the last decade, and — in this effort — elements within the All Party Hurriyat Conference can play a critical role.

In many ways, it is good that the drama that surrounded the passing of the autonomy resolution in the legislative assembly and legislative council of Jammu and Kashmir is finally over. The cabinet has clearly and explicitly rejected the National Conference's demand. But this rejection is not as much of the possibility of a devolution of the powers

NC meet today, Omar called back

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 8. The working committee of the ruling National Conference will discuss here tomorrow the Jammu and Kashmir autonomy resolution, which was rejected by the Union Cabinet, and also take a decision on the party's continuance in the National Democratic Alliance.

Sources said the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, had called his son and Union Minister of State for Commerce, Mr. Omar Abdullah, back from New Delhi this evening.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah has convened the meeting to discuss the developments which followed the rejection of the autonomy resolution. He is under pressure from his party men to adopt a new line of action.

The sources said the calling of Mr. Omar Abdullah back from Delhi is significant in view of the BJP-RSS tirade launched against the NC Government in the last two days.

Earlier in the evening, Dr. Abdullah made a provocative speech at a seminar saying he was ready to go to jail for even 30 years.

"Even if we are being labelled as traitors, we will continue to be in India, he added. He also cautioned that if a separate Eelam came into being in Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu would break away from India.

Inaugurating the two-day conference on 'Autonomy in J&K: Restructuring Indian Federalism' organised by the Regional Autonomy Implementation Committee, Dr. Abdullah reiterated his party's resolve to strive for restoration of greater autonomy despite the Centre's rejection.

Stating that State Autonomy Committee report was final, Dr. Abdullah told the Centre defiantly "Either you convince us or we convince you."

The report of the Regional Autonomy Committee (RAC), which had recommended eight units within the State, was yet to be finalised as sentiments of all the regions were to be taken into account

The MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko, who was all praise for Sheikh Abdullah and Dr. Abdullah's patriotism, said, "I have come here to express solidarity with and support to the people of Kashmir at

this crucial hour, to express goodwill from the people of Tamil Nadu.

"I want to mention in no uncertain terms that I am here to emphasise to honour the commitment made in Article 370 (special status for J&K) and in the instrument of accession. We are for real federation."

Stressing the importance of discussion in a democracy with reference to autonomy to J&K, he said the BJP was not the NDA. India would never be ruled by a single party and only regional parties could play a role at the Centre. Mr. Vaiko opposed the demand for restoring the pre-1953 status, but said the discussion should continue.

Mr. Vaiko demanded the scrapping of Article 356 (imposition of President's rule) as also the posts of Governors who, he said, had only one role, of toppling State Governments which did not toe the Centre's line.

The CPI(M) State secretary, Mr. M.Y. Tarigami, described the rejection of the resolution, passed by the J&K Assembly, by the Centre as a big shock.

29 more peacocks found dead

MORENA, JULY 8. Twenty-nine more peacocks were found dead at Sitapur village in the district today, taking the number of birds dead during the last few days to 80.

The District Collector, Mr. Pramod Agrawal, told PTI that the deaths were caused by the birds consuming bajra containing pesticides.

Mr. R. S. Upadhyay, inspector of the Bamore police station, said the Collector and the Superintendent of Police rushed to the village. Earlier, the administration claimed to have rushed teams for preventing any more death.

The veterinary officer, Dr. S. Mishra, said the post-mortem report revealed that the death of 10 peacocks was due to the birds consuming foodgrains containing chemicals, of the 'Organo-Phosphet' category. "However, the final conclusion could be drawn after the vicera report is obtained from the forensic laboratory." — PTI

THE HINDU

9 JUL 2000

Farooq slams Sangh

PTI and UNI

NEW DELHI, July 9. — Dr Farooq Abdullah has accused the Sangh parivar and the media of creating a hype against the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

"I think there was a lot of media hype. There has been a lot of talk that it is going to balkanise India," the Chief Minister told Karan Thapar in BBC's *Hard Talk India* programme.

On whether the Sangh parivar had mislead the government with a "misinformation" campaign, he said: "It is definitely misinformation because I can't see why they rejected it outright when they should have talked."

Dr Abdullah described Mohammed Ali Jinnah as a "nationalist" and said he had been driven to accepting "a moth-eaten Pakistan". "Don't you think Jinnah was a nationalist? My father continuously told me that he was more nationalist than many."

Asked if his remarks in the Assembly that he should not be pushed to the wall like Jinnah and that he could have been Prime Minister if he had gone to Pakistan were reasons for the outright rejection of the resolution by the Centre, he said: "The way I said it and the way I meant it .. it's possible that these people didn't understand."

On whether he was the

Jinnah of 2000, he said: "I am neither that intelligent nor that great a lawyer."

Refusing to accept the official reason for the rejection, he said: "What was the need to set up the Sarkaria Commission? Even the BJP-ruled states said we should have a commission to decide on a true federal structure." He iterated that he wouldn't give up the autonomy demand.

Talking to reporters in Srinagar, he said he was "hurt and alienated" by the outright rejection, adding that he would depute his colleagues to New Delhi to brief leaders of all parties and MPs before the monsoon session of Parliament to clear the misgivings about the autonomy demand.

Dr Abdullah denied having been pushed to the wall by the Centre and also ruled out dismissal, saying the era of dismissing governments was over.

He said no provocation would drive him to nearer Pakistan as he was an Indian from the core of his heart. "I will remain an Indian even if I am sent to prison," he said, adding that he was no stranger to the anti-India label. Kashmir would never become part of Pakistan, he said.

The National Conference meets tomorrow to chalk out its course of action. The party today said it wouldn't take any hasty step and avoid all confrontation with the Centre on the issue though the manner of rejection was "discourteous".

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Doors open for autonomy talks: Farooq

Continued from page 1

discussion so that we evolve a solution rather than harp on something that may sound politically correct but may not be workable. However, in a democracy, I can't tell everyone that they should do as I feel. You have to listen to the majority in the party.

"My own people proposed an amendment to the government's motion. Have you heard of this happening anywhere else? Then the honourable Speaker, in his best judgement, ruled that the amendment also be included in the debate. I was not in the know of it till the last moment."

Did he have no control over his party and his MLAs? Could he not have asked them to withdraw the amendment? I asked Dr Abdullah. "I think it is very difficult for me as the President of the National Conference and the Chief Minister to really become a dictator. The mood of the House too had to be taken into account," he explained.

Since he had a good relationship with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, had he kept him informed of the changing dynamics of the legislative process in the State Assembly?

Dr Abdullah claimed that he had told the Prime Minister what was happening and that Mr Vajpayee was a bit worried with the developments. "I told him that I had gone before the people on the autonomy question and that I could not go before them and say that this is all I could do. I am sure the Prime Minister did not want the whole process to go the way it did."

Did Dr Abdullah want it to go the way it went? "Well, it has gone the way it has gone. It is now there," he replied. If this is what the people of J&K wanted, why had Dr Abdullah not followed the Centre's rejection of the Autonomy Resolution with mass mobilisation of the people in the State on the issue? The Chief Minister said that the "shock is far too recent" and that it would take time for the people to recover from it and think of the next strategy.

In the worst case scenario - of there being no discussion on the autonomy issue between the Centre and him - did he see himself taking up more extreme positions as time went by? Dr Abdullah replied, "I don't know. I think time itself will tell. My people have gone through hell. I don't want to push them into further tragedies. I will try to the very last to ensure that sense prevails in the corridors of power in Delhi. The rest is up to God."

Did Farooq Abdullah see himself as a man who changed the course of history of Jammu and Kashmir - if his father had done it once by opting for India; had his son now provided the pivot around which the politics of Jammu and Kashmir will have to move henceforth, I asked him? "I think I can't be as tall as my father. You haven't produced a Mahatma Gandhi or a Jawaharlal Nehru in the last fifty years. You have not found another JP. So I don't think I can step into the shoes of my father. However, I am certain of one thing -- I have made the States realise that India can become a good and strong

federal State," Dr Abdullah replied.

So, had Farooq Abdullah finally arrived as a political leader, as it were? "I don't know about that. But Farooq Abdullah certainly has the most amount of troubles," he said.

How did he feel about the Centre dealing with the All Party Hurriyat Conference, which seeks independence, while keeping him at a distance because he wants autonomy? Dr Abdullah replied, "I would say to the government: 'Please start talking to the Hurriyat on azadi and the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan and then see what the people of Valley, Jammu and Ladakh have to say. Let the nation know where the Hurriyat stands and what the government of India is offering them. You are not willing to give us autonomy, I wonder how you will offer them azadi and merger with Pakistan?'"

"That is why I say that I am open to discussing every clause of the State Autonomy Committee's recommendations. I want a federal India, not a unitary India. I belong to a secular India, not to an India based on Hindutva. I have never been for confrontation. I am for reconciliation."

How should the people of the rest of India judge him, I asked Dr Abdullah. "There are those who view me through the RSS spectacles - they see me as a traitor who ought to be put behind bars. But they are in a minority. The majority knows that I am fighting not for Kashmir but for India, to retain and preserve our way of life within the Indian Union," he replied.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10.11.99

'Centre has left doors open for autonomy talks'

Bharat Bhushan
Srinagar, July 9

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah believes that the Centre has not ruled out a dialogue with him on greater autonomy to the State by not accepting the State legislature's resolution on it.

"I believe that the Centre-State dialogue on the autonomy issue will still take place. My understanding is that they have kept the door for dialogue open. When I meet the Prime Minister next, I will discuss the various mechanisms for the dialogue with him," Dr Abdullah said in an exclusive interview to *The Hindustan Times*.

Virtually throwing open the discussion on the autonomy issue once again, the Chief Minister said that any mechanism for discussing the issue was acceptable to him. He said that as far as he was concerned, each and every clause of the recommendations of the State Autonomy Committee report was open for discussion, dialogue and debate.

The report of the State Autonomy Committee, Dr Abdullah felt, could still be referred to a committee of legal experts as it addressed constitutional issues. The Union Government could even send it to the Constitution Review Committee that it had set up.

"If they say it is a political issue," Dr Abdullah said, "why should it not be sent to a political committee of some kind? These are only mechanisms for discussion. We have no objection to any mechanism so long as the discussion is held with an open mind. A dialogue is essential with people who understand the law and who are concerned with the issue. Only then can we see how best a working relationship can be evolved on the issue. Our primary interest is in reducing the alienation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and thereby strengthening Indian democracy. This can only be done by clearing the disinformation campaign about the

autonomy issue."

The Chief Minister seemed to make a clear distinction between the non-acceptance of the autonomy resolution passed by the State Assembly and the State Autonomy Committee Report which, he said, was still under the consideration of the Centre. "I think the Resolution has been pushed out. Some people say that it was not worded properly. Perhaps the Centre took the wording of the Resolution as an affront. That was not our intention. However, the State Autonomy Committee Report is still under consideration. I do not think that they can

just push it out," he said. Admitting that "they (the Centre) gave it to us as good as we gave it to them," he, however, claimed that he was "terribly upset" with the whole thing.

There is a strong belief that the National Conference is being disingenuous in talking of a dialogue on the autonomy issue now while having substituted a relatively open motion before the State Assembly with a harder resolution in the last minute.

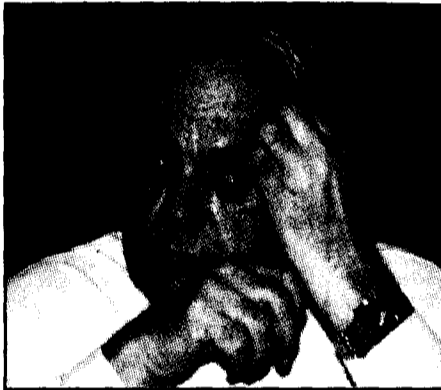
The motion originally moved by the National Conference in the legislature talked of the State setting up a ministerial committee to initiate a dialogue on autonomy not only with the Union Government but also other States, the convening of an all-party meeting on the issue and requesting the Union Government to also set up a ministerial committee to initiate a dialogue on the State Autonomy Committee Report.

However, after three members of the National Conference moved an amendment to this motion, the party itself substituted the initial motion by another that announced the acceptance of the report and demanded effective steps from the Union and the State Government "for implementation" of the recommendations.

Asked why his party had done this, and whether this meant that the National Conference had in effect shut the door for discussion, Dr Abdullah replied, "I am for

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Farooq Abdullah talks exclusively to HT



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Abdullah's Autonomy

Is Unworkable, Untenable, Dangerous

By JAGMOHAN

IN the ongoing debate on Kashmir autonomy, the fundamental point to note is the distinction between autonomy that leads to efficiency in administration, speed in development and fuller realisation of the creative potential of a community, and autonomy that breeds separatism, subversion and secession.

Consider the following points: The Instrument of Accession of October 27, 1947, and the Indian Constitution adopted on January 26, 1950, irrevocably brought Jammu and Kashmir under the territorial and constitutional jurisdiction of India. Article 1 made it a permanent part of the Indian Union. Article 370 provided for a special relationship which, to use the words of Jawaharlal Nehru, was temporary. Said Nehru: "We all wanted to leave it in a fluid condition because of the various factors and gradually to develop the relations — legal and constitutional relations. As a result of this, a rather unusual provision was made in our Constitution. That provision is now in Article 370, in part XXI, temporary and transitional provisions."

Under Article 370, Parliament can make laws for J&K with regard to the items in the Union and concurrent lists — items other than defence, foreign affairs and communication — but only with the concurrence of the state government.

In July 1952, representatives of the state and the Union arrived at the Delhi Agreement which provided for the abolition of the hereditary rulership; vesting of the residuary and 'concurrent' powers in the state; continuance of special citizenship rights for the 'state subjects'; flying of a separate flag for the state with the national flag also finding a 'supremely distinct place'; and, subject to certain limitations, extension of the provisions of the Indian Constitution to the state.

Sheikh Abdullah implemented whatever suited him. But when it came to items which made for greater integration of the state with the Union, he resorted to the subterfuge of referring them to one or another sub-committee of the state Constituent Assembly. His tactics upset even Nehru, who wrote to Abdullah: "To me it has been a major surprise that settlement arrived at between us should be by-passed or repudiated. That strikes at the root of all confidence. My honour is bound up with my word."

It was only after Bakshi Ghulam Mohammad became head of J&K government that various legal and constitutional measures were taken to bring about workable arrangements in the political as well as administrative areas. The process was set in motion by the promulgation

of the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954. Over the next few years, many more provisions of the Indian Constitution were extended to the state: Financial integration was followed by extension of the jurisdiction of customs, central excise, post and telegraph, civil aviation, comptroller and auditor-general and census. In 1960, the Supreme court was given powers to entertain 'special leave to appeal' against the decision of the J&K high court. The supervisory role of the Election Commission of India was also allowed, though elections continued to be held under the laws of the state. Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian Constitution were extended in 1964 and some Central labour laws in 1965. In 1968, Entry 72 of the union list, which provides for appeals to the Supreme Court

declaration of financial emergency, is not applicable to J&K. Nor is Article 365, which authorises the President of India to issue directions to the state government: Article 352, too, has only limited application.

In February 1975, Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi signed the 'Kashmir accord' which gave the impression that certain aspects relating to autonomy could be reviewed. But the government of Sheikh Abdullah could not formulate any proposal with regard to the withdrawal of any law or provision of the Indian Constitution which had been extended to the state between August 1953 and February 1975.

The reason why no change was sought was that all the measures enforced during this period were necessitated by practical considerations and in the interest of the common citizen of the state. What objection, for instance, could be taken to the extension of jurisdiction of the Election Commission or the Supreme Court or the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India? These extensions merely make available better justice and better accounting and audit arrangements. In what way do they militate against the identity or personality of Kashmir?

Those who demand pre-1952/53 status for Kashmir take care not to address themselves to concrete questions. They remain conveniently vague and show little respect to the practical implications of their stand. For instance, they suppress the fact that, in the absence of full financial integration with the Union, Kashmir would have no resource at all for development. It is the Union finances that provide the entire funds for the state's five-year plans and also for the substantial part of the non-plan expenditure.

Likewise, what happens without Article 356 — President's Rule — in case of a breakdown of the constitutional machinery in the state or if the state refuses to comply with any direction concerning defence, foreign affairs or communications?

The crucial questions that need to be asked are: In what way is any welfare work or work of development held up for want of powers? Where is any law or executive order or judicial pronouncement that has undermined the personality or identity of Kashmir or altered its spiritual landscape?

The advocates of pre-'53 position for J&K are misleading the people, planting untenable and unworkable notions in their minds and arousing false and dangerous hopes.

The author is Union urban development minister and a former governor of Jammu and Kashmir

IN BRIEF

- Autonomy that leads to efficient governance is different from autonomy that leads to separatism and subversion
- Between 1953 and 1975 many provisions of the Constitution were extended to J&K
- This was done for practical considerations and in the interest of the common citizens of the state
- These modifications do not undermine the identity of Kashmir, nor do they obstruct welfare work

from the decision of the high court on election petitions, was extended.

What is wrong with these modifications? In what way do they harm the interest of the common Kashmiri or undermine his identity, religion, culture, language or any other aspiration? They merely establish a smoother, constitutional, administrative and financial arrangement. And they were brought about with the full concurrence of the state government.

Moreover, there is still a vast area which remains under the exclusive jurisdiction of the state government. The citizens of India are not ipso facto citizens of J&K; they cannot acquire right of settlement and hold property in the state. They cannot vote in the assembly or panchayat elections. A woman citizen of J&K loses her property and other rights if she marries a non-state resident. Article 360, allowing for the

TRY SOMETHING ELSE!

W/X Farooq falls on his face, aiming high ^{5/16}

FAROOQ Abdullah shows every sign of having tried it on and protesting too much when found out. He did not deny that he sprang this autonomy resolution on the nation after promising Vajpayee that it was a harmless airing of views and no resolution would be passed in the Kashmir Assembly; he went ahead and did just that. The only provocation seems to have been the prospect of the Home Ministry talking to the Hurriyat, whereas he would like to retain his position as the only link with the people of Kashmir whom he serves so ill. Instead of frightening the Government into giving up the idea he has only succeeded in firming their resolve not to be bullied. It remains to be seen however, whether the Home Ministry will, in fact proceed to talk to the Hurriyat leaders as they have intended and should be doing, or restrict themselves to standing still as they have done these many years. Having said that, Farooq has lost no time in reversing himself, now that his bluff has been called. Appearing on television, he tried his best to sound the injured party. He did not know why "they" rejected the demand outright instead of giving him the importance he craved by talking to him so that he could extract something for his private benefit. Perhaps he would have settled for Sadar-e-Riyasat for the Governor and Prime Minister for himself. He had said earlier that if he had gone to Pakistan, he would have been prime minister of that country long ago. Having made such a suggestive statement, he would have us believe that he only intended to say that Jinnah was a nationalist! He happens to be right about Jinnah but the context escapes us. Jinnah was in the forefront of the nationalist movement for Home Rule; his speech in defence of Bhagat Singh in the Viceroy's Executive Council turned the House against the passing of an infamous resolution seeking to stand the criminal procedure code on its head and allowing the trial of an accused in his absence. He did that while Gandhiji and the Indian National Congress were strangely silent, wishing Bhagat Singh would simply go away. This is history but where is the relevance to Farooq's action in drawing attention to himself? With engaging modesty he disclaims any intention to compare himself to Jinnah — "I am neither that intelligent nor that great a lawyer". Intelligence is a matter of evidence, but we did not know that Abdullah was a lawyer at all. We thought he practised medicine in the UK before opportunity brought him to India.

His protestations sound less than sincere. He insists no provocation would drive him towards Pakistan, he is an Indian from the core of his heart. "I will remain an Indian even if I am sent to prison" says the absentee chief minister of Kashmir, "Kashmir would never become part of Pakistan." Just address me as prime minister of Kashmir he seems to suggest and I will forget all about autonomy!

The reason why his demand cannot be accepted even as a talking point is simple enough. Every state of the Union wants a greater say in the affairs of the particular state. There is a whole report on Centre/State Relations by the Sarkaria Commission. There is the Finance Commission, which decides on sharing revenues and there are other fora available. Farooq does not go to any of these. He exploits the sensitivity over Kashmir and then pretends he is misunderstood.

Try something else, Chief Minister!

THE STATESMAN

'PRESSURE ON TO SNAP TIES WITH NDA'

Crucial NC meet begins in Srinagar

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 10. The crucial working committee meeting of the ruling National Conference (NC) in Jammu and Kashmir began here today to decide on its continuance in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Though no indications were available on the future course of action, the members were not in an upbeat mood.

All 31 members of the working committee, belonging to all the three regions of the State, met at the residence of the party general secretary, Sheikh Nazir Ahmed. None of them talked to mediapersons on what line would be taken in the backdrop of the Centre's

rejection of the autonomy resolution passed by the State Assembly last Tuesday.

The Chief Minister and party president, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, was the last to arrive. He said it would take them an hour to deliberate upon issues and take a decision. When his son and Union Minister, Mr. Omar Abdullah, expressed surprise at this, he said, "Yes. We are going to finish it by that time."

However, Sheikh Nazir, who talked to the waiting mediapersons, said that the deliberations would resume tomorrow. When asked what options were being discussed, he shot back saying "to remain in the NDA or not". He added that all the members had

spoken in favour of autonomy.

On the Union Law Minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani's statement that a dialogue could be held, he retorted, "What dialogue? What we had to say we have said and conveyed it to the Centre and asked them to take positive steps." But the Centre had summarily rejected the resolution. "It could have debated whether to give the pre-1953 position or not."

Mr. Nazir denied that the party had softened its stand on autonomy, saying, "We have given this agenda to the people after the Congress(I) and the UF Governments failed to keep their commitments." Any MP was free to move a motion in Parliament if he had the support.

Mr. Nazir, however, said that the NC was not for confrontation with the Centre adding that the BJP was not the NDA.

The meeting started with speeches by Mr. Qamar Ali Akhoun, Mr. B.A. Nengroo, Mr. Chuni Lal Khajuria and Mr. Togdan Rimpooche, who condemned the Centre for turning down the autonomy resolution. The mood of the members was defiant but there was no clear indication as to which way the wind was blowing.

This is for the first time that the working committee is meeting after the Union Cabinet rejected the autonomy resolution. Dr. Abdullah holds the key, but pressure is building up within his party on severing the ties with the NDA. Mr. Omar Abdullah was summoned on Saturday to attend the meeting. The Centre, on its part, has been trying to persuade Dr. Abdullah not to quit the NDA.



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, with National Conference leaders, Mr. Omar Abdullah, Mr. Gulam Mohiuddin Shah, Mr. P. L. Handoo and Sheikh Nazir at a working committee meeting in Srinagar on Monday.

— Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Temporary, Yes

But only to Preserve J&K's Autonomy

The Jammu and Kashmir autonomy committee report has aroused passions on all sides. At the centre of the controversy is the special status granted to the state under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution. Yesterday in these columns, Urban Development Minister Jagmohan argued that the Article was conceived as a temporary measure. Further that this justified the gradual extension of the Union's jurisdiction to J&K. Today, we carry the autonomy committee report's interpretation of Article 370 — Edit page editor

A careful study of the text (of Article 370) reveals six special provisions for J&K. First, it exempted the state totally from the provisions of the Constitution of India providing for the governance of the states. It (J&K) was allowed to have its own constitution within the Indian Union.

Second, Parliament's legislative power over the state was restricted to three subjects — defence, external affairs and communications. (In respect of these) only "consultation" with the state government was required since the state had already accepted them in 1947 by the Instrument of Accession.

Third, if other "constitutional" provisions and other Union powers are to be extended to the state, prior "concurrence" of the state government was required.

Fourth ...even that concurrence alone did not suffice. It had to be ratified by the state's Constituent Assembly. This is often overlooked. Article 370 (2) says clearly: "If the concurrence of the government of state... be given before the Constituent Assembly for the purpose of framing the Constitution of the state is convened, it shall be placed before such (Constituent) Assembly for such decision as it may take thereon".

Fifth ...the state government's authority to give the "concurrence" lasts only till the state's Constituent Assembly is "convened". It is an "interim" power... Moreover, the President cannot exercise his power to extend the Indian Constitution to J&K indefinitely. The power has to stop at the point the state's Constituent Assembly drafted the state's Constitution and decided finally what additional subjects to confer on the Union and what other provisions of the Constitution of India it should get extended to the state... Once the state's Constituent Assembly had finalised the scheme and dispersed, the President's extending powers ended completely.

Sixth ...the last step in the process, is that Article 370 (3) empowers the

President to make an order abrogating or amending it. But for this, also "the recommendation" of the state's Constituent Assembly "shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification".

Article 370 cannot be abrogated or amended by resource to the amending provisions of the Constitution which apply to all the other states because Article 368 has a proviso which says that no constitutional amendment "shall have effect in relation to the state of Jammu and Kashmir" unless applied by order of the President under Article 370. That requires first the concurrence of the state government and subsequent ratification by its (J&K) Constituent Assembly.

Article 370 was authoritatively explained by its mover in the (Indian) Constituent Assembly,

IN BRIEF

- Article 370 restricts Parliament's power over J&K to defence, external affairs and communications
- For extending other Constitutional provisions, state government's permission required
- But this permission is subject to ratification by the state's Constituent Assembly (now defunct)
- Article 370 cannot be amended or abrogated now because this requires the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly

Mr N Gopalaswamy Ayyangar...

Mr Ayyangar said in the Constituent Assembly on October 17, 1949: "... (As) to matters which are not mentioned in the Instrument of Accession, and it is one of our commitments to the people and government of Kashmir that no such additions should be made except with the consent of the (J&K) Constituent Assembly which may be called in the state for the purpose of framing its Constitution. In other words, what we are committed to is that these additions are matters for the determination of the Constituent Assembly of the state".

Mr Ayyangar explained that, "the provision is made that when the Constituent Assembly of the state has met and taken its decision both on the Constitution for the state and on the range of federal jurisdiction over the state, the President may, on the recommendation of that Con-

stituent Assembly, issue an order that this Article... shall either cease to be operative or shall be operative, only subject to such exceptions and modifications as may be specified by him. But before he issued any order of that kind the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly will be a condition precedent.

This unique process of Presidential orders altering Constitutional provisions by an executive order ends with the final decision of the state's Constituent Assembly. "When it (J&K Constituent Assembly) has come to a decision on the different matters, it will make a recommendation to the President who will either abrogate (the) Article... or direct that it shall apply with such modifications and exceptions as the Constituent Assembly may recommend". Mr Ayyangar repeatedly said that the government's concurrence alone will not do. "That concurrence should be placed before the Constituent Assembly when it meets and the Constituent Assembly may take whatever decisions it likes on those matters".

...Sheikh Saheb (Sheikh Abdullah) told the state's Constituent Assembly on August 11, 1952 that "the fact that Article 370 has been mentioned as temporary provision in the (Indian) Constitution does not mean that it is capable of being abrogated, modified or replaced unilaterally. In actual fact, the temporary nature of this Article arises merely from the fact that the power to finalise the Constitutional relationship between the state and the Union has been specifically vested in the J&K Constituent Assembly... It follows that whatever modifications, amendments, or exceptions that may become necessary either to Article 370, or any other Article in the Constitution of India in their application to the Jammu and Kashmir state, are subject to the decisions of this sovereign body (Constituent Assembly)".

Obviously, once this body disperses after completion of its task, no amendments to the Constitution of India could be made in their application to the state for the simple reason that the sovereign and appointed ratifying body no longer existed...

Sheikh Saheb warned: "I would like to make it clear that any suggestions of altering arbitrarily this basis of our relationship with India would not constitute breach of the spirit and letter of the Constitution, but it may invite serious consequences for a harmonious association of our state with India".

(Excerpts from chapter V of the report of the J&K autonomy committee, entitled, Article 370 of the Constitution of India)

Time for a new compact in Kashmir

By Harish Khare

The Abdullah family is not Kashmir, just as the Hurriyat is not... The time has come for a new democratic engagement of Kashmir with the rest of India.

JUST CONSIDER this Kafkaesque absurdity. About six months ago the ruling National Democratic Alliance establishment was flaunting its "mandate" as the licence to rewrite the Constitution; on the basis of this "democratic endorsement" it could secure the acquiescence and cooperation of some of the most sober minds in this entirely ill-advised, unnecessary and divisive adventure. Yet six months later the same crowd and its cheerleaders want to deny Dr. Farooq Abdullah the right to invoke his "mandate" to work for "autonomy", as if the National Conference's "mandate" was not sufficiently consecrated in a democratic franchise. If the record were to be set straight it would transpire that during the October 1996 Assembly election campaign Dr. Abdullah talked more often about the ideal kind of autonomous relationship between Srinagar and New Delhi than did Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr. Lal Krishna Advani put together talk in the 1999 elections about rewriting the Constitution.

This negation of the democratic legitimacy of Dr. Abdullah's right to invoke "autonomy" is a minor affair when compared to the wilful denial of our own word as a nation. It does not behave an honourable country to forget what has been said or promised on the floor of the sovereign Parliament of India, especially during those difficult days of 1995-1996 when our collective efforts were directed at putting in place the buffer of a "representative" Government between the security forces and the alienated people in Jammu and Kashmir. The most inspired wisdom insisted that the "problem" would largely resolve itself once a "democratic" regime was installed in Srinagar. And, it seemed, every successive Union Home Minister would give his left arm to cajole Dr. Abdullah to participate in an election.

For example, participating in the debate on the Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill for 1995-96, the then Union Home Minister, Mr. S. B. Chavan, referred to the difficulty: with whom in Kashmir is "autonomy" to be discussed? His formulation was: "After the elections, there will be an elected representative Government. Those are the people who will be in a position to discuss with us and we cannot unilaterally

take any decision. That becomes the starting point for further negotiations." That was as coherent a formulation as Mr. Chavan was capable of making. However, the Lok Sabha records show that when the Home Minister finished with his oration, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee asked him: "What happened to 'autonomy'?" He (the Prime Minister) has said earlier that short of *azadi*, autonomy will be given." The parliamentary records further show that, amid interruptions, the Prime Minister (Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao) was heard observing: "He (the Home Minister) has spoken what was needed to be spoken, and you have also understood that much."

Let us hear what another Union Home Minister promised. After a meeting of all political parties, convened by the Prime Minister (Mr. H. D. Deve Gowda) on August 7, 1996, the Home Minister, Mr. Inderjit Gupta, issued a public statement. Its last paragraph read: "As far as the promised 'maximum autonomy' to Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, all parties agreed that its content and quantum can be decided only after further discussions when there is a duly elected Assembly and Government in the State. There is no desire or intention by the Centre to impose any formula on the people of Jammu and Kashmir without first heeding the voice of their elected representatives."

Well, the voice of the elected representatives has been heard, and, rejected temporarily, "India" is as much a loser as is Dr. Abdullah. Can a nation pretend that its commitments are not solemn undertakings but merely convenient noises? What has changed so dramatically since the bloody days of 1995-96 for reneging on a national assurance. This collective amnesia is now sought to be elevated as statecraft.

It may be that the latest self-inflicted stalemate in Kashmir is an inevitable by-product of the conceptual stupidity that is at the heart of the Vajpayee Government's foreign policy: an untenable faith in the benignity of the American interest in Kash-

mir. The grandiloquent nationalists who are lordling it over us naively believe that the State Department has exorcised itself of the 50-year-old mischievous prescriptions. Now in the post-Clinton visit honeymoon, the pseudo-*deshbhaktis* succumbed to the American pressure and went about signalling the start of a surreptitious "dialogue" with the Hurriyat leadership, forcing the impetuous Dr. Abdullah to go into "autonomy" over-drive. This folly was matched at home only by those who pride themselves on being the political heirs of Shyama Prasad Mookerjee; Dr. Abdullah's willingness to break bread with

the BJP establishment was equated with the craven political opportunism of a Ram Vilas Paswan or a K. Ramamurthy, without understanding the structured precariousness of Kashmiri politics.

However, the follies of the Vajpayee-Advani-Jaswant Singh trio notwithstanding, the fundamental core of the "Kashmir problem" remains, more or less, unchanged; how to make the average Kashmiri think he is an honourable and equal partner in the enterprise called democratic India? Neither the raised voices from the Sangh Parivar nor the "autonomy" theatrics from Dr. Abdullah address this issue. Let us checklist the basic ingredients.

First, the 1996 Assembly elections were not an endorsement of the "Kashmir-is-an-integral-part-of-India" hymn book nor a rejection of "autonomy". Second, the Kashmiri psyche continues to subscribe to "we were cheated of our autonomy"; honour and self-respect remain evocative elements in the Kashmiris' quest for collective pride. Third, romanticism of the *azadi* movement may be gone, but the agents, prophets, financiers, arms merchants, RDX manufacturers and the constituency for *azadi* are very much in place. Fourth, though Dr. Abdullah courageously and consistently argued against *azadi* he and his National Conference never addressed the political and psychological dimensions of "alienation"; instead, first the

United Front regime and later the BJP indulged Dr. Abdullah in his infuriating indifference to the overwhelming need to provide governance and to recoup the Kashmiri civil society's creative energies. In fact, Dr. Abdullah was happy to let the Army be as long as New Delhi did not ask him any questions about anarchy, lawlessness and non-governing kleptocracy; in the process, the good doctor squandered his credibility as a custodian of the "Kashmiri identity".

Now the Vajpayee establishment's political cleverness has combined with Dr. Abdullah's nervousness to push Kashmir back. It is, therefore, time to work towards a new compact between democratic India and the people of Jammu and Kashmir. A way must be found to break out of fallacy of the 1953 accord and 1975 agreement: "New Delhi" could conclude pacts only with the Abdullah family, which in turn nurtured everyone's comforting formula-tion that "Farooq is our best bet". The Abdullah family is not Kashmir, just as the Hurriyat is not. As long as we continue to proceed on an assumption that Kashmir is the Abdullah family's zamindari, we will not be able to address the "problem".

The time has come for a democratic engagement of Kashmir with the rest of India. Instead of letting Dr. Abdullah do a guilt-number on democratic India, he should be asked to explain his willful incompetence. Similarly, Syed Gilani and the rest of the APHC should be asked to explain their "grievances" before the people of India; rather than go on a road-show in Hyderabad, Moradabad or Calcutta; for too long the APHC has been content to dine with the Pakistani High Commissioner and "debrief" American and European ambassadors in New Delhi. In this age of global democracy neither the Abdullahs nor the Hurriyat leaders can be allowed to get away with their self-proclaimed assertions of representativeness. The people of Jammu and Kashmir do have a right to an honourable ruling arrangement, but they will continue to feel cheated of such a dispensation as long as they allow the Abdullahs, the Mufiris, the Kars, the Maliks and the Gilanis to manipulate their hurt feelings just as they manipulate the fixations of realpolitik practitioners in Delhi, Islamabad, and Washington.

BEGUM JEHAN DIES; VAJPAYEE ATTENDS FUNERAL

NC meet deferred, PM invites Farooq for talks

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 11. The autonomy issue was reopened today with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, inviting the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, for "further dialogue", saying the Centre's rejection of autonomy resolution passed by the J&K Assembly was not "outright", 9.87-58K

Mr. Vajpayee, who arrived here to participate in the last rites of Begum Akbar Jehan, wife of late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who passed away here this morning, also visited the famous Hazratbal shrine for the first time. The meeting of the National Conference working committee, which was to be resumed this evening, has been postponed till July 15 in view of the demise of Begum Jehan, mother of Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

Accompanied by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, Mr. Vajpayee told mediapersons outside the Hazratbal shrine that they prayed for the peace, prosperity and development of the State.

'Not an outright rejection'

"I have invited Dr. Abdullah to Delhi for further dialogue (on autonomy)," he said, adding that the Union Cabinet had not rejected the autonomy resolution outright but "it was not accepted". So, there was scope for discussion. Asked what would be the basis for such a dialogue, he did not elaborate. Mr. Vajpayee also refused to cite the reasons for the rejection of the resolution.

Dr. Abdullah confirmed that he had been invited for talks by the Prime Minister. "I am otherwise going to Delhi to receive the B.C. Roy Award on July 14 and will come back to attend the fourth-day ceremony of my mother." On



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, at the funeral of Begum Jehan in Srinagar on Tuesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahamad

July 15, he would again visit Delhi for the proposed talks but would first convene the National Conference working committee meeting to deliberate the autonomy issue.

Asked what was the significance of Mr. Vajpayee's unscheduled visit to Hazratbal, Dr. Abdullah said, "It has a great religious and political history and this visit was also religious and political."

Earlier, Mr. Vajpayee landed at the Srinagar airport and drove straight to Dr. Abdullah's residence and laid a wreath on the body of Begum Akbar Jehan. Mr. Advani and Mr. Fernandes, besides the Governor, Mr. G.C. Saxena, who was in Delhi and flew with Mr. Vajpayee, also laid

wreaths. The Prime Minister, after a brief halt at the Raj Bhavan, visited the banks of the Dal Lake where Begum Jehan was buried by the side of her late husband, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah. She was buried with the full state honours and the Government announced a State holiday today.

The Begum's death has been widely mourned. Her sons Mr. Tariq Abdullah, Dr. Mustafa Kamal (a State Minister), daughter Prof. Suraya Mattoo, son-in-law and former Chief Minister, Mr. G.M. Shah, were also present.

A towering personality

A towering personality in Kashmir politics, Begum Akbar Jehan was born in 1916 in a family

which had converted to Islam from Christianity. Married to Sheikh Abdullah in 1933, she always stood by her husband who spent 22 years in incarceration after being dismissed in 1953. The patron of the ruling National Conference till her death, she was first elected to the Lok Sabha in 1977 from Srinagar and from Anantnag in 1984.

After the Sheikh's death in 1982, she continued to be a source of inspiration to the party workers. When militancy erupted in 1989, she quit active politics. Indisposed for quite some time, she breathed her last on Tuesday morning.

PM's Hazratbal visit: page 13

Centre's olive branch to NC

PM attends Farooq mother's burial, visits Hazratbal shrine

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 11

IN A major initiative to ease the tension following the Cabinet's rejection of the autonomy resolution, Prime Minister A B Vajpayee today invited Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah to New Delhi on July 15 for a dialogue.

Mr Vajpayee's invitation came as the PM, accompanied by Home Minister L K Advani and Defence Minister George Fernandes, flew to Srinagar as a special gesture to pay their last respects to Begum Akbar Jehan, the widow of Sheikh Abdullah, who passed away this morning after prolonged illness. She was 84 and the chief patron of the National Conference.

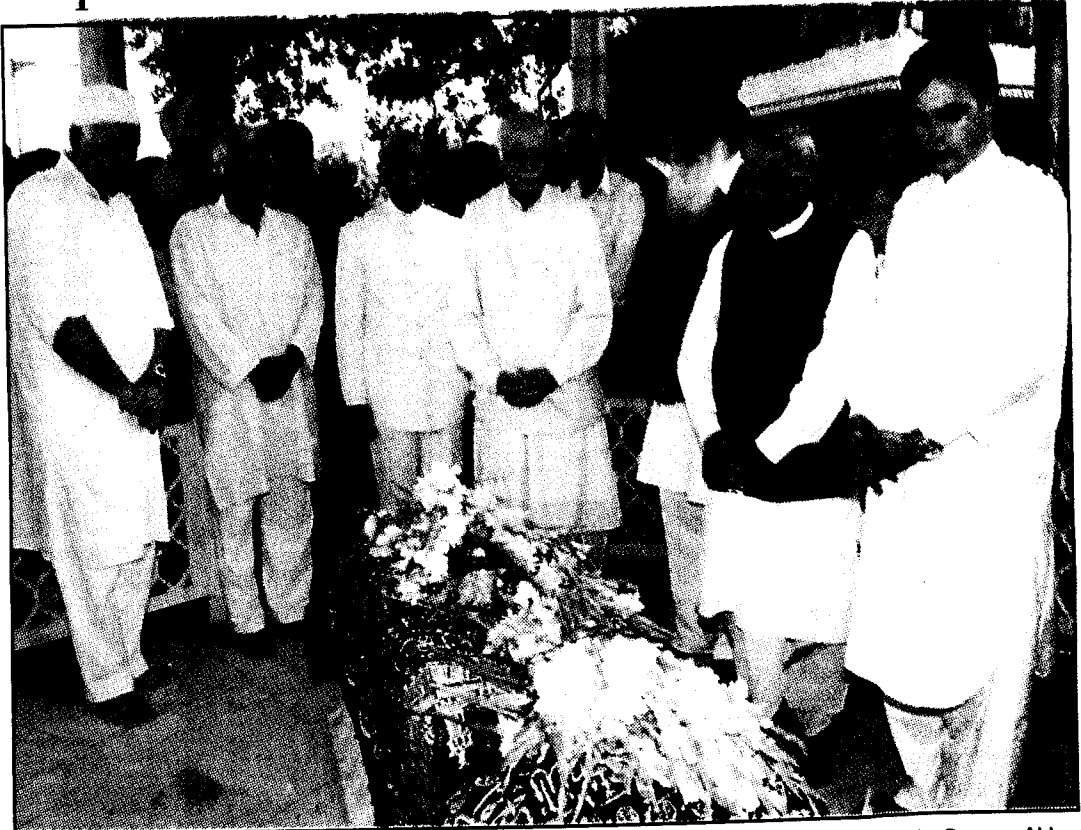
Besides commiserating with Dr Abdullah at his hour of bereavement, Mr Vajpayee, accompanied by other central leaders, paid obeisance at the historic Hazratbal shrine and held out hope for a solution to the Kashmir problem. They also laid wreaths at the memorial of Sheikh Abdullah.

"There are many things to talk and the dialogue will continue," the Prime Minister said in response to questions on what was left to be discussed after the Cabinet's rejection of the autonomy demand.

Mr Vajpayee said the Cabinet's decision was based on many reasons and could not be termed as an "outright rejection."

Clearly pleased with the National Conference's decision to postpone its working committee meeting on whether to remain in the NDA, Mr Vajpayee said his message was that "we have to live together for peace and prosperity of Jammu and Kashmir and the country."

Dr Abdullah, on his part,



Atal Behari Vajpayee, L K Advani and George Fernandes at the grave of Sheikh Abdullah. Begum Akbar Jehan was buried beside the Sheikh's grave in Srinagar on Tuesday. Photo: AFP

responded positively to Mr Vajpayee's invitation saying, "Yes, I have been formally invited to New Delhi for talks." Before coming to the Capital, the Chief Minister said the National Conference's working committee would meet to finalise its stand.

On being asked about the significance of Mr Vajpayee's visit to Hazratbal, the Chief Minister said: "You must know that Hazratbal is a religious and political centre. Therefore, his visit has political and religious significance."

In the Centre's view, although it was the death of Begum Akbar Jehan which forced the National Conference to postpone its working committee meeting, Dr Abdullah had avoided a hawkish approach and gained time to take a fresh look at the issue.

As a special gesture, the Union Cabinet today condoled the death of Dr Abdullah's mother saying it was "a loss to the nation." And BJP leaders here expressed the hope that the easing of tension between the Centre and the NC would

eventually lead to a dialogue.

Although Dr Abdullah is still firm on the autonomy demand, what has pleased the Centre is that he has so far avoided a decision on breaking ties with the NDA and precipitating a crisis for New Delhi.

The BJP, which had taken a strong view of Dr Abdullah's autonomy demand, also showed signs of softening up. Party chief Kushabhau Thakre hailed Begum Akbar Jehan as a "pious lady."

Obituary on Page 10

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUL 2000

TRIFURCATION

Communalising The Kashmir Issue

By AG NOORANI

WHEN the Union Home Minister LK Advani went to Leh, on 7 June, he knew he was on charged terrain. The Ladakh Buddhist Association has for years threatened violence. "It seems that the Centre understands only the language of violence", its President had said as far back as on 18 May 1992. A social boycott of Muslims was on for months. Last year the hapless refugees from Kargil were cold-shouldered in Leh. Enactment of the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997 notwithstanding, the LBA revived its demand for Union Territory status.

Earlier, on 13 May 1992, the Governor of J&K, GC Saxena, ruled out categorically any move for trifurcation of the state. Now, in contrast, Advani has encouraged it. The ritual qualification "within the four corners of the Constitution" is less relevant than the fact that the Home Minister has countenanced ("can discuss") the trifurcation and in the context of the memo the LBA gave to the PM that day containing the demand.

Constitutionally, the Centre has no right or power in this matter at all. Article 3 empowers Parliament "by law" to "diminish the area of any State". In relation to Kashmir, no such Bill can even "be introduced in Parliament without the consent of the Legislature of that State". The Centre has no business to offer to "consider" a demand whose acceptance is the sole prerogative of Kashmir.

Advani could not have been un mindful of the chain reaction which his remarks would set. Jammu's separation from the state of Jammu and Kashmir was demanded by the Jan Sangh at the very moment of its birth in 1951. It will lead to a partition of the state on communal lines with incalculable consequences, at home and internationally. The region of Ladakh comprises two districts — Leh, which is predominantly Buddhist, and predominantly Muslim Kargil which "would remain with Kashmir" as an influential leader Asghar Karbalayee said on 19 June.

JAMMU

Jammu will split evenly. Three of its six districts have a Muslim majority — Doda (63.59 per cent; Poonch (88.87 per cent); and Rajouri (60.97 per cent). The latter two abut the LoC. The other three are Udhampur, Jammu and Kathua. A tehsil in Udhampur and three in Rajauri will go to the Valley.

Jawaharlal Nehru told the Lok Sabha on 25 March 1953: "It has been proposed ... 'Well, if not Kashmir, let Jammu become completely inter-related with India'. That obviously means that the Jammu and Kashmir state is disrupted. And we support this famous process of integration by disruption and by throwing away inevitably the rest of the State into somebody's lap."

Sheikh Abdullah sharply reminded Shyamaprasad Mookerjee on 4 February 1953: "This arrangement Article 370 has not been arrived at now but as early as 1949 when you happened to be a part of the Government". Nehru delivered the same reminder in the Lok Sabha on 7 August 1952: "a basis which was made in my absence from India — I was in America at that time — and laid down by that stout builder of this nation — Sardar Patel". The Constituent Assembly adopted Article 370 of the Constitution on 17 October 1949. The Constitution has since become studded with its companions conferring "special status" on Nagaland (Article 371A); Sikkim (Article 371F); Mizoram (Article 371G); and Arunachal Pradesh (Article 371H). Parliament may not, for

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instance, alter laws on land and on criminal and civil justice in Nagaland and Mizoram.

It speaks for Sheikh Saheb's vision that whenever he spoke of Kashmir's autonomy vis-a-vis Centre, he stressed also the need for autonomy to its regions in his inaugural address to the State's Constituent Assembly on 5 November 1951, and repeatedly later.

A misconception must be dispelled here. Districts or regions within a state are exposed to its government's "overlordship" regardless of whether it has a "special status" within the Union or not. Devolution of power from the state capital downwards alone can prevent that. Hence, the 73rd and 74th



Constitutional Amendments (1992) on the panchayats and the municipalities, respectively. Jammu and Leh enjoy no better "protection" from Srinagar now or would if Article 370 were restored to what it was before its unconstitutional erosion. They do need fair guarantees of devolution of the kind Sheikh Abdullah had envisaged.

There can, doubtless, be two opinions on the Report of the State Autonomy Committee. There can be no two informed opinions on the inspired stupidity of the report of the Regional Autonomy Committee. One wonders whether the two MLAs and a minister who inscribed their signatures to it had delved into the historical, economic and other texts it ostentatiously cites. That must be the handiwork of an overly zealous academic far removed from reality. It holds that "it is relevant to define the regions within the State". Why? Because in his opinion "This issue is basic to the political and economic empowerment of the people". And he proceeds to undertake "the mapping of the regions". Eight are listed; some with fancy names for the lay like Kamraz, Nundabad and Maraz. It ends up by carving up the State, in effect, on a communal basis instead of taking the State just as it is and formulating a scheme of devolution which would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of Jammu and Ladakh.

MODELS

He did grave disservice by muddying the waters. Kargil, he separated from Leh, and Poonch, Rajouri and Doda, from Jammu with a tehsil of Udhampur thrown in. He had ample models to draw upon which he ignored. Devolution of power to Scotland and Wales is one of them. On 11 April 1992 the BJP leader Chaman Lal presented the PM with a memo which demanded inter alia "Statutory Regional Councils be established in all the three regions of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir on the principle of division of legislative, executive and judicial powers of the State between the State and the Region ... within the framework of the Indian Union and the unity of the States". It can be improved upon.

A sensible approach on devolution would have raised the level of debate on both Reports. As the Governor, GC Saxena had said in an interview to this paper on 6 May 1992 that "short of secession or azaadi (freedom), Kashmir can have anything within the framework

of the Indian Constitution".

Which brings us to the self-indulgence of another academic, Joseph E Schwartzberg. He familiarised himself, in intoxicating detail, with the linguistic, ethnic, geographical divisions of Kashmir and proceeded, in his inebriation, to inform whoever lent him an ear on how the State should be carved up. The report of the much talked about Kashmir Study Group bears the impress of his hare-brained outpourings. Which is a great pity.

The KSG is neither a US state department front nor its adviser. It was set up by M Farooq Kathwari of whom a lot is said, little known. Poor when young, this Kashmiri went to the US and became a billionaire. Just when happiness seemed perfect, tragedy struck him. Unknown to him, his son went to fight in Afghanistan and was killed there. Kathwari — who, incidentally, this writer has never met — did what people in such situations do — fight grief with commitment to a cause. His KSG comprised some 20-odd members of distinction. They laboured hard. A lot of money was spent in travels and publication of excellently produced reports and maps, which is not to overlook the inaccuracy. If a sense of realism had kept company with sincerity, their proposals would have been more relevant. That is no reason for not studying them carefully; least of all treating them with smear or suspicion.

Let us look beyond our frontiers to gain some perspective, some calm. At our instance, Sri Lanka acknowledged in the 1987 accord that it "is a multi-ethnic and a multi-lingual plural society." India is much larger, far more diverse. The Meech Lake Accord (1987) between the PM and the Premiers of Canada's ten Provinces recognised "that Quebec constitutes within Canada a distinct society". Failure to ratify it led to alienation in Quebec.

GOALS

The Supreme Court of Canada's ruling on 20 August 1998 is very relevant to our situation. It said that the "principle of federation facilitates the pursuit of collective goals of cultural and linguistic minorities which form the majority within a particular province. This is the case in Quebec..." It cannot secede "unilaterally"; but nor can Ottawa ignore separatist sentiments in the province. The solution lies in "negotiations". The Court passed severe strictures on refusal by either the Centre or the Province earnestly "to negotiate in accordance with the constitutional principles" it had outlined in the judgment. It was a unanimous judgment by nine judges of distinction. A model of judicial statesmanship, it frowned on both extremes.

That is the only course open to all concerned in Kashmir. The LoC divides Jammu as well as the Valley. We need to look beyond it and to promote dialogue at all levels — with the Hurriyat, between the two halves of Kashmir, with Pakistan, and, indeed, with all the elements in all the regions of the State. If the two Koreas can sign an agreement on reunion of separated families, why cannot India and Pakistan in respect of divided Kashmir?

As Canada's Supreme Court said: "No one can predict the course that such negotiations might take". But they would definitely mark a change of direction, a raising of sights. In like situations GM Sadiq, a cerebral CM of Kashmir, often quoted a couplet by the immortal Majaaz: *Kuch nahi to kum se kum khwab-e-sahar dekha to hai! Jis taraf dekha na tha ab tak udhar dekha to hai.* (If nothing else, I have at least dreamt of a dawn/ Where I had never before turned to cast my eyes, I have now turned and seen).

Farooq changes tack, will speak of devolution, not autonomy

By Manoj Joshi

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Union government and J&K chief minister Farooq Abdullah have agreed to restart a dialogue on autonomy by beginning discussions on the devolution of more financial and administrative powers to the state.

Having hit a brick wall in asking for restoration of the state's pre-1953 status, the National Conference is apparently now willing to discuss the subject under the rubric of 'devolution' since the word 'autonomy' has been per-

ceived as a red rag for the Union cabinet. State officials and ministers now say that 'autonomy' and 'devolution' are interchangeable, emphasising that they are not interested in any confrontation with the Centre on the subject.

This is a view that sits well with the position taken by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani in rejecting the autonomy resolution.

The government's decision to talk to Dr Abdullah is based on a carefully constructed compromise that was in the works after the

peremptory rejection of the assembly resolution. Union government officials say that while the funeral of Begum Akbar Jehan, Farooq's mother, acted as a catalyst in bringing New Delhi and Srinagar together, the process of finding a common ground for talks was already being explored through a variety of channels. The PM's gesture in personally attending the funeral considerably softened the chief minister and his party colleagues.

► No going back to pre-'53, Page 7
► See Edit: No-risk Venture, Page 8

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 JUL 2000

This haste will haunt us

By Pran Chopra

A mood of hope had spread through Kashmir... But what came to pass on July 4 was a startling anti-climax... There is only a long way out of the mess, if there is one.

WHENEVER SOMEONE usually does something exactly the reverse it is best to suspend judgment, because there may be more to it than meets the eye. However, this does not preclude examination of such evidence as exists for understanding events and reading their shadows. The case in point is the way the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, on one side and Dr. Farooq Abdullah on the other handled the matter of the J&K State Autonomy Committee's Report, and what the consequences might be.

On June 30, several correspondents at the Prime Minister's press conference on board his aircraft heard him say that the autonomy resolution passed by the J&K Assembly was within the Constitution, and they so reported in the next morning's newspapers. On July 2 followed a "clarification". It said what the Prime Minister said was that the Report would be "considered in accordance with the Constitution". Both comments were unnecessary statements of the obvious. All powers of any State are, and can be, only as they are in the Constitution, they can be reduced or increased in (and only in) accordance with the Constitution and its amending procedures; any demand for changes can only be considered in accordance with the Constitution, and in that sense it is not outside the Constitution. The demand itself is unconstitutional only if made in an unconstitutional way, which a resolution by a State Assembly is not and if anything is conceded which is incompatible with the Constitution it is bound to be struck down in any case.

What this sequence did was only to heighten the contrast between what happened on the morning and the evening of July 4, and what the Prime Minister and the Home Minister had been saying until only a few days and hours earlier.

Even in the in-flight press conference, the Prime Minister said there was no mistrust between New Delhi and Srinagar, the Autonomy Report was not a "serious" development, and "this situation will be tackled with complete success". The Home Minister went further on June 27. "The Government of India will take a considered view on the autonomy resolution

(and) ultimately it has to be decided by Parliament." Asked if other States would make similar demands, he replied "I do not think" while also adding that the National Democratic Alliance had received a mandate on the devolution of power to States. Similarly reassuring was his reported comment in London on June 22 that the Centre was not against autonomy, and "the J&K Assembly's views will be kept in mind when we consider the Report". This was after a meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and Dr. Abdullah the preceding day.

Thanks to such views and their extensive reporting a mood of hope had spread through Kashmir which was summed up in a newspaper headline on July 1 which said "Fed up with war, Kashmiris forget *azadi* settle for autonomy", and a signed article by the paper's well known chief editor said "End game in the valley. *Azadi* to Autonomy". "There is a lot of room for give and take" he added in a highlighted passage. The mood of hope was justified because for years a credible report had been doing the rounds that Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao had said in 1995 that short of secession, "the sky was the limit" for autonomy.

But what came to pass instead on July 4 was a startling anticlimax. At a single sitting that morning the Union Cabinet rejected the Report "unanimously" and summarily. It was nothing like "this is acceptable", "that can be considered", "but that cannot be." The report was rejected *in toto*. Mr. Advani announced "the Government would not do anything" to bring the Report before Parliament though a private member could do what he might. This followed his statement on Doordarshan the previous evening which can only be described as selective truth. He held up to the camera a copy of the text of the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord of November, 1974, and read a sentence from it which said "... provisions of the Constitution of India already applied to the State of Jammu and Kashmir without adaptation or modification are unalterable." But he said nothing about nine points which are going

to matter much in the coming months. First. The same Accord also says that the "adaptations and modifications" made in (numerous) provisions before applying them to the State can be "altered or repealed" on merits. Second. It also lists many other extensions of the Union's jurisdiction to the State after 1953 (that is after Sheikh Abdullah was arrested) which could be terminated, and the State's recommendations about them would be "sympathetically considered". Third. It promises "fullest consideration" to the views of the State in taking any steps, going beyond the accepted subject of "defence", for protecting the safety and integrity of the State and of the Union. Fourth. The Accord is an extra-constitutional bilateral agreement between the Sheikh and Indira Gandhi and open to change by mutual agreement between their successors. Fifth. The Centre is already committed, and proud to be, to devolve more powers to the States, including presumably J&K. Sixth. There is little difference between the quantum of powers the State may get under a practicable and exercisable autonomy and those it may get under a devolution which has now become practically irreversible all over the country.

Seventh. If "give and take" had begun there would have been a good chance of consensus on the extension to the State of the jurisdictions of the Supreme Court, the Election Commission, and the Comptroller and Auditor General. In the late 1950s, Sadiq Sahib, the best Chief Minister the State has had, said these jurisdictions were so popular with the average Kashmiri that no politician would have opposed the chance of a consensus on them. Eight. Given that consensus, and the Supreme Court's new-found power to protect "the basic structure", the State's essential interests in the union and of the Union in the State would have been equally safe. And finally, and most importantly, the issue on that fateful morning and evening of July 4 was not what was more constitutional but what was more conducive for a political climate, within the State and between it

and New Delhi, which would nurture a consensus. Surely a sincere and open-ended invitation to patient talks, not the abrupt and almost insulting rejection of the Report, which has sharply diminished the standing of the most outspoken Kashmiri defender of the State's accession to India and has encouraged some ambivalent leaders of the Huriyat to push their oars into the newly-troubled waters.

Who is responsible for this debacle? Facts are scarce as yet. But the needle of speculation points to the two meetings the Prime Minister had just before the cabinet met, one with the BJP president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, the other with Dr. Abdullah. Even while the Prime Minister and Home Minister were holding out uncommon hope. Mr. Thakre had already, on June 26, called upon people to reject the autonomy resolution, which he called "a retrograde step". Two days later the BJP General Secretary and party spokesman predicted rejection of the resolution by Parliament. Prime Minister and the Home Minister probably blinked, confronted with the false argument that other Indian States would prove to be dominoes. Dr. Abdullah's failure was patent and it must have soured his meeting with the Prime Minister. He had failed to keep his (reported) promise to the Prime Minister that the State Assembly would only debate the Report not adopt a resolution demanding its acceptance. Worse, he could neither prevent, anti-India venom in the Assembly debate nor build a consensus in the State, as shown by the demonstrations in Ladakh and Jammu. While trying to persuade the country that autonomy for the State was good for it, he could not tell the two regions of the State what was in it for them. There is only a long way out of this mess, if there is one.

Mr. Vajpayee and Dr. Abdullah have fortunately given themselves a chance to recover some lost ground. The least they must ensure is that substantial discussion ensues between New Delhi and Srinagar. There is much that can be offered to J&K without going beyond desirable devolution. New Delhi need not think of other States as thoughtless dominoes. How many asked for a Constitution for themselves just because J&K was given one in the very special circumstances of the accession of the State to India.

THURSDAY, JULY 13, 2000

STARTING THE DIALOGUE

IN A MOVE that looks more like a damage-control exercise, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has "invited" Dr. Farooq Abdullah for talks on the nationally sensitive, and contentious, issue of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir. This precisely is the way the Centre ought to have responded, in the first instance, to the autonomy resolution the State Legislature had passed less than two weeks ago and followed it up with a much wider debate in Parliament and other high powered forums. Instead, the National Democratic Alliance regime summarily and unthinkingly rubbished the resolution — this was exactly what the Cabinet did, never mind Mr. Vajpayee's quibbling over the connotation of the terms, 'rejection' and 'not acceptable' — by harping on the 'return to pre-1953 status' claim in spite of Dr. Abdullah stating on record that the cutoff year and other aspects of the autonomy package are indeed negotiable. The flip-flop in a way reflects the strains and conflict of interests inherent in a disparate grouping of the NDA variety. And palpable in the Prime Minister's latest initiative is an anxiety not to let the National Conference, deeply hurt as it was by the Centre's negative attitude to the State's emotive demand for autonomy, pull out of the coalition; the party's national executive was in fact seriously deliberating on that option. Mr. Vajpayee could not have had a better opportunity for making the appeasement move than the one that presented itself during his visit for the funeral of Begum Akbar Jehan, mother of Dr. Abdullah and chief patron of the party. It is unlikely that the NC executive, which has deferred its deliberations by a few days, will opt to break away from the ruling coalition at the Centre in the changed context. Dr. Abdullah himself, keen as he has been to avoid a showdown with the Centre which would have entailed his party's pulling out of the NDA, might well be feeling relieved, now that the dialogue route has been opened.

The political ramifications aside, the proposed talks between the Centre and the National

Conference leadership constitute the crucial first step towards formulating an autonomy package for Jammu and Kashmir and the exercise should serve to set the basic parameters, besides identifying the sticky points in the scheme put forth by the State Autonomy Committee's report which the Legislature had endorsed. Obviously, there has to be a much wider debate, with participation by representatives of regional and sub-regional interests of the State, mainstream political parties of the country and so on, before the components of the package can be finalised. In fact, it may even be desirable, and worthwhile, to bring the secessionist All Party Hurriyat Conference also into the picture at some stage; after all, the Centre has of late been making subtle moves for opening a dialogue with the Hurriyat leadership in an effort to bring peace to the State. Going by the tenor of the official statement explaining the Cabinet's decision not to accept the autonomy resolution, there is a distinct attempt to set Jammu and Kashmir's case in the overall national context of greater devolution of powers on the States — and the term, 'autonomy', is seen as a synonym for 'secession' when used in relation to Kashmir. The BJP and its Sangh affiliates make no bones about their ideological 'commitment' to the abrogation of Article 370 and their deep-seated antagonism has found a more strident articulation in the days since the passing of the autonomy resolution by the J&K Legislature, as evidenced by the contemptuous manner in which suggestions by a few of the non-BJP partners even faintly supportive of Kashmir's case have been dismissed. What needs to be recognised is that the accession of Kashmir to the Indian Union was in effect contingent upon the State being given a greater measure of autonomy is a settled historical fact. The Vajpayee regime will need to come out categorically on honouring this national commitment, if its claim to being bound by the coalition's common agenda, as distinguished from that of the BJP, means anything at all.

THE HINDU

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Govt. inconsistent on autonomy issue: Sonia

19/7

By Our Special Correspondent

ND-13

NEW DELHI, JULY 13 The Congress(I) president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, today said the NDA Government was confused and inconsistent in its approach to the question of greater autonomy to J&K. Her remarks came in the course of her address to the PCC chiefs and CLP leaders this afternoon.

Mrs Gandhi used the meeting to elaborate her party's stand on the issue, and in doing so she tried to distinguish between what she called the BJP's confused approach to the issue and her party's clear policy. "For us the Indira Gandhi - Sheikh Abdullah accord of 1975 takes care of all Constitutional concerns, and therefore within the Constitution and within the framework of the 1975 accord. We believe it is possible for the Government to hold discussions and consultations with Dr Abdullah and all political parties to bring about a satisfactory solution".

Later talking to presspersons the Congress president took the Government to task for talking in different voices on important issues. She chose to explain away the problem of indiscipline in her party saying the Congress was "a large family, one in which different views and voices came up from time to time and it was important to listen and accommodate these voices". She took a swipe at the BJP say-

ing the focus was deliberately kept on the Congress "because it helps to suppress what is happening in the BJP".

Criticising the Government for withdrawing support to the khadi and village industry, she announced that the party would organise dharnas and protest marches throughout the country against the move on August 9, the Quit India day. Mrs Gandhi expressed deep concern at the attacks on the minorities and urged the party to put pressure on the Government to prevent such attacks.

During her address the Congress president urged her partymen to remain vigilant specially in the States where Assembly elections are scheduled next year and to keep an eye on the preparation of voter lists. "It often happens that we don't pay attention and our supporters' names are struck off the list."

Today's meeting decided to hold camps for active members of the party throughout the country. The idea, according to the party spokesman, Mr. Ajit Jogi, was to help the members acquaint themselves with the party's ideology, history, stand on some of the important issues concerning the nation and the challenges before the party. The party also planned to hold zonal conventions of block presidents, DCC and PCC office-bearers in the last week of August.

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Farooq calls off Delhi trip

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 13. — Dr Farooq Abdullah has called off his scheduled Delhi visit tomorrow, seeking first the "agenda" for his talks with the Centre. He had been expected to meet the Prime Minister tomorrow.

The Jammu and Kashmir chief minister has stayed back to buy peace with the members of his party's working committee who want him to pull out of the NDA, sources said.

Dr Abdullah has now decided to seek his party's endorsement at an extended meeting of its working committee in Srinagar on 15-16 July before committing himself to opening talks with the Centre on autonomy, it was learnt.

The Centre tried to play down the incident. "One should not read too much into the sudden postponement of the talks which were earlier scheduled for 15 July," an aide to the Prime Minister told **The Statesman** today. "There are some grey areas in formulating the agenda before the talks begin. It will be sorted out in a day or two."

At the meeting of the 31-member NC working committee, the chief minister is likely to have a tough time convincing colleagues to formally endorse opening talks with the Centre on the autonomy issue after the Cabinet rejected the demand for restoration of pre-

1953 status to the state.

Dr Abdullah was informed of the Centre's view soon after the Prime Minister extended an invitation to him to visit Delhi for talks.

Official sources said the chief minister was told the government was willing to devolve more powers to J&K within the parameters of the Sarkaria Commission recommendations. But it would not favour any dilution of the constitutional position under Article 370 that accords the state special status within the Indian Union.

After knowing the Centre's broad position on the autonomy demand, Dr Abdullah has urged it to keep the agenda open and flexible, so that he is able to get his party to agree to continuing in the NDA. Besides, he wants more room to manoeuvre before the Assembly polls next year, official sources in South Block said.

The chief minister's reported comments at a Srinagar rally today that his party did not want to weaken the Centre but was interested in the recognition of the state's dignity, was interpreted by Kashmir watchers here as a last ditch effort to get the Centre to at least agree to re-designate the post of chief minister as Wazir-e-Azam or Prime Minister, and that of Governor to Sadr-e-Riyasat or President, if it could not fully revert the status of Jammu and Kashmir to its pre-1953 position.

THE STATESMAN

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Centre hopes Farooq can rein in NC leaders

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 13. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah's decision to delay his arrival here by a few days has not been taken amiss at the senior level of decision-making. The Chief Minister was originally scheduled to visit New Delhi on July 15 in response to an invitation from the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to resume the dialogue on the State's quest for "autonomy"; now he has announced in Srinagar that he was deferring his visit by a few days. Everyone is pretending that it is entirely normal that before travelling to New Delhi the Chief Minister should be done with all the rites associated with his mother's death. The calculation here is that it would be just as well if Dr. Abdullah was to help the National Conference executive take a decision to stay in the National Democratic Alliance; more than political considerations, the verdict is that Dr. Farooq would not do anything to precipitate matters for the Centre.

It is argued that the Prime Minister had already given Dr. Abdullah sufficient room for manoeuvring by suggesting that the Centre had not rejected out-

right "autonomy" and instead, the Union Cabinet had only found the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's resolution "unacceptable". This formulation should help the Chief Minister prevail upon the NC leaders not to take a path that could only lead to some kind of a confrontation with the Centre.

It is hoped that the Chief Minister and his colleagues would have also noted the changed tune of the BJP. The party, which only last week had reverted back to its Jan Sangh days formulations about the Abdullah family, was now calling Dr. Abdullah a "great patriot". Many non-BJP political parties are also inclined to understand the "autonomy" urge and what could be done within the framework of the Constitution to satisfy that urge. There is a realisation that the hardliners in the BJP and the National Conference should be given some time to cool off, and that the cooling period be used to educate each other about the hard realities in Srinagar. The delay, therefore, in Dr. Abdullah travelling to the capital would help defeat those who want a "here and now" response to the autonomy issue.

Farooq sees positive move: Page 13

THE HINDU

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There is a middle path

By P. V. Indiresan

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IN THE 1920s, it was the fashion among psychologists to relate criminal character with facial features. Some researchers tried to estimate the face of the average criminal by taking the mean of the photos of a number of well known criminals. When they did so they found that the face became truly beautiful. The larger the number of samples they averaged, the more beautiful it became. The researchers could not explain the result then. Only recently has it been realised that the average is truly beautiful. The more beautiful a person is, the more average he or she will be — not too tall nor too short, not too lean nor too fat; eyes not too protruding nor too sunk; lips not too thick nor too thin and so on. As it is with beauty so it is with politics. The best politics is not too far out on one side or the other. As the Buddha advised, the best is the middle path.

It would appear reasonable that only a strong Centre can hold the country together. However, if for any reason the Centre does not hold, even if that happens momentarily, the system is liable to collapse. There lies the danger of a centralised system. It can work only against weak centrifugal forces but is no insurance against strong ones. It is also no answer with a weak or incompetent administration. However, a decentralised system too is no panacea by itself. According to a Chinese proverb, "servants do not what the master wants but what the master checks." That gives us the clue: a decentralised system operates satisfactorily only with checks, not otherwise. Essentially, a decentralised system has five steps. One, the rules of the game are set by mutual agreement. That is the Constitution. Two, targets (and intermediate checkpoints too) are set. That is the plan. Three, (at this stage) local bodies take over. They are free to choose how to meet the targets. Four, an independent agency reports the performance at each checkpoint. This is the stage where the India Government has made a big bloomer. The Indian inspector is policeman, prosecutor, judge and jailer all rolled into one, a petty dictator with no qualms. Instead, the inspector should merely report facts, do that without bias,

without fear or favour. It can be shown that the ultimate quality and the effectiveness of the whole system is set almost solely by the integrity and purity of the inspection. After inspection comes the role of the Centre at step five to introduce corrective measures based on the progress reports provided by the inspectors. The Centre will also reward those local bodies that are doing well and penalise those that are doing badly. The resultant competition among local bodies ensures a fine degree of control that is both delicate and robust. This five-step system of

human resource. It is difficult to say which is worse.

It can be said with much justification that Sheikh Abdullah started the rot by opting for Urdu instead of Kashmiri as the language of instruction in the State. That made Kashmiriyat a very confused concept. He also promoted a highly personalised administration leading to unbridled corruption. Such was the corruption that, thirty years ago, I found that engineering graduates from Kashmir preferred jobs in the State administration to Central jobs in the State even though the

low) will have to be found elsewhere in the country. It is best to appeal to the Narayanmurthis and the Tatas to help in generating such career opportunities. Let us give Kashmiri youth butter and not guns, convince them that in India they can make a prosperous home.

As matters stand, a scheme of this nature will end up filling the pockets of corrupt Ministers and officials, making the youth even more bitter than before. The Central Government is slow, its officials are often heartless and contemptuously overbearing. Hence, it is best to hand over this scheme to business leaders. Without doubt, there will be demands that jobs should be created in the Valley itself. That is fair enough but, thanks to the prevailing atmosphere of terror, that cannot be done overnight. In any case, that is quite impractical so long as the Kashmir Government holds on to its archaic rules. What is important is to find genuine jobs.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah wants autonomy. According to the principle of the middle path, there is no harm in meeting him half way. He wants to be called Sardar-i-Riyasat. That cannot do any harm. He wants greater control over finances, administration and recruitment of staff. That too can be conceded and the same autonomy can be given to other States too. However, there can be no autonomy without accountability. So, there can be no compromise on independent audit, the Election Commission or the Supreme Court. Such monitoring is in the best interests of Kashmiris themselves. Further, Kashmir should throw open its economy to other Indians the same way India has started to throw open the market to global players. Above all, just as India accepts the WTO, Kashmir too should concede it can have no arbitrary rules of its own.

Kashmiris want autonomy. Give it to them generously but use the opportunity to bargain. Make the Kashmir Government accept its duties of citizenship, a duty which successive Indian Governments have foolishly allowed them not to honour. Autonomy is not a one-way street! It has to be balanced by responsibilities so that the polity remains on the middle path!

Kashmiris want autonomy. Give it to them generously but use the opportunity to bargain.

latter paid much more. No wonder, Dr. Abdullah, the son, wants to get rid of Central services. Matters were made worse when political interference destroyed the quality of education. When students found that neither had Kashmir any jobs to offer for them nor were they able to compete outside, they fell to the blandishments of extremist madarasas. A comparison with Kerala will be illuminating. Kerala opted for "convent" type of schools to train its youth to serve and compete internationally. Extremist madarasas taught the youth to whine and to kill, trained them to compete internationally only in terrorism — giving thereby a bad name for all madarasas.

So far the Indian Government has tried to hold on to Kashmir by bribing the State's politicians and using force against its disaffected youth. It would have been far wiser to have patronised the youth and used force against the State's corrupt politicians! Again and again Kashmir's youth have pleaded for jobs and not guns. Their cry has gone unheeded by indifferent politicians and unimaginative officials. Even now it may not be too late. At a small fraction of the cost of maintaining the Army in Kashmir, apprenticeships can be created to bring up to scratch Kashmiri youth who are currently unemployable. However, there are few career prospects within the State. So, those apprenticeships (and then the jobs to fol-

feedback links all parts of the decentralised state by a mesh of interconnections, it is self-correcting. Errors are corrected irrespective of where they occur, whether introduced accidentally or deliberately. So, it can hold on even when several parts are damaged.

In a way, nations are like liquids. Like the way liquids take the shape of the vessel in which they are confined, nations take the shape of their physical and cultural boundaries. Liquids evaporate, so do nations. The hotter it is, the greater the evaporation. That is what is happening in India: the country is getting too hot for comfort. What Kashmiris feel is not an isolated instance. The alienation that has developed in Kashmir or in the Northeast is basically no different from the alienation Dalits feel, or what the tribals suffer from.

It is strange that one and all (including the NRTIs) are so much worried about Kashmiris breaking away. How about the NRTIs themselves? They too have broken away. Kashmiri youth too would have taken up green cards instead of arms if only they had the competence, rather if the Kashmir Government had been competent enough to give them good education. As they have no ability to compete, Kashmiris have got the illusion that they will do better if they break away. They want to denude the nation's geographical resource. NRTIs have denuded the nation's

Militants kill 3 monks, curfew clamped on Leh

The Times of India News Service

JAMMU: Indefinite curfew and shoot-at-sight orders were clamped on Leh and its adjacent villages on Thursday as tension mounted between Buddhists and Muslims when three monks were gunned down by militants in Kargil. In an earlier incident at Leh, a Ladakh Buddhist Association (LBA) leader allegedly made "derogatory remarks" about the Quran.

The situation is now officially described as "tense but under control".

According to a report from Srinagar, the Ladakh region has so far been free of militancy, except for an unsuccessful attempt by the Pakistan-backed ISI to pump in sophisticated arms during the Kargil war last year. The Ladakh police had busted the arms trade during the war, recovered 54 AK-47 rifles and arrested five persons from the Batalik sector.

On Wednesday afternoon, prohibitory orders under Section 144 of the CrPC were issued in the town when the two communities attempted to take out processions but were stopped short by the police. However, there were scuffles between isolated groups, which the police separated and chased away.

Several arrests were reported from both communities. A wave of anger and dismay ran through Leh on Wednesday afternoon when news of the shooting of three

monks from Kargil's Rangdum monastery on Tuesday night reached town. The monastery, situated between Fedun and Kargil towns, is in the Buddhist majority Zaskar tehsil. Kargil district itself, however, has a Muslim majority, while Leh district has a Buddhist majority.

The killers are said to have come in a truck and fired at the monastery, which houses 30 monks, killing three and wounding others. Another version said the three monks were gunned down some distance away from the monastery.

It was officially stated that 12 suspects had been rounded up in this connection.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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The Centre is right in rejecting Kashmir's autonomy resolution. But what of its impact on Kashmiriyat?

Secularism betrayed

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

EVER SINCE Farooq Abdullah dropped the autonomy bombshell on an unsuspecting NDA Government in Delhi, the Indian intelligentsia has been in a frenzy trying to assess its impact on Indian federalism and the balance of power between the Centre and the states. Its concern is understandable. No sooner had the Kashmir Assembly passed its resolution than a string of other State chief ministers formed a queue to press demands for more autonomy upon the Centre. Prominent among them were Parkash Singh Badal and M. Karunanidhi. Right behind them were Chandrababu Naidu and Jyoti Basu. In each and every case their reasons for doing so were the same: All faced serious political competition at home and were not averse to using autonomy as a playing card against their opponent. The Centre, therefore, did the right thing by stopping Kashmir's autonomy resolution cold in its tracks. But few political analysts have stopped to analyse the impact of this decision on Kashmir and Kashmiris. Several newspaper correspondents have reported that the issue has left most people cold because they regard it as an empty political ploy. But with just one or two exceptions — such as Muzamil Jaleel of the *Indian Express* — no one has bothered to analyse the reactions of the Kashmiris to the other part of the autonomy resolution — the one that deals with relations between the eight ethnic sub-units of the State. There was a great deal that was wrong with this part of the draft report. But the spirit behind it was healthy, constructive and designed to serve India's national interest.

Over the last two decades, what had been at first purely ethnic divides within the State imposed largely by its geography, slowly developed a communal colour. This first became apparent when Kargil opted to stay out of the Ladakh Autonomous Development Council. The reason was the rift that had developed after the incursion of Khomeini-ite Shia-ism in Kargil and active proselytisation of young Ladakhi girls in fundamentalist Shia schools even in the heart of Leh. Thus when Ladakh rebelled against the economic discrimination it was suffering at the hands of Srinagar and demanded an ADC, Kargil refused to go along largely on communal grounds. A second divide gradually opened between Hindus and Muslims especially in the Doda and

northern Jammu districts. This followed three years of relentless attacks upon Hindu families (a minority in this area) by Pakistani terrorists who often found shelter with local families. The result was a migration of as many as 20,000 to 30,000 Hindus from the region by July 1998.

A third divide, especially tragic because it is now almost forgotten, was between the Pandits and the Muslims of Kashmir Valley. Between January and July 1990, 132 Kashmiri Pandits were killed in the middle of Hindu localities. This was supplemented by abduction threats aimed at women of Pandit families. Then when a quarter of a million Pandits fled, the Kashmiri militants blamed Jagmohan for their departure. They claimed that the then Governor had incited them to leave in preparation for genocide against Muslims in Kashmir. All this was carefully planned with the help of the ISI in Pakistan, and the JKLF was manoeuvred into starting the killing in order to force it into a confrontation with the security forces. This would destroy the JKLF and leave the field open for the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen.

Far from wanting to exacerbate communal tensions in Kashmir, the second part of the autonomy report was an attempt to contain them within a single multi-chambered vessel. But none of this was apparent to the BJP MLAs in Jammu or the RSS chief and his advisors in Nagpur. Faced with Dr Abdullah's autonomy resolution and Ladakh's revolt against it, they demanded a trifurcation of the State into Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. That, and not the Centre's rejection of the autonomy resolution, is what is threatening to set the Valley on fire.

Trifurcation will strike a deathblow to what remains of 'Kashmiriyat', that syncretic fusion of Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism in a composite culture that is the very heart of this unique civilisation.

It was the desire to protect Kashmiriyat that made Sheikh Abdullah break ranks with the Muslim Conference and set up the National Conference in 1936. It was Kashmiriyat that made him renew his commitment to a federal India and continue his alliance with the Congress in the face of numerous blandishments by Jinnah and his colleagues in 1945.

Today, in addition to being an ethnic standard, Kashmiriyat is also a political one as well for Kashmiris demanding self-government. It was this that impelled Hashim Qureshi, the chairman of the JKLF, to refuse to recruit Kashmiri volunteers for guerilla training by the ISI in 1986. He realised that Pakistan had no intention of supporting Kashmir's independence. It was Kashmiriyat that drove the JKLF to battle the Hizbul Mujahideen in a no-holds-barred mini-war that took over 500 lives in the two years (1991-93). And it is the banner of Kashmiriyat that Dr Abdullah wrested from 'the boys' — it now seems temporarily — to win the 1996 State elections and take the heart out of militancy.

Trifurcation would therefore destroy everything that three generations of Kashmiris have fought for. Although its survival is of vital importance to India, successive governments in New Delhi have spared no effort to destroy it. In a dress rehearsal for what it would do in Punjab six years later, the Indira Gandhi Government in Delhi persuaded Chief Minister Ghulam Sadiq to lift a ban on the Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir in 1972. (The aim was to propitiate orthodox Sunni Muslims and thereby create a vote base for the Congress in Kashmir). This coincided with an inflow of oil money into this organisation throughout Pakistan and India.

As a result, today there are no fewer than 800 *madrasas* of the Jammata-e-Islami in J&K. Although these are very different from the



madrasas and *deen-i-madaris* of Pakistan, they have turned out to be the seedbeds from which the Hizbul Mujahideen regularly harvests its crop of martyrs and mercenaries.

The Centre's attack on Kashmiriyat did not relent during the Nineties. The security forces in Kashmir never once succeeded in making a distinction between the JKLF and the Hizbul, and killed cadres of both with equal abandon. The high point of this mindlessness was reached in November 1992 when JKLF president Hamid Sheikh was killed by an army detachment on the basis of a tip-off from an Al Jihad (pro-Pakistan) informer. Sheikh was actually holding a meeting of the JKLF's council to discuss terms for ceasing to wage war on the security forces in Kashmir and come overground.

Following the release of Yasin Malik, the JKLF gave up violence and came overground in 1994. The Government left Malik to stew in his own juices and did not even bother to lift the ban that had been imposed on the organisation for the murder of Indian diplomat Ravindra Mhatre in England a decade earlier. To the security forces, therefore, the JKLF remained fair game. Malik claimed recently in an interview that his party had lost 500 cadres after it gave up violence. The estimate may be exaggerated, but even half this number would rule out accident or sheer stupidity on the part of the police and the armed forces.

Unless it is crushed immediately and decisively, the mere demand for trifurcation will set off a chain reaction of communal polarisation that even the JKLF, the Mirwaiz, Shabbir Shah and its other votaries will not be able to contain. For it will demonstrate that most Indians have either never understood Kashmiri syncretism, or have long since dismissed Kashmiriyat as a fig leaf for Muslim communalism. To them a Kashmiri Muslim is a Muslim, a Hindu is a Hindu and a Sikh a Sikh, and they cannot live together. That, of course, is what Ali Shah Geelani has been saying all the time.

The comment of a key member of the Hurriyat to the demand of trifurcation was one that filled me with shame: "India needs to be secular. That is why Kashmir is so important to it. Trifurcation will be an attack on our secularism. How can India claim to be a secular country if it destroys Kashmir's secularism?"

Divisions in Ladakh

THE SUDDEN outburst of communal tension in Ladakh could not have come at a more inopportune time for the State Government. The authorities were forced to issue shoot-at-sight orders amid an indefinite curfew in Leh town and surrounding villages on Thursday. The tension has been building up following the killing of three Buddhist monks in a monastery on the outskirts of Zaskar by suspected Muslim militants a few days earlier. It is widely believed that this dastardly act was yet another instance of trans-border terrorism intended to create a division between the Buddhist and the Shia Muslim communities living in the twin districts of Leh and Kargil. It is a measure of the lack of rapprochement and understanding between the local population and the leadership in Srinagar that some Ladakhi leaders have blamed the State Government for the incidents.

It is true that some militant outfits in Srinagar have over the past decade made periodic attempts to get a foothold here by communalising the situation in Kargil. The region's Shia Muslim population, however, have generally kept their distance from the Pakistan-trained mercenaries operating out of the Valley. This was amply demonstrated during the Kargil war last year. It is possible that the subversive elements may now be seeking to capitalise on the widespread disenchantment in the region over Dr Farooq Abdullah's autonomy proposal. It would be sheer folly to let them succeed in their designs.

It is important to put these developments in the perspective of the recent controversy over the autonomy resolution. It was because of the Ladakhis' deep sense of alienation vis-a-vis the rulers in Srinagar that they responded to the State Assembly resolution by reviving their long-standing demand for Union Territory status through a unanimous resolution of the Ladakh Hill Council. Given this context, the State Government must not see the latest developments as a routine law and order problem. It must urgently address the grievances of the Ladakhi people and do whatever possible to make them feel equal participants in the tasks of development and governance. The Ladakhi leaders also feel that the State Government has been treating them in a cavalier fashion. They partly blame the Central Government not taking them seriously for this. They allege that often they tend to be taken for granted by the Centre just because they are solidly committed to the cause of national unity. That is a sentiment that should not be allowed to take root in the minds of the people of a region whose strategic importance — and vulnerability to trans-border mischief — cannot be over-emphasised.

15 JUL 2000

Let's start talks from 1947: Farooq

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 14. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, today said he wanted to discuss the Kashmir issue right from 1947 so that the honour and confidence of the people could be restored and a solution found. While reiterating that Kashmir would never secede from India, he said all options would be discussed by the working committee of the National Conference.

Talking to mediapersons after the fourth-day ceremony of his mother, Begum Akbar Jehan, Dr. Abdullah said, "We are going to discuss all the aspects of the Kashmir issue right from 1947 to this date, and without any conditions." He was ready to discuss everything, including the 1975 accord between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah.

On how much depends on the working committee meeting which will resume deliberations tomorrow, he said: "Nothing depends on that."

However, he said no option had been foreclosed, when his attention was drawn towards the statement of the NC general secretary, Sheikh Nazir Ahmed, last Monday, when he had said

the working committee was discussing only "whether to remain in the NDA or not". He is the general secretary and makes the laws of the party, the Chief Minister added.

Dr. Abdullah said he had no reason to doubt the sincerity of

the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, who had made an offer to him to come to Delhi to discuss the issue. He will be accompanied by some of his ministerial colleagues to Delhi on Monday for discussions with the Prime Minister.

"A solution which is acceptable to the people has to be hammered out... a way has to be found so that we are on the path of peace and prosperity," he said. Earlier speaking at the function organised at the

mausoleum of Sheikh Abdullah, where Begum Akbar was laid to rest, the Chief Minister said Kashmir will never secede from India to become independent or part of Pakistan. "Yehaan azadi ya Pakistan kabhi nahin aaneey wala hai," he said. But there was no going back on the issue of autonomy as it was the question of honour and dignity of the people. He noted that newspapers had been writing that the autonomy issue was only being used to fool the people, as 'Farooq Abdullah was not serious', but "when the resolution was passed it was like a hydrogen bomb". He said that he does not want to put the people into trouble like the Hurriyat Conference is doing.

Thousands of people today participated in the fourth-day ceremony of Begum Abdullah, paying rich tributes to her. Dr. Abdullah announced that a Trust in the name of Begum Abdullah, popularly known as Madar-e-Meharban, would be set up to rehabilitate widows and orphans who were victims of 10 years of militancy. He donated a cheque of Rs.1 lakh to the Trust which he received as Dr. B.C. Roy Award.

Shah, Farooq come closer

demise. Accompanied by the police, Mirwaiz Farooq spent 14 minutes with Dr. Abdullah at his Gupkar residence.

He is the only and the first separatist leader from the Hurriyat Conference and outside to extend his sympathies to Dr. Abdullah's family publicly. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's father had entered into an accord with Dr. Abdullah in the mid-80s, ending the decade-old hostility between the two political families of Kashmir.

However, with the onset of militancy, the Mirwaiz dynasty distanced itself from Sheikh Abdullah's family. And it is for the first time that the two families have met, though the occasion was the demise of the National Conference patron-in-chief, Begum Akbar Jehan.

a relaxed mood. When Dr. Abdullah said how chief ministership prevented him from taking rest in the woods of Tangmarg, Mr. Shah quipped: "Leave it (the chair)." And Dr. Abdullah responded: "I would, but you will occupy it."

Later talking to reporters he said, "The battle is over." He, however, avoided queries on whether Mr. Shah will make a comeback to the National Conference.

Mirwaiz calls on Farooq
In a significant development, the former chairman of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, and one of its advocative members, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, today called on the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah and extended his sympathies to him on his mother's

By Our Special Correspondent
SRINAGAR, JULY 14. The death of Begum Akbar Jehan has helped put an end to 16-year-long hostilities between the two families of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and his estranged brother-in-law, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Shah.

Though the family of Mr. Shah, who toppled Dr. Abdullah's Government in 1984, visited the Gupkar residence of the Chief Minister on Tuesday when their mother passed away, the two for the first time appeared jointly on one platform in Hazratbal near the mausoleum of Sheikh Abdullah where the fourth-day ceremony of Begum Jehan was being observed.

Dr. Abdullah and Mr. Shah exchanged pleasantries and were in

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Hope as PM, Farooq set to discuss autonomy

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 14. The "autonomy dialogue" is likely to begin on July 17 when Dr. Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, is scheduled to visit here and take up the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee's offer of talks with the central leaders. "We wanted the dialogue on the autonomy issue to begin and it has begun," Dr. Abdullah told reporters here after receiving the B. C. Roy National Award for 1999.

Before the Chief Minister returns here, he expects to have the endorsement of his party, National Conference, for continuing the dialogue, and for possibly continuing links with the ruling National Democratic Alliance.

Before flying back to Srinagar, the Chief Minister expressed satisfaction that the Prime Minister had reopened the door on negotiations on autonomy, a door that last week appeared to have been shut rather firmly. Describing Mr. Vajpayee's offer of talks as a "positive development", Dr. Abdullah said "the Centre has appreciated the importance of a discussion on the autonomy resolution passed by the Assembly and has invited me for a dialogue on the issue."

The immediate question that Dr. Abdullah needs to settle is whether the National Conference should continue in the NDA. The Chief Minister sounded confident that after the Prime Minister reformulated the Union Government's stand to mean that a rejection of the "autonomy resolu-



The President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, presents the B. C. Roy memorial award to the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Friday. — Photo: V. V. Krishnan. (Another photo on Page 10)

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tion" was not a rejection of the idea of autonomy, it would be possible for him to persuade his party colleagues on the merits of continuing links with the ruling establishment at the Centre. "I

Farooq wants talks from 1947: Page 13

am sure we will be able to find an amicable solution to our problem," he added. In fact, the BJP and other constituents of the NDA have been trying to nurse the NC's collective ego, which stands bruised after the abrupt rejection of the "autonomy resolu-

tion". The BJP has already declared him to be a "great patriot", and another senior leader, Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde, today found nothing wrong in the autonomy resolution.

And the icing on the cake was provided by the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, who is believed to have told reporters that "I am sure the National Conference will remain in the NDA. They are among our very important constituents and most valued colleagues. In Omar Abdullah we have a Minister of great competence who is one of our brightest young colleagues."

Centre urged to protect Ladakh Buddhists

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 15. The Buddhists of Ladakh want the Centre to live up to its "legal and moral responsibility" of protecting all sections of the population in Ladakh. Lama Lobzang, a senior Buddhist leader and a member of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, has invoked the Central attention because, according to him, the Farooq Abdullah Government in Jammu and Kashmir was being indifferent to the safety and security of the Buddhists. The whole of Ladakh remains tense ever since three Buddhist monks were killed on July 12.

Acknowledging that the recent trouble erupted when at a public meeting on July 10 at

Leh "an uneducated officer-bearer of the Ladakh Buddhist Association" made derogatory remarks about the Holy Quran, the Lama has regretted that no attempt was made by the State authorities to control the situation even after "a written apology" was tendered and the accused had been arrested. "Since the Buddhists of Ladakh had no faith in the State Government, they want the Government of India to take special measures to protect their lives," he said.

According to Lama Lobzang, while it was regrettable that even a mild criticism was made of the Holy Quran, "the reaction of the Muslims was excessive and deplorable." The Lama further notes that "the visit of a State Minister on July 11 did not help in restoring peace and,

on the other hand, aggravated the explosive situation. It is noteworthy that the heinous crime of killing of three Lamas had not been condemned by the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir or any other Muslim leader so far."

The Buddhists of Ladakh have for some time now been demanding "union territory" status for the region, and have renewed their demand after the National Conference Government in the State cranked up the autonomy issue. Recalling the past "reign of terror" against the Buddhists for demanding a union territory status for Ladakh, the senior Lama apprehends a repeat, and has, hence, called upon the Centre to step in before there was more violence against the Buddhists.

11/15/75

16 JUL 20 1975

PM-Farooq talks may be based on 1975 pact

Jay Raina
New Delhi, July 16

TOMORROW'S CRUCIAL meeting here between Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Dr Farooq Abdullah is expected to pave the way for a sustained dialogue over "greater devolution" of powers to Jammu and Kashmir without necessarily making the controversial autonomy report a reference point.

The two leaders are expected to reassess each other's perceptions in the aftermath of the Union Cabinet's summary rejection of the State Assembly's autonomy resolution, which had almost snapped interaction between the two sides.

It was Mr Vajpayee's unilateral offer of talks that prevented further deterioration in their ties.

According to indications available on the eve of the talks, the Central leadership is likely to give Dr Abdullah a patient hearing before dilating on the broad parameters for further interaction.

As the Union Cabinet has already rejected the Assembly resolution seeking implementation of the autonomy report, the Premier's effort would naturally be to carry forward the dialogue on the basis of

the 1975 Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah Accord. It may be recalled that the said pact was pointedly referred to in the Cabinet's July 4 resolution.

In nutshell, the Centre perceives tomorrow's meeting as an opportunity to explore possibilities and options. While recognising Dr Abdullah's political compulsions, the Government interlocutors would expect the NC leader to show equal appreciation for their constraints.

From the Centre's standpoint, resumption of any kind of discussion on the autonomy report would be impractical since the Assembly resolution seeking its consideration by the Centre has already been found "unacceptable" by the Cabinet.

Official circles here argued that the scrutiny of the State Government's autonomy report — by a Committee of Secretaries chaired by Cabinet Secretary Prabhat Kumar — would also seem untenable in the light of Cabinet resolution. After all, the rejection was prompted by the committee's recommendations.

The logic behind the proposal to have the report studied by a Group of Ministers (GOM) also gets defeated on similar grounds. Taking recourse to this option would amount to a negation of the Union Cabinet's "unanimous" decision.

The Indira-Sheikh Abdullah Accord, therefore, becomes the sole reference point on which any discussions can be held with Dr Abdullah.

That there also exists a broad political consensus on this approach strengthens the possibility of the Centre attempting to persuade the NC leader to recognise the continuing relevance of the Pact authored by his late father.

Spelt out in six clauses, the 1975 Accord provides ample scope for meeting the NC's major demands, some of which have been raised in the latest autonomy report. Among other things, the Pact, supported by almost all major political parties, including the Congress, reiterates the Centre's commitment to Article 370 which governs J&K's relations with the Union.

The document simultaneously provides for reconsideration of provisions of the Indian Constitution as applied to J&K — by way of adaptations and modifications — for either "alterations or repeal on merit", except for those applied directly without such distinctions.

Significantly, the Clause VI of the Accord keeps the demand of changes in the nomenclature of the Governor (to Sadar-e-Riyasat) and the Chief Minister (to Wazir-e-Azam) open for discussions.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 JUL 2000

Basu favours greater autonomy for J&K

By L.K. Sharma
The Times of India News Service

LONDON: The state of Jammu and Kashmir should have more autonomy within the framework of the Indian constitution, according to Jyoti Basu, West Bengal chief minister. He said the principle of greater autonomy should be accepted and details worked out in consultation with the state government. He had not had the opportunity to study what had been proposed by the state assembly, Mr Basu said.



Jyoti Basu

The chief minister said many states also felt that their share in the resources collected by the Centre needed to be increased. This issue would be taken up at a chief ministers' meeting soon, he said. Talking to reporters, Mr Basu painted a very

gloomy picture of the political and economic situation in India. However, there was no alternative to the present government dominated by the BJP which, he said, was a communal party. A credible third front was not about to take shape and the present "dangerous communal formation" would continue.

He said once again plans for the revival of the Hindu temple campaign were being announced after having done damage to the secular constitution, the country and to the Hindu religion itself. He said the Left Front was engaged in an ideological battle and for that it was prepared to support the Congress in the national context, without having any truck with it in West Bengal.

In the economic sphere too, the present Indian government had been ignoring the needs of the 85 per cent of the people while implementing its reforms to benefit some 15 per cent of the people. The issue of land reforms was not even being talked about while floodgates had

been opened for foreign consumer goods and the public sector undertakings were being sold off.

India's policies should be designed to ward off foreign domination of its economy which did not mean that foreign investments should not be sought and secured. India should avoid the policy prescriptions given by IMF and World Bank and should strive for self-reliance, he said. Foreign investments should be on India's terms and as per India's priorities.

Mr Basu was returning from a visit to Israel where a memorandum of understanding was signed for collaboration in West Bengal in the field of food processing. Israeli software companies had also shown interest in West Bengal. In London also, the chief minister met potential investors interested in opportunities provided by his state. Mr Basu presented to the British library a set of volumes on the history of the Communist Movement in India.

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

17 JUL 2000

Autonomy, the only way out

By Muchkund Dubey

Autonomy is the least that must be conceded to win back the Kashmiri people, to assuage their hurt feelings and restore their honour and dignity... It can also provide the much-needed space for reaching an agreement with Pakistan.

IT IS impossible to visit Kashmir and not confront immediately the reality of almost total alienation of the people from India. The alienation is rooted in a variety of causes but is due in large measure to the near-universal perception of the Kashmiris that India has systematically reneged on its commitment on the grant of a special status to the State, made in the Instrument of Accession and Article 370 of the Constitution.

The alienation has multiplied many times over with frequent violations of human rights, which are implicit in the very nature of the security operations carried out over the past 11 years. Practically every person one encounters — from a Hurriyat leader to a taxi driver — has his own tale to narrate of atrocities and humiliations suffered daily by the Kashmiris.

During the past one year, insurgency has intensified and acquired new dimensions. Home-grown insurgents have fast replaced the imported ones. The new breed is well indoctrinated, highly motivated and skilled in wielding sophisticated arms and ammunitions. While continuing to strike terror every now and then, the tactic of these militants has shifted to carrying out a guerilla warfare against the security forces. This makes the prospect grim for India in the coming years.

There has been a renewed international focus on the Kashmir issue after the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan in May 1998. The Kargil war further heightened the international concern. The outside world sees Kashmir as a major trouble spot with a potential to explode into a nuclear conflagration. It was a misadventure by Pakistan in Kargil and, thanks to the restraint displayed by India, there is now a better understanding among major powers of its position on cross-border terrorism. However, India continues to remain under pressure to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

Unless there is a real change in the ground reality, there will be little prospect of our doing so either on the battlefield or through negotiations with Pakistan. However, there is still a prospect of re-

solving the issue with our own Kashmiris. This will bring peace to the tormented and long suffering people, change the ground reality to compel Pakistan to think of alternatives to the use of force and enable us to live up to the expectations of our friends in the outside world. Autonomy is the only basis of, and indeed the minimum must for, settling the problem with the people of Kashmir. It is the linchpin of a new compact we must enter into with them. It is an indispensable condition for bringing a part of India into the national mainstream.

Autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, therefore, cannot be equated with any plan for restructuring the Indian federation or for further devolution of powers to the States. These may or may not be pursued seriously. Even if they are, they may take a long time to bear fruit. Besides, Jammu and Kashmir will automatically be entitled to its share of whatever is conceded to the constituent States. The case for autonomy is sui generis deriving from the urgency of the situation prevailing in Kashmir and its far-reaching ramifications for the Indian polity and the country's position in the comity of nations.

Autonomy is needed to change the perception of the Kashmiris that India has gone back on its obligation to accord a special status to the State. Whatever the legal basis of the changes introduced after 1953, the public feeling there is that these have been forced upon successive pliant governments as part of a well-conceived plan to erode Kashmir's special status.

Autonomy is the least that must be conceded to win back the Kashmiri people, to assuage their hurt feelings and restore their honour and dignity. They must be made to feel that they have got something in return for the precious lives lost and

the humiliation suffered. Autonomy alone can give the assurance that they are masters of their own destiny and that it is within their power to take measures and create institutions to ensure that the indignities which have been part of their life in recent years will never again visit upon them.

Autonomy may also very well prove the most effective way of dealing with the proxy war being waged by Pakistan. Given Pakistan's objective of wresting Kashmir, it can be expected to deploy all means and spare no effort at exploiting India's vulnerability. India's greatest vulnerability is the alienation of the local population which provides a fertile ground for the proxy war. Once this alienation is removed or substantially reduced, the very basis for the proxy war will disappear.

India is committed to arriving at a final settlement of the Kashmir issue with Pakistan. Autonomy can provide the much-needed space for reaching an agreement. If we have the Kashmiri people on our side by offering them a mutually-agreed package of autonomy, the proxy war will cease to be a feasible proposition for Pakistan. In that event, it will have no alternative to accepting the solution which it has so far resolutely spurned, i.e. making the Line of Control part of the international boundary between India and Pakistan. Even then Pakistan will need some face-saving device. This can be provided by permitting in the autonomy package a measure of flexibility for our Kashmiris to deal with the people in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. There could, for example, be provisions for a relatively free movement of goods, services and population, and institutional arrangements for undertaking joint projects for development.

What should be the quantum and nature of autonomy to be conceded? Should we go back to the 1953 position as demanded by the Assembly resolution or should the 1975 agreement between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi be the point of departure? It is neither necessary nor desirable to provide a priori answer.

However, two important considerations should be kept in view. First, the autonomy package should not be imposed but should emerge out of negotiations and be acceptable to the Kashmiri people. Secondly, in any negotiation, the bottom line should be the Instrument of Accession and Article 370.

With whom should the package be negotiated? The negotiating partners should be so selected as to ensure that it becomes acceptable to the people of Kashmir. Therefore, all important leaders who have a sizeable following among the people and who command their respect should be involved. The National Conference under Dr. Farooq Abdullah will be the first and obvious choice. Other leaders, including those affiliated to the Hurriyat, fulfilling this criterion, should also be brought into the negotiating process.

It will be difficult to negotiate with the Hurriyat as a group because it is clearly seen to be acting as an agent of Pakistan. It is not prepared to settle for anything short of Kashmir's merger with Pakistan or Azadi which will but be the first step in that direction. It also insists on the inclusion of Pakistan in the dialogue, which demand India cannot accept.

Because of the strong feelings publicly held on this issue and extreme positions taken by several leaders and groups, any attempt at open negotiations is bound to be infructuous. It will be necessary to hold prolonged consultations with important leaders outside the limelight. Only when there is a near-agreement on a package through this process, should it be thrown open for public debate before the legal and constitutional procedures are initiated for giving it a final shape.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary.)

Farooq-Vajpayee meeting 'positive'

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 17. The much-awaited "autonomy dialogue" between the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, took place "on a very positive note" this evening. Both sides seemed relieved that the meeting went off remarkably smooth.

Dr. Abdullah had come to the capital in response to an invitation from the Prime Minister last week in Srinagar, to talk further the issues arising out of the "autonomy resolution" recently passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. The Union Cabinet had earlier rejected the resolution, terming it "unacceptable"; this rejection created a crisis within the ruling National Democratic Alliance, with Dr. Abdullah's National Conference threatening to snap its ties.

Talking to the media after a 45-minute meeting with the Prime Minister, Dr. Abdullah clearly seemed to have backtracked on the "pre-1953" package, and more or less suggested that it would be futile to get trapped in this or that cut-off date; instead, he argued, that "dialogue" had to take place in the realities of year 2000. Dr. Abdullah's utterances this evening were very much at variance with the thrust of the strident noises his party colleagues have been making in Srinagar.

Nonetheless, a number of prime ministerial aides expressed themselves to be fully satisfied that the idea of "kick-starting" the dialogue had clicked so effortlessly. Particular note has been

taken of the Chief Minister's invocation of "1957", the year Jammu and Kashmir gave itself a new constitution which is presumed to override the "Delhi Agreement" of 1953 between Sheikh Abdullah and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. The Vajpayee Government has no problem re-working the 1975 Accord, the last negotiated relationship between Srinagar and New Delhi.

The Chief Minister, on his part, made it clear that this evening's meeting was only the beginning of what he deemed would be a long process. He asserted that there were no "parameters", and that a solid mansion could be built only by the painstakingly slow process of laying the foundations, finding the construction material, etc. In his view the quest for autonomy had to ideally be within the "Strong Kashmir, Strong India" formulation.

A number of changes in the format and content of the "dialogue" got introduced. Till this morning the general understanding was that the Prime Minister would have the services of the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, while the Chief Minister would be helped by his Law Minister, Mr. P.L. Handoo. Later in the day, the format was revised and it was let out that it would be "one-to-one" meeting, with the two principals "breaking the ice" between them. The idea was to seek a "political" understanding; that is why the bureaucrats were kept out of today's dialogue. However, the Prime Minister did have a meeting earlier in the day with the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani.

THE HINDU

18 JUL 2000

Economy is the real need in J&K

By C. Subramaniam

The most effective strategy to combat militancy in Kashmir is... to create more opportunities for higher education and better employment for the youth.

THE DEBATE on the National Conference's autonomy resolution detracts from one thing that is absolutely essential for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue — rapid economic development in the State. External forces are no doubt seeding, funding and fanning militancy and secessionist sentiments. But more than any other factor, the slow pace of economic development has been providing the fuel for discontent in the Valley especially among the educated unemployed.

To some extent the perception in the Valley that Jammu and Kashmir has been economically neglected does not tally with facts. Its 4.4 per cent compound annual growth rate from 1991 to 1997 was only slightly less than that achieved by Haryana, Punjab and Delhi and is far higher than the performance of Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and most of the northeastern States. The per capita Central assistance to the State in the 1990s averaged roughly 10 times the level of Tamil Nadu.

Nevertheless, the sense of economic deprivation is not without foundation. The rise of militancy after 1988 has devastated the tourism industry in the Valley. There is very little of large and medium industry and little sign of new manufacturing activity. Today there are about 1,50,000 educated unemployed youths in the State. For most of them the economic prospects look bleak. This group has been the source of many of today's Hurrayat leaders. By one estimate more than 20 per cent of the educated unemployed are joining militant groups.

The most effective strategy to combat militancy in Kashmir is neither an increase in security forces nor more autonomy. It is to create more opportunities for higher education and better employment.

The challenge today is to build confidence among the Kashmiri youth about their economic future as part of the Indian Union. The best strategy is to evolve a five-year plan to generate employment opportunities inside and outside the State for at least 50,000 youths and higher educational opportunities outside J&K for another 25,000.

The right economic goal is integration, rather than autonomy. Kashmir cannot thrive either economically or politically on its own. But it can do so by linking its development potential with the rest of India's rapidly expanding economy. Thus

medical transcription for major clients in the West.

Electronics is not the only field which offers attractive employment. An even greater employment potential lies in transforming agriculture. The application of advanced farming methods can double or triple yields of commercial and orchard crops. One of the most important areas is soil improvement focussing on ensuring supply of micronutrients. Given the Valley's climate, there is no reason why high yields of a wide-range of temperate fruits and vegetables cannot be achieved for local consumption, domestic sale and export. The key is to induct greater knowledge into the agricultural sector. The right candidates for the job are unemployed agricultural graduates who have acquired book knowledge but have no experience applying it. An effective strategy would be to establish and conduct a training programme in hi-tech farming methods to produce 1000 agricultural entrepreneurs in five years. After completing the course, each entrepreneur should be equipped to establish and operate a private, for-profit school consisting of 10 acres of agricultural land leased out by local farmers. The entrepreneur could cultivate a range of crops, earning a minimum net profit of Rs. 50,000 per acre per annum. Additional income would also come as fees from the local youth who join the school for training.

Our leading educational institutions are a grazing ground for large Indian and foreign corporations seeking talent. The Centre can also foster economic integration and enhance youth confidence by earmarking a few thousand seats a year for Kashmiri youth in leading universities and professional colleges and providing special financial assistance as part of the package.

The above measures can be undertaken even in the context of the present stalemate in Indo-Pakistan relations to generate prosperity in the Valley and lay the foundation for peace and stability. But Kashmir possesses a greater potential to transmute itself from a source of conflict

into a source of peace. The Kashmir dispute has been a convenient instrument for politicians on both sides of the Line of Control to distract attention from domestic problems and rally popular support against an external enemy. People everywhere are easily aroused by such calls and are ready to support their leaders in the name of national security. What has been lacking is a full appreciation of the economic benefits of achieving a lasting peace between India and Pakistan.

Studies have been done in the past to assess the potential for increasing trade between the countries, which will primarily benefit a relatively few companies. But trade is the smallest part of the economic potential of peace in the region. The proposed gas pipeline from Iran to India via Pakistan is representative of a range of economic opportunities that could have a profound impact on growth rates and living standards in both countries. A copious source of cheap energy is of vital importance to India's future development.

Other opportunities include regional collaboration to develop the more than 50,000 MW of Himalayan hydroelectric power potential, inland water transport routes, railways, cement and other industrial plants. The full economic potential of peace needs to be carefully studied and quantified. According to informed estimates, peace in the region could make it possible for India to achieve growth rates more than double those it achieved during the 1990s and exceeding the rates achieved by China and South Korea over the past two decades.

Instead of allowing Kashmir to continue as a centre of military strife and Pakistan contention, let both India and Pakistan make it a centre-piece of peace and economic cooperation. Let cooperative strategies be formulated to achieve rapid and high levels of economic development on both sides of the border. Stop the hostilities, open the borders to trade and tourism, invest in developing the region's power potential and timber reserves.

The Kashmir problem has been with us for half a century. We are stuck in a syndrome of violence. The human, financial and goodwill costs as well as the lost opportunity costs have been mind-boggling. More of the same will not do. Let us have the wisdom and courage to chart a new course.

U Redefining autonomy

The key to success is compromise by both sides

THE autonomy agenda is back on centre stage largely due to the positive tone of Monday's dialogue between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. Notwithstanding the initial negative feelers from both sides, for once, the dialogue was bargained neither by underground leaders, nor under any threat of separation, but by democratically elected leaders, in a spirit of give and take. It is a positive first step in the battle to attain *Kashmiriyat*. While Abdullah backtracked on the pre-1953 package much to the chagrin of the radical National Conference members, the Prime Minister, by merely agreeing to discuss autonomy, must have ruffled quite a number of feathers of his more strident colleagues. For them, even an invocation of the 1957 position on the issue of autonomy is a total surrender. However, the essence of democracy is dialogue, and the path to it is through bargain.

The dialogue, described officially as a kick-start, is likely to have two desirable consequences: first, it is likely to throw up a window of opportunity to address the long-neglected issue of *Kashmiriyat*. Autonomy, if implemented even in its present incarnation, is bound to act as a balm. Indeed, it will go a long way in assuaging the feeling of alienation prevalent among the ordinary Kashmiris; second, it is most likely to isolate the native militants who have sprung up in the Valley after the Kargil war. Without their support base among the people, even they are like fish outside water. Additionally, the autonomy dialogue may also be seen as an olive branch by sep-

arartists in other parts of the country. For them the message is loud and clear: New Delhi cares and is ready for dialogue. If someone is responsible for reviving the autonomy issue it is Abdullah. He has proved his detractors wrong, not once, but twice. For one, the NC's popularity in the last assembly polls (witness the fairly high turnout rates despite poll boycott calls) caught many political pundits by surprise.

Next, even if one were to argue that the political balance had altered in the post-Kargil situation, with Abdullah losing some of his initial elan after three years as incumbent and with some Hurriyat leaders fresh out of jail enjoying an upper hand, the autonomy dialogue is bound to reverse the trend. Abdullah has not only proved his capacity to bounce back from political hibernation. He has displayed remarkable sagacity, indeed, political innovation. He literally coopted the autonomy agenda from his rivals. In this one move, he killed two birds with one stone. First, he proved to the world that the autonomy agenda was not a monopoly of one section of the leadership in the Valley. Second, displaying vision and foresight he re-defined azaadi as autonomy, leaving space for bargain and compromise in a true democratic spirit and ensuring the absence of any foreign players. The Hurriyat leadership and other leaders in J&K must enter into further discussions with the Central government taking the autonomy as a starting point. Even if Kashmiris take time to accept the new autonomy package once it is worked out, in the end the trajectory from azaadi to autonomy is a step in the right direction.

INDIAN EXPRESS

19 JUL 2000

'AUTONOMY, DEVOLUTION TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN'

Group of Ministers will discuss autonomy: Farooq

By Harish Khare

19/7
40-1

NEW DELHI, JULY 18. Dr. Farooq Abdullah appears to have earned the prime ministerial nod to his suggestion that a Group of Ministers be constituted at the Centre to engage a Jammu and Kashmir ministerial team on the thorny question of the quantum and kind of "autonomy" for the troubled State. At least this is the impression the Chief Minister sought to give about the Centre's predilection after a meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, this morning; more significantly, the Centre chose not to contradict or correct Dr. Abdullah's suggestion.

The Chief Minister also asserted that "the Centre would be soon fixing a date for another meeting" on the "autonomy" business.

Dr. Abdullah had his second meeting with the Prime Minister in as many days; though this morning he had taken a group of five ministers with him to call on Mr. Vajpayee, as if he wanted to make his ministerial colleagues an equal party to the path of negotiation, rather than confrontation, with the Centre. The Chief Minister has pre-empted the possibility of these Ministers pretending, back in Srinagar, that Dr. Abdullah has sold the "Kashmir's interests" behind their back.

After this ritual in courtesy, the Chief Minister almost paraded his group of Ministers before the media as the possible interlocutors in the autonomy dialogue with the Centre. This group included the Urban Development Minister, Mr. G. M. Shah; the Law Minister, Mr. P. L. Handoo; the Finance Minister, Mr. Abdul Rahim Rather; the Education Minister, Mr. Mohammed Shafi; and the former Industries Minister, Mr. Bodh Raj Bali.

If Dr. Abdullah's meeting with the Prime Minister was brief and lasted just over 20 minutes, it was because he had already had his most substantive discussion over breakfast with the Union Home

Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani. During the interaction with Mr. Advani, the Chief Minister is believed to have heard for himself the tactical advantage of talking of "devolution" of powers rather than demanding outright any time-pegged "autonomy". Over breakfast, the two leaders talked about how to eat their respective cakes and have them, too.

Thus tutored by the most political mind in the ruling establishment, the Chief Minister was able to formulate before reporters that "the devolution of powers and autonomy are only two sides of the same coin and there is no difference between the two." For good measure, Dr. Abdullah repeated his yesterday's assertion that at no time did the National Conference contemplate leaving the National Democratic Alliance and attributed the authorship of any such suggestion to the "media". Moving rather swiftly, he also sought the sympathetic ear, if not the support, of the Congress(I) for his party's demand for "autonomy". After a meeting with the Congress(I) president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, it was agreed that Dr. Abdullah's ministerial entourage would have a discussion with a Congress(I) team tomorrow.

Dr. Abdullah first held one-to-one discussion with Ms. Gandhi for about 15 minutes; later his ministerial team came in, while the Congress(I) president was assisted by Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia and Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad.

The Chief Minister later met the former Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral. While Dr. Abdullah sought to convey that he was not "rigid" and had no fixation about "pre-1953", the former Prime Minister was appreciative of the difficulties in Jammu and Kashmir and advised the Chief Minister that he should be explaining his point of view also to the secular friends and public opinion in the country.

THE HINDU

19 JUL 2000

Joint ministerial panel on J&K likely

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19/7 ✓

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 18. — A joint committee of Union ministers and ministers of Jammu and Kashmir is likely to be constituted soon to prepare the agenda for the autonomy demand.

However, the committee won't be the final authority to recommend the quantum of autonomy or devolution of power to the state. This is likely to be taken up at a later stage by an independent body, officials said.

Dr Farooq Abdullah, who met the Prime Minister here last night, called on Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee again this morning along with a team of his ministers and decided to hand over the task of negotiations to a joint ministerial committee.

After meeting Mr Vajpayee, Mr Abdullah said the team of J&K ministers would hold negotiations with central leaders.

Mr LK Advani is likely to lead the Central team of ministers in the joint committee along with Mr George Fernandes.

Dr Abdullah met the Union home minister today before leaving for Srinagar. Mr Advani welcomed the softening of the attitude of the J&K leaders on the autonomy demand and said the Centre was equally keen to find a solution to the Kashmir problem.

Dr Abdullah iterated that the National Conference would not pull out of the NDA. "It was never the issue," he said when asked if his party was still likely to desert the ruling alliance at the Centre if an amicable solution is not found.

The chief minister also cleared the air on his differences with the Centre over defining the word "autonomy". The Vajpayee government favours devolution of more power to J&K along with a special economic package. And the chief minister has no objection to it. "I don't find any difference between the word autonomy and the word devolution which are two sides of the same coin," he said.

Law ministry suggestion: The Union law ministry has suggested that the "autonomy" resolution should be referred to the Constitution Review Commission since the matter involves Centre-state relations. According to officials, the resolution was not acceptable on three counts — provision of dual citizenship in J&K, withdrawal of the jurisdictions of the President and the Supreme Court over J&K which are not negotiable at any cost.

Cong stand: The Congress today said the Centre's handling of the autonomy issue would only promote secessionist forces in Kashmir and that any dialogue should be on the basis of the 1975 accord.

The party spokesman, Mr Ajit Jogi, said the government had shifted its stand at least four times since the autonomy resolution was adopted by the J&K Assembly. He said even though Congress favoured autonomy to states and in particular to J&K, it would not accept the NC's demand for going back to pre-1953 status.

THE STATESMAN

19 JUL 2000

Behind the Kashmir curtain

The Kashmir issue can be settled once and for all not by denying the State's special status but by taking care of what lies at the very root of the problem: Pakistan, writes V.K. GROVER

KASHMIR IS once again in the limelight with the autonomy debate dominating the news. Jammu and Kashmir has not been like any other state in India. It has special status, its own Constitution and is linked to the Indian Constitution through Article 370. The argument that autonomy for J&K will lead to similar demands from other states is fallacious. No mother state in India, historically, can make the same claim.

Farooq Abdullah fought the last elections on three major planks: autonomy, the promise of good governance, and normalisation of life in the Valley with the assurance that Pandits will be able to return to their homes. He has been able to deliver on none of these election promises. The question of autonomy is more complex than it seems. There is no reason for the Hindus in Jammu, or the Buddhists in Ladakh, or for the matter the Shias and Gujjars, to accept Sunni-dominated Muslim rule. In any case, trifurcation of the State on communal lines is not acceptable. If Dr Abdullah wants to go back to the pre-1953 status, then he should be able to create pre-1953 conditions in the Valley, when there was perfect communal harmony, and no militancy.

If there is to be permanent peace in J&K, then some degree of autonomy cannot be denied to the Kashmiri people. The question is: who represents the Kashmiri people? Neither Dr Abdullah nor the Hurriyat can claim that they are the true representatives. If the Centre has talks with the Hurriyat — which is by no means a homogeneous body — any agreement must result in the Hurriyat participating in future elections in Kashmir. More important, the elections must be totally free and fair. Once a truly representative body is elected, we can certainly discuss autonomy with them. Independence is out of the question; the people of India will not accept it.

Unfortunately, for the last 50 years our Kashmir policy has been totally inconsistent. You cannot foist your chosen Chief Ministers on the State, nor undermine fair elections whenever they are held. The removal of Dr Abdullah during Indira Gandhi's time was a bad mistake. Dr Abdullah is a trusted friend

PLATFORM

of India and should not be abandoned. But he must also deliver on his promises. The Hurriyat, at best, is unreliable, but we must engage them in a dialogue as well.

The malaise with our leaders is, they fail to recognise the true nature of the problem. There is no solution to Kashmir as long as Pakistan continues to be a religio-fundamentalist-narco-terrorist state. Pakistan is the root cause, and all other manifestations of the



problem are only symptoms. It was Pakistan which attacked and forcibly occupied what is now known as Azad Kashmir, and the portion now occupied by China.

If the Kashmir problem is to be solved once and for all, it is Pakistan which has to be taken care of. Once that front is settled, it will not take long to come to an agreement with Kashmiris, of all hues and religions, living on the Indian side. It has been the failure of the Indian leadership to fully understand the true nature of the beast. Friendship with Pakistan is not possible as the latter does not wish to live in peace with India. If the lesson has not gone home even after Kargil, I am afraid India is heading for a serious political disaster.

Our Pakistan policy had been derailed and distorted by people like I.K. Gujral. By holding out infantile hopes of friendship with Pakistan, they have misled the nation. There is an interesting anecdote about Radhakrishnan's meeting with Stalin when he

was sent as the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union. Radhakrishnan spoke at great length on the virtues of non-violence and *ahimsa*, on the need to live in peace with one's neighbours etc. Stalin heard him very patiently and then replied "Mr Ambassador, the Russian peasant is very wise. When he sees a wolf in his backyard he kills it, he does not try and make friends with it."

Pakistan has to be dealt with firmly and aggressively. There is no choice. We have extended the hand of friendship often enough only to have it bitten off. It is also no good trying to get third parties, such as the US, to help put pressure on Pakistan. We have to fight our own battles.

It is indeed bewildering how the present Government seems to think they have made a major breakthrough with the US. Public statements emanating from Washington are certainly not satisfactory. On issues of importance to us the US has made no commitments — at least publicly. To India's rightful claim for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council, all kinds of conditions have been added. It has been linked to the CTBT and progress on economic reforms. On Kashmir, so far the US has declared the LoC as sacrosanct. It is not willing to take the next logical step and treat it as the international border.

The US agenda for South Asia has not been spelt out. Is there an Indo-US agenda? There has been a shift in US policy towards India, but we must not get carried away just because a few gestures have been made. There is no perceptible change in US policy towards Pakistan.

Of late, US policy towards India has become intrusive. The CTBT issue is dead; the US Senate has rejected it. Yet we are talking of creating a consensus within the country. There is no logic in the PM visiting Washington in September; Mr Clinton is no longer relevant to US politics. We seem to be going out of our way to oblige the Clinton administration. What are we getting in return? If there is a private understanding, the people of India have a right to know.

Centre, Farooq fail to find meeting ground

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 19

THERE WAS no forward movement today on the establishment of a "mechanism" for the resolution of J&K's autonomy demand as the Centre continued with its stoic silence on Dr Farooq Abdullah's proposal that it institute a ministerial group to hold talks with his representatives.

In fact, Home Minister L K Advani, with whom the Chief Minister had a breakfast meeting on Tuesday, has reportedly asked the State Government to come up with fresh proposals on "devolution of more powers" to J&K. It was clear from his remarks that the Centre was in no mood to make the Autonomy Committee Report, rejected on July 4 by the Union Cabinet, the basis of the proposed dialogue.

"Dr Abdullah has been asked to come with fresh proposals. We would like a rearrangement of powers between the Centre and States," Mr Advani noted in a carefully worded statement to a private television channel. His remarks clearly implied that left to itself, the Centre would take up J&K's autonomy case as a part of a wider devolution package for States.

In contrast, the Chief Minister reaffirmed his commitment to the Assembly resolution: "Every clause of it needs to be discussed. It has to be seen whether it is within the parameters (of the Constitution) or not." While describing the ministerial group idea as the only possible forum for a discussion on autonomy, he broadened the parallel talks he had opened yesterday

with Opposition parties to explain the National Conference's demand for greater autonomy.

It remains to be seen whether the NC's increasingly vigorous interaction signifies any distancing from the ruling National Democratic Alliance. It could well be a part of the pressure tactics deployed by Dr Abdullah, first by asking for a ministerial group and thereafter announcing his own team for holding discussions with the Centre and the Opposition parties.

The Chief Minister apparently moved a step further on Wednesday by unveiling his plans for an all-party meeting in Srinagar to deliberate on the issue. He also followed up with separate meetings last night with Sonia Gandhi, I K Gujral, H S Surjeet (CPI-M), A B Bardhan (CPI) Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party) and Sharad Pawar (NCP).

Dr Abdullah's high-voltage campaign would take him to Hyderabad and Chennai over the next couple of days for talks with Mr Chandrababu Naidu and M Karunanidhi.

As a sequel to Dr Abdullah's meeting with Ms Gandhi, a team of senior Congress leaders held detailed discussions this evening with the J&K ministerial team. Interestingly, the Congress team at the talks included Dr Karan Singh and JKPC chief Mohammad Shafi Qureshi besides Pranab Mukherjee, Madhavrao Scindia, Arjun Singh, M L Fotedar and Ghulam Nabi Azad.

"Today we just listened to the NC leaders. Another meeting might be shortly scheduled," Mr Mukherjee later told *The Hindustan Times*.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Farooq seeking to create a consensus

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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 19. On the third day of his campaigning here today, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, met the leaders of various political parties in an effort to create a 'consensus' behind his demand for 'autonomy', while at the same time maintaining that this demand was not pegged at the "pre-1953" cut-off date. On the other hand, he also put pressure on the Vajpayee Government to constitute a Group of Ministers that would negotiate with his ministerial team on the quantum of autonomy.

Among others he met Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, the president of the Samajwadi Party which had rejected the "pre-1953" package in very unambiguous terms; Mr. Sharad Pawar, president of the Nationalist Congress Party; and leaders of the two communist parties who did a bit of blunt talking to him.

And late in the evening his ministerial delegation—including Mr. G.M. Shah, Mr. P.L. Handoo, Mr. Abdul Rahim Rather, Mr. Mohammed Shafi and Mr. Bodh Raj Bali—exchanged views with a Congress(I) team. The Congress delegation consisted of Mr. Pra-

nab Mukherjee, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr. M.L. Fotedar, and Mr. Madhavrao Scindia.

In his interaction with the media, Dr. Abdullah sought to give the impression of wanting to get out of the "pre-1953" trap, a stance which had been almost universally found unacceptable by the political parties across the spectrum. He also repeated his statement that there was no question of the National Conference walking out of the NDA. By the end of the day he was doing some loud thinking about calling an all-party meeting in Srinagar to discuss the 'autonomy' demand. Dr. Abdullah said "I do not want any confrontation over the issue with even small parties and I want to carry along all shades of opinion from all parties in the country."

PTI reports:

The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, told a private TV that the Centre has sought fresh proposals from the J&K Government on the autonomy issue. "Dr. Abdullah has been asked to come with fresh proposals on rearrangement of powers between Centre and States. Whether such an arrangement is formal or informal...Government would be willing to consider it," Mr. Advani said.

THE HINDU

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2000

A WELCOME DEVELOPMENT

THE TWO-DAY INTERACTION between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, would by all accounts appear to have cleared the decks for a serious debate at the governmental and political levels on that State's demand for 'autonomy', a nagging issue brought into focus by a resolution the Legislature passed less than a month ago. On his part, Dr. Abdullah has set up a panel of ministers to carry on the dialogue with the Centre — and possibly also with leaders of mainstream political parties — and put forth J&K's case for greater autonomy on the basis of the State Autonomy Committee's report. Indications are that the Vajpayee Government would reciprocate by constituting a group of ministers to interact with the State team. And this is as it should be, because such an exercise at the Centre-State level should help in the two sides understanding the nuances of the admittedly complex problem in the right historical perspective and coming up with a broad prescriptive formulation that recognises J&K's special status guaranteed by the Constitution and, at the same time, takes due note of the changed national context in the political, governmental and Constitutional spheres. The formulation so evolved could be the basis for a focussed discussion in Parliament or at all-party meetings.

It was just as well that Dr. Abdullah came out categorically that there was nothing dogmatic or inflexible about 1953 being the cut-off year. Although he himself had been maintaining this position in his public statements even earlier, the fact that the core of the SAC recommendations (which the Assembly endorsed through its resolution) meant restoration of the pre-1953 status made the 'autonomy' demand highly controversial and provided a good enough pretext for the likes of the BJP and the RSS to see it as a ruse for secession, with a few of the Sangh Parivar outfits going to the extent of seeking his Government's dismissal. The Vajpayee regime also

chose to go along with that anti-autonomy line and found the pre-1953 factor handy to summarily reject the resolution as "unacceptable", regardless of the wrong signals its decision was bound to convey to the alienated people of the State. Convincing those at the helm at the Centre and the political leadership in general that the National Conference's 'return to pre-1953' position is indeed negotiable would seem to have been the main objective of Dr. Abdullah's interactive mission and he must be said to have carried much conviction on this score.

Politically speaking, the reconciliation initiative — largely dictated as it was by the compulsions as much of the ruling coalition in Delhi as of Dr. Abdullah — has paved the way for the National Conference's continuance as a constituent of the National Democratic Alliance and this partnership, even if unnatural in the ideological sense, should be taken advantage of to work out a viable autonomy package. That the question warrants as extensive a debate as possible and nationwide is unexceptionable. No less important is to involve the people of Jammu and Ladakh and even the Hurriyat leadership at some stage. It is only proper that the other States are also taken into confidence, given their legitimate claim for greater devolution of powers as proposed by the Sarkaria Commission. But a caveat needs to be entered here. The so-called 'wider debate' and search for a consensus should not be turned into an excuse for inordinately delaying action or, worse, doing nothing at all by way of honouring the spirit of the Instrument of Accession which is exemplified in the special provisions under Article 370. Fears on this score cannot by any means be dismissed as unwarranted. Witness for instance the fate of the women's quota bill and the much talked about proposal to provide constitutional safeguards against misuse of Article 356. Should that happen to the J&K's autonomy demand, it would amount to renegeing on a national commitment.

THE HINDU

Pro-Pakistan leader Abdul Ghani Bhatt elected Hurriyat chief

9/8/87 The Times of India News Service *11-7*

SRINAGAR: For the second consecutive term a pro-Pakistani leader was elected the chairman of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) when Abdul Ghani Bhatt defeated Abdul Ghani Lone, a senior member of the executive committee of the APHC here on Thursday.

For the first time the APHC chairman could not be elected unanimously.

Mr Bhatt polled four votes against three by Mr Lone. Against the expectations, senior leaders Omar Farooq and Yashin Malik did not contest the elections. Mr Bhatt's predecessor Syed Ali Shah Geelani completed his two years' term in April this year.

The Jaimat-i-Islami, People's League, Muslim Conference, Itihad Muslimia Shia organisations voted for Mr Bhatt, while the JKLF, the Awami Action Committee and the People's Conference voted for Mr Lone.

Mr Bhatt was a teacher in Persian at the Government Degree College in Sopore before he was removed from service by the then governor Jagmohan in 1986. He became the founding member of the Muslim United Front, which contested the assembly elections in 1987, against the Congress-NC alliance.

Later, he revived the Muslim Conference (MC) in December 1988. The MC was founded by Sheikh Abdullah in 1931. Mr Bhatt had been jailed five times, including one for 25 months and was released from detention only two months ago.

The controversy over the visit of Omar Farooq, the senior APHC leader, to the chief minister's residence to express condolence on the death of Farooq Abdullah's mother was laid to rest with the APHC claiming there was no bar on the Hurriyat leader's visit to Mr Abdullah's house to express condolence. The APHC had not prohibited anyone, party sources said.

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21 JUL 2000

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Back to Kashmir

The Centre and Farooq Abdullah are cosyng up once again. And it might be time to ask both sides if they could not have avoided the volley and thunder of their respective positions in the first place. In retrospect it does seem as if there was a lot of deliberate drama here. The cabinet's resounding 'no' and the overblown sound effects from the Abdullah camp have both turned out to be just so much posturing. Evidently, the hardline positions were merely a bargaining means for the adoption of a more realistic, middle course. In the end, what is important is that the two sides have agreed to talk. The next step is to decide the right forum for the talks. Mr Abdullah has been quoted as saying that rather than send the matter to the Constitution Review Commission, he would prefer for it to be discussed between ministerial groups from the Centre and the state. This makes sense because the Constitution Commission can discuss J&K autonomy only within the broad framework of devolution. It has no brief to consider J&K separately. On the other hand, J&K will be the only topic of discussion between the two ministerial panels. Till now, the Centre has been obsessively concerned about not yielding ground on the pre-1953 position. The National Conference has since clarified that this was never on its agenda. Not just this. The NC seems willing to meet the Centre halfway on most other issues, including the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and the Election Commission.

Whatever the Centre's fears regarding J&K, there is little point pretending that it is on a par with other states. J&K acceded to India in extraordinary circumstances. Maharaja Hari Singh sought Indian intervention to clear his territory of invaders from Pakistan. India agreed to help but only on condition that he first acceded to it. Though the accession was complete in all respects, our founding fathers recognised J&K as a special case. Which is why it became the only state to have its own constitution and flag — a position that continues to this day. The Indian Constitution reaffirmed J&K's special status through the provision of Article 370, which too continues, despite the ongoing controversy about its utility, scope and intention. If these are hard points of law that cannot be overlooked, there are equally other reasons why J&K deserves special attention. For starters, there is the groundswell of opinion against the Indian government. Secondly, there is the aspect of militancy. But the two are not independent phenomena. The latter may seem more strategically crucial in view of our growing problems with cross-border terrorism. However, terrorism cannot be tackled without first addressing the alienation so very evident on the ground. Thus far the BJP-led government's approach has been to treat Kashmir as a haven for Pakistan-backed militancy; once the latter bit was sorted out, there would be no further trouble. But Kashmir is not only about security and borders; it is about flesh and blood people. The sooner the state and the Centre work out a solution keeping this in mind, the better the relationship between Kashmir and the rest of the country.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 JUL 2002

J & K settles to a simmer

By Kuldip Nayyar

The problem of the ordinary Kashmiri is not so much the security forces or the militants as his living. He faces economic hardships more than anything else.

SHORT visit to Srinagar tells you that bullets and bunkers have not lessened in Kashmir. It is still a cantonment. People's alienation has not decreased. In fact, they are more different than before, as if they have seen the worst. But they are vocal and the incipient press they have is bold and articulate. However, the insurgency is practically over, although the embers of militancy continue to burn. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, admits that persons are still picked up by the security forces. The authorities also concede that there are "deaths in custody" but they claim a marked decline. The main bazaar, where the famous Lal Chowk is located, is far more crowded than it was last summer. The police are prominently visible. Once in a while, a military truck goes up and down. Otherwise, local vehicles and people throng the place.

"The situation," a top official said, "was returning to normality when the Kargil operation disrupted the security apparatus which had been built over a long period." Things would be all right in a few months from now, he said. Normality may take time to prevail because fear still stalks the land, the fear of militants and of security forces. In the countryside, people are harassed by both, the militants wanting shelter and food and the security forces wanting to know their whereabouts.

Interrogation centres have gone down in number but searches continue in the same old fashion. There are still scores of people in detention under the Public Safety Act (PSA). The latest Amnesty International report says: "The law has been used by the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to arbitrarily detain political activists. People held in preventive detention include those who have not committed any offence and have not used or advocated violence, as well as those who have used violence and committed offences. Some amongst both groups may have been charged with criminal offences but the State uses preventive detention legislation to detain them when it anticipates their release on bail granted by a court. All are held on the purported pre-

sumption that they may in the future commit acts that are harmful to the State." The State Human Rights Commission has vainly reported certain instances of excesses. Many *habas corpus* petitions are pending before the State High Court. In some cases, the police have not complied with orders directing the release of certain persons.

The problem of the ordinary Kashmiri is not so much the security forces or the militants as his living. He faces economic hardships more than anything else. At least, one lakh educated unemployed youths are looking for jobs. This is a combustible material. Some of them are going across the border for training and getting arms. Last year the number had gone down but it has increased once again. The money offered is Rs. 10,000 a month and Rs. 1 lakh for the family. Avenues for employment are limited. It was evident from the response the Army had when it advertised for local recruitment. Five thousand young men turned up for some 60 vacancies. "Had public and private undertakings in India given jobs to the young Kashmiris and taken them to the different parts of the country, the problem would have been solved by this time," says Dr. Abdullah. "Even now it is not too late."

The State Government's resolution on autonomy and, more so, the Centre's rejection, are the topic of discussion. Hurriyat Conference leaders may say that the resolution does not affect their demand for independence. But the fact is that they were worried when the resolution was passed. In fact, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, who has the largest base amongst them, says autonomy can be a starting point of discussion for *azadi* (independence). In any case, the Centre's rejection of the resolution has disappointed the Kashmiris. It may turn out to be a popular plank for Dr. Abdullah when the State goes to the polls next year.

The Valley has very few Hindus and Sikhs left. However, the hold of fundamentalists has weakened. There was a time when cinema halls were closed on their order. They are now open and running to capacity. Music was banned but it is now louder than the traffic. People were prohibited from going to the Moghal Garden in Srinagar. They frequent it like they did in the past. Also burqa-clad women are a rare sight. Young boys and girls are seen at cafes and restaurants without any elder accompanying them. The Government is trying to bring back the Kashmiri pandits. But it does not seem possible because what

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was known as "Kashmiriyat" is a thing of the past. The atmosphere has become so parochial that you can taste communalism in the Valley and Jammu. Ladakh does not want to associate itself with either of them. Still there are many who miss the togetherness of the past. One senior Muslim editor told me at Srinagar that he would give anything to have the Kashmiri pandits back. "I want to hear them talking in my language," he said. "Their absence is, indeed, what you call the violation of human rights."

Amnesty International has reconstructed the killing of Sikhs in Chithisinghpura, a village in Anantnag district. On the evening of March 20, according to its report, 15 or 17 unidentified gunmen, some in Indian army uniform, entered the village. They ordered the Sikh men to assemble and systematically shot 34 of them dead from close range. Several of them were injured, one of whom succumbed to his injuries later. A unit of paramilitary Rashtriya Rifles (RR) stationed close to the village failed to intervene and only visited the place of incident the following morning. Whereas members of the Hindu minority have been targeted frequently by the armed groups, Sikhs and Muslims have lived in harmony without a single

attack on Sikhs, says Amnesty International. The fact that many members of the army and central police force stationed in Jammu and Kashmir are Sikhs did not have any negative impact on their relations with the Muslim majority. After the incident, Muslims pleaded that Sikhs — many of whom feel insecure — should not leave Jammu and Kashmir. The community has stayed back. Three human rights activists from Punjab investigated the incident in mid-April. They found that between 15 and 20 Urdu-speaking armed men had come to the village several times prior to the massacre and mixed freely with the villagers. According to the local population, they were careless with their arms, hanging them on trees while playing cricket with local boys. Several of them had visited the village earlier and were reportedly recognised as the attackers of March 20. Some local observers told the activists that they did not believe the attackers to be "foreign mercenaries" as they had returned repeatedly to the village and handled their arms very casually.

The human rights activists concluded that "dress, language, careless handling of arms and behaviour are all factors that speak against the security forces' involvement in the unlawful killing." Amnesty International quotes in its report. For the first time, it has said in its report that Pakistan was not only helping the Kashmiri militants morally and politically but also supplying them with arms. This statement seems to be in line with the observation by some European and American organisations which blamed Islamabad for helping the militants.

As if to make amends for the bad name which some Muslims have given to Islam, the affluent Muslims in Kochi have come together to retrieve its prestige. They have constituted an organisation, Faith and Fraternity, which conducts every year an essay competition on Islam for Hindu students from all over the country. "Islam as I know," was the topic of the last essay competition. Some 1,500 Hindu boys and girls participated in it and the 76 winners journeyed to Kochi at the expense of the organisers to receive a cash prize, as much as Rs. 80,000, for the first position.

Karunanidhi favours CMs meet on autonomy: Farooq

By M. R. Venkatesh

CHENNAI, JULY 21. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, today urged the Centre to take steps for an in-depth consultation on the question of autonomy to the States "within the ambit of the country's sovereignty," even as his Jammu and Kashmir counterpart, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said Mr. Karunanidhi preferred a conference of all the Chief Ministers to discuss the issue. After nearly an hour's deliberation with Dr. Abdullah, who had come to mobilise support for his views, Mr. Karunanidhi sought to dispel the impression that the DMK meekly toed the BJP's line on autonomy.

Though Mr. Karunanidhi's statement on their talks makes no explicit reference to convening a conference of the Chief Ministers, Dr. Abdullah and his Law Minister, Mr. P. L. Handoo, told the media that the former's response was "very positive."

Dr. Abdullah said the purpose of his tour was to "explain to our friends what our demands of autonomy are." Concerned about "malicious disinformation", he said the J and K State Autonomy Report did not contain any prescriptions such as the State having its own currency, not recognising the Supreme Court or the State having its own reserve bank. Basically their report "conformed to a lot of things that even the DMK has." The only difference was that Kashmir had a special status, for, as a State it had acceded to India and "did not merge."

On reversion to the pre-1953 status, Dr. Abdullah said "there is no such thing as a Lakshman rekha." All these things would come



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, with his Tamil Nadu counterpart, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, at the latter's residence in Chennai on Friday.

— Photo: T.A. Hafeez

up when a discussion took place.

Rejects Advani's proposals

Dr. Abdullah, rejecting the fresh proposals mooted by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, said he was "never even told about the new proposals." He had seen it only in newspapers.

"Only on the basis of discussions," said Dr. Abdullah and Mr. Handoo when asked whether a "golden mean" was possible.

In his statement, Mr. Karunanidhi said they had discussed Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy demand, vis-a-vis its historical background, the call for autonomy since the days of Sheikh Abdullah and the present problem.

Mr. Karunanidhi said the "State Autonomy" resolution adopted by the Tamil Nadu Assembly in 1974 was based on the philosophy of giving autonomy to the States "without prejudice to India's territorial integrity and sovereignty," and ensuring a federal set-up at the Centre. "It was applicable not only to Tamil Nadu but to all the States," he pointed out.

Kashmir, nonetheless, had some "special features," again only within the "framework of India's sovereignty." "Efforts should be made to discuss all these issues in depth, and I hope that the present Government at the Centre would take appropriate steps in this regard," Mr. Karunanidhi said.

THE HINDU

21 JULY 1974

The Centre has triggered the political turmoil in Kashmir under US pressure

Clinton's shadow in the Valley

A YEAR ago the Government slept through a broad-barrel Pakistani invasion in Kargil aimed at altering the political and military dynamics of the region with a view to settling the Kashmir issue on Islamabad's terms. The sheer grit of our fighting forces saved the day for India. This year our rulers have done one better. They have scored an own goal in conscientiously seeking to undermine the internal political balance in Jammu and Kashmir held in place by the National Conference administration of Farooq Abdullah.

This means, in effect, that the good work done by the armed forces in clearing J&K of intruders, thereby negating any possibility of political turmoil in the Valley that a Pakistani success in Kargil would surely have generated, has to a considerable extent been lost. The political situation in the State has once again become unstable and marked with risks. This works to the detriment of India, and not just that of the Vajpayee Government, and sustains the ambitions of foreign forces and their surrogates in Kashmir.

From the national point of view, this is a disaster of the first magnitude. It had been a long haul, but over the last few years, through a combination of political and security measures, the State had been enabled to regain a measure of poise. Challenges that remained came mainly from foreign terrorists operating on a hit and run basis and without significant popular support. Indeed, Pakistan had found it necessary to mount an attack in Kargil precisely because things were going India's way in Kashmir and the puppeteers in Islamabad were desperate to disturb the status quo with a view to making a reentry into the arena.

In the event, the gambit failed, but Islamabad and its political and terrorist backers in Kashmir have now been thrown a lifeline, thanks to the series of ill-advised steps to which the Centre committed itself in respect of propping up the Hurriyat Conference, the political umbrella under which militant outfits operate, provoking the National Conference into adopting headline postures on the

issue of constitutional autonomy which have sent the political establishment into a tizzy. Pakistan and its friends are now certain to be rubbing their hands in anticipation.

Is an Indian retrieval possible in the short term? The answer, of course, turns on a host of imponderables, but recapturing lost ground cannot but be a tortuous process now. To put matters in perspective, it cannot be achieved simply because the BJP has done a palpably opportunistic somersault and calls Farooq Abdullah a 'patriot' — following the so-called 'funeral diplomacy' much tomtommed by obliging sections of the media — only a few days after reviling him as a turncoat and traitor. The liberal hurling of epithets can do no justice to a party in power, and betrays an inadequate appreciation of the complexity of the Kashmir question.

The way it has all turned out, Farooq now does not have many corners left to turn to. With barely a year to go before the Assembly elections in Kashmir, this is not a good sign. The Chief Minister could well choose the comforts of continuing his association with the ruling establishment in Delhi, overlooking the political mood in the Valley which his party helped pitch so high through the autonomy issue. But such a course may end in disaster for him (and of course, for the country), easily allowing the terrorist tendencies the chance to outflank him politically. In such a scenario, the National Conference could also split, causing a further rupture in the mainline pro-India stream in Kashmir.

In that event we might well witness a return to the days of bloodshed and bomb blasts. Who knows, then, whether it will be possible to hold the next Assembly elections or not? It is plain to see that the disruption of the normal process of seeking the

people's mandate causes an overall setback to the Indian position in the Valley, and this has an international dimension as well.

Farooq Abdullah may, on the other hand, up the ante if he sees that as the only way to keep in step with the psychological spirit in Kashmir after the autonomy issue has been whipped up. This too cannot give India much solace.

After all, the demand of restoring the pre-1953 status, that is, return to the days before the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, essentially means that New Delhi should enter into pretty much the same arrangement with the National Conference (the only viable all-Kashmir party) as obtained before

August 15, 1947 between the British rulers and the princely states including that of the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, thus entirely negating the tide of the last 50 years.

No Government in Delhi can countenance this, whatever the costs. But long-term tragedy is assured, should Dr Abdullah and his party decide to play hard ball. This, then, is the sorry position in which the country has been pitched through the utterly inept handling of the situation by the Vajpayee Government.

Why did Farooq throw the autonomy dice? Was he being anti-national, as some suggest? This can best be answered by placing him in the historical context. It is well to remember that up till the mid-years of the Pakistan-instigated insurgency in the Valley, Dr Abdullah absented himself from the Kashmir scene. He possessed no adequate response to the demand for secession then sweeping the Valley. But even in these years, he battled for India at public forums across Europe and America.

In the end he realised that the prevailing mood in

Kashmir could be countered politically only with the demand for autonomy. Thus, he pitched into the 1996 Assembly elections with this as his manifesto, and earned a handsome dividend. In the process, militancy was sidelined politically.

It was upto India to build on this by engaging him in credible dialogue so that he may keep his credibility vis-a-vis the Hurriyat Conference which can only be described as the political arm of the militant organisations. But the National Democratic Alliance Government failed to see this. In fact, it slept over the autonomy report of the State Government for more than one year. In a sense, this forced the issue and led to circumstances that led up to the passage of the autonomy resolution in the J&K Assembly.

Why did the Centre so completely ignore the autonomy issue as it rose above the mists in the Valley of the *chinars*? The only plausible answer suggests itself and can be found in the wishes of President Bill Clinton expressed through his interview to NBC television when he was here last March.

Answering a pointed question on Kashmir, the US President noted, "I think what really matters — in terms of an ultimate resolution — is that the people of Kashmir feel that their legitimate interests are being addressed in some formal fashion." Clearly, he did not think that the forum of the J&K Assembly was formal enough for addressing the legitimate interests of the people of the Valley.

It can hardly be coincidental that the Centre released the leaders of the Hurriyat from jail, and began the process of initiating 'formal' dialogue with them. In these efforts, Dr Abdullah and the NC rightly discerned moves to dislodge them from power and replace them with the Hurriyat. That is when the autonomy issue began to rise to its crescendo. The way now is to engage the NC leadership once again and maintain the dialogue in a transparent manner at least right up to the Assembly elections next year, instead of expecting a quick-fix solution.



Mr-15 2007
BY ANAND K. SAHAY

Gujral for talks on Kashmir issue

NEW DELHI, JULY 23. The former Prime Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral today advocated negotiations, without involving Pakistan, to resolve the Kashmir issue and said the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir assembly should not be branded as dissidence.

Mr. Gujral, at a seminar here, said the country had faced various other problems such as in Assam, Nagaland and Punjab which were solved through discussions.

"A similar approach should be adopted to resolve the Kashmir issue. The issue should be resolved through internal negotiations without involving Pakistan," he said at the seminar 'Cracking the Kashmir Problem'.

Referring to the demand for greater autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, the former Prime Minister said "because a duly democratic Government of Jammu and Kashmir has discussed the autonomy issue it should not be branded as dissidence."

He said the autonomy call given by Dr. Farooq Abdullah was without political compulsion.

The Congress(I) leader, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, supported dialogue as a means to resolve the issue and said the various agreements relating to Kashmir had been altered on various occasions.

Mr. Vishwa Bandhu Gupta, president of all India Newspaper Editors Conference (AINEC), which organised the seminar, disfavoured any third party mediation in the Kashmir issue and said it



The former Prime Minister, Mr. I.K. Gujral, addressing a seminar on "Cracking the Kashmir problem" at the All-India Newspaper Editors Conference (AINEC) in New Delhi on Sunday. To his left are the AINEC president, Mr. Viswa Bandhu Gupta, and the senior Congress leader, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee. — Photo: S. Subramaniam

should be solved 'through our own genius'. — PTI

Central team reviews scenario

SRINAGAR, JULY 23. A two-member Central team led by the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pandey, reviewed the Kashmir security scenario in Srinagar here on Saturday evening.

Mr. Pandey, accompanied by the Additional Home Secretary

(Kashmir Affairs) Mr. T.R. Kakkar, held a series of meetings with senior officers of the Army, police, paramilitary and State Government officials on Saturday, an official spokesman said here today.

The Central team was apprised of the current security situation in Kashmir by the Director General of Jammu and Kashmir police, Mr. Gurbachan Jagat and Corps Commander of 15th Corp, Lt. Gen. J.R. Mukherjee.

The IG of Jammu and Kashmir

police, (Kashmir range) Mr. A.K. Khan, the IG of Border Security Force, Mr. K. Vijay Kumar and the IG of the Central Reserve Police Force, Mr. P.C. Joshi, also attended the meeting.

Seven persons, including five militants, were killed in various incidents, while security forces rescued five youths, who were being sent to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for arms training by militants in Jammu and Kashmir. — PTI

24 JUL 2000

Gen. Rao favours more powers for J&K

The Times of India News Service
HYDERABAD: Former Jammu and Kashmir governor General K.V. Krishna Rao advocated granting of more powers to Kashmir to win people's confidence and avoid any external threat.

Participating in a panel discussion on "Kashmir — Is greater autonomy the only solution?" organised by the Institute of Asian Studies, Gen Rao said Kashmir had been facing several problems that have to be dealt with in all seriousness.

He said the state did not even have sufficient government properties, while the industrial sector suffered a lot due to militancy in the region. He said there were over 1.5 lakh educated youth left with no

jobs. To solve all these problems, Kashmiris need the support of not only the Centre, but of the entire nation.

Gen Rao described the National Conference as a true patriot which had played a major role in the restoration of democracy in the state. While praising the Kashmiris, he said by participating in the general elections, they proved that they were an integral part of India. He said that it was the fault of certain administrators who gave the impression before the international community that Kashmiris do not want to live with India. He said that Kashmir was strategically a most vital area not only for the security of India but also for Pakistan. That

was the reason why the latter had three wars and was continuing the proxy war even now.

Gen Rao said though greater autonomy was not the only solution, more powers should be given to Kashmir to clear off the impression among Kashmiris that India treats them as a colony. He said people in the Kashmir valley wanted autonomy to safeguard their identity. They were afraid that in the absence of autonomy, migrations from other states would swamp their unique culture and way of life.

Former chairman of National Minorities Commission, Justice Sardar Ali Khan, said that the demand for greater autonomy to J&K deserved to be considered, but

more appropriately, it could be called as "devolution of powers from the Centre to the state."

He said the degree of autonomy could be decided while not offending any provisions of the Constitution. He said it would not be ideal to talk about restoring the pre-1953 situation in Kashmir, but the Centre should be flexible in exploring all ways and means of solving the problem. He also suggested that both India and Pakistan should have bilateral talks to resolve the on-going problem without entertaining third-party mediation.

Veteran communist Mohit Sen, Prof F.D. Vakil, Prof Ratanlal Hangloo and H.S. Gururaja Rao took part in the discussion.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 JUL 2000

Hizbul announces unilateral ceasefire

Srinagar, July 24

In a surprise move, the Pakistan-backed militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) today announced a unilateral three-month-long ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and declared its readiness to hold talks with the Centre, which immediately welcomed it as "good development."

Making the announcement, Abdul Majid Dar, who claimed to be the 'chief commander' of the powerful outfit, said the ceasefire will be effective from

tomorrow. "We are ready for talks with New Delhi to ensure peace in the trouble-torn State," he told a group of reporters here but warned if the offer was not responded to appropriately by New Delhi, the outfit had "a right to withdraw it even after a week."

In a quick reaction, Union Home Secretary Kamal Pande said in New Delhi that any step towards peace in the State was a "welcome development." He said the group wanted a discussion with the Centre and had not put any condition.

"It is a step in the right direction," Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah said in his



Abdul Majid Dar (left) announcing the three-month ceasefire. Photo: AFP

reaction.

While the Harkatul Mujahideen spokesman in Muzaffrabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir declined to comment, pro-Pakistan Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, a breakaway group of the Hizbul, described the decision as "an act of treachery."

The ceasefire can be extended beyond three months if there is a positive response from New Delhi, said Dar, who crossed over from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir only three months back after his four-year stay.

A top police official told AFP on condition of anonymity that he was sceptical of the offer. "It's a welcome step but let us see how they behave in the next couple of weeks," he said.

The surprise ceasefire announcement came just days after the election of Abdul Gani Bhat as the new chairman of the main separatist political alliance in Kashmir, the Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference. Bhat favours Kashmir's accession to Pakistan.

The only previous militant group to announce a unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir was the pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) in 1994.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUL 2007

Hizbul offers ceasefire, talks with Centre

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, July 24. — The Pakistan-backed militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen today announced a unilateral three-month ceasefire starting tomorrow, and declared it was ready for talks with the Centre.

The government has welcomed the move, adds SNS from New Delhi.

Making the surprise announcement, the Hizbul Mujahideen's 'chief commander', Abdul Majid Dar, said: "We are ready for talks with New Delhi to ensure peace in the trouble-torn state". But if the offer did not find an appropriate response, the Hizbul Mujahideen had "a right to withdraw it even after a week," he warned.

On the other hand, the ceasefire could be extended beyond three months if there was a positive response from New Delhi, Dar said.

In a statement issued here this evening, the home ministry said: "Any move which points towards peace is welcome. The government, however, will be watching the situation closely and make its assessments later. We're in touch with the state government."

(The J&K chief minister, Mr Farooq Abdullah, too welcomed Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire announcement and its willingness for a dialogue with the Centre, reports UNI. "It is a step in the right direction. Let us watch," he said).

The Centre had released top

leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference to create the right atmosphere for talks at a later stage.

The government has expressed its willingness for talks with individuals or groups from within the country, but steadfastly refused to include Pakistan in negotiations to restore peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

The ceasefire announcement has set the stage for negotiations similar to those with insurgent groups in the North-East. But officials in Delhi have cautioned against equating the situation in J&K with that in the north-east. "There is a foreign player involved in insurgency in Kashmir," an official pointed out.

THE STATESMAN

HD-1
25/7

Hizbul announces ceasefire 9/8/81

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 24. The Jammu and Kashmir militant organisation, Hizbul Mujahideen, which has been sustaining the anti-India militancy since 1990, announced on Monday a "unilateral ceasefire" for three months. It also expressed its willingness for a dialogue with the Government for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

The surprise development was announced at a hurriedly held press conference by Salaar Aala (chief commander), Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, on the outskirts of Srinagar. He was flanked by the top brass of the organisation.

Terming the decision historic, Mr. Dar said the ceasefire would be extended if there was a positive response from New Delhi. "The primary objective of the announcement is to break the deadlock and make the atmosphere conducive to talks," he said. He claimed that the decision had the full backing of all segments of the HM, including that based across the Line of Control.

Mr. Dar urged the other militant outfits to follow

suit. He cited various reasons that prompted the move. "There is a craving worldwide that peace and normality should return to the sub-continent which is passing through difficult times. Our decision is also in consonance with the statements by the Hurriyat leaders and the popular feelings," he said.

The basic stand of the Hizbul, he said, was resolution of the dispute on the basis of the U.N. resolutions. "But after that a new stand based on a trilateral dialogue involving the representatives of the Kashmiris emerged and we supported it."

Asked whether the Hizbul has taken up the issue with other militant organisations, he said, Syed Salauddin, supreme commander of Hizbul, was also heading the Jihad Council and he may have taken up the issue with them. "But this is purely our initiative." He expressed his hope that Pakistan would strengthen the move. "It is a fact that without the assistance of Pakistan it was not possible to sustain the movement. But we are sons of this soil and no other person can understand the sufferings we are passing through."

Centre welcomes decision: Page 13

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98, 98K Peace Attack 11-10

An apparent miracle has happened — a unilateral three-month truce offer by the Hizbul Mujaheddin. The Hizbul has also asked other militant outfits in the Valley to follow suit. Of course, every one knows the Hizbul's Pakistan connection, but, understandably, there wasn't any immediate statement from our recalcitrant neighbour. Is there a pattern here? Perhaps there is, for there are too many things happening at the same time for all this to be unconnected. Pakistan has been pushing for talks, but it has not stopped its support to cross-border terrorism. Some recent news reports even go as far as to suggest that the Pakistan army has attempted to take over a few Indian posts. There is no doubt that the Hizbul Mujaheddin could not have taken a decision without the backing of General Musharraf's regime. Yet, the question remains — why did Pakistan agree? Surely, suing for peace in Kashmir will not make the hawks there too happy. It is here that speculation on the US' role in Kashmir becomes important. Look at the symptoms: Hurriyat leaders released just around President Clinton's visit; informal negotiations between the Indian government, US-based Kashmiris close to the US establishment and other players in the conflict; track two dealings between India and Pakistan; proposals for trifurcating J & K along religious lines; and the whole autonomy tragicomedy in the state. It may be too much to expect a conscious plan behind all this, but it is quite clear that something is brewing in J & K. That is what all actors in the drama have sensed: This is the time to make compromises, or at least don a temporary mask of geniality.

For all this, no one really expected the Hizbul to play dove, and understandably, the Indian government's reaction has been cautious. What counts, after all, is not peace offers, but an actual end to terrorist-type militant attacks. Then there is the Lashkar-e-Toiba, another Pakistan-based militant outfit. What is it likely to do? Questions, whose answers will ultimately determine the Vajpayee government's moves. If the Hizbul's peace-bomb is genuine and if it has Pakistan's blessings, then there might be fewer terrorist attacks in the Valley. That would give India a justification for resuming talks, something that will be supported by the international community. In any case, in the race for getting international appreciation, India has definitely come out as a winner — at least in the post-Kargil phase. General Musharraf, on the other hand, is not very popular in the West. In recent months, however, his stock has risen a bit, thanks especially to his anti-Taliban rhetoric. It is not entirely unlikely that Pakistan is being forced to stop supporting militancy in Kashmir as a condition for the West to bail it out economically. However, Pakistan's public rhetoric might not change to synchronise with the happenings on the ground. The cease-fire offer might also be an attempt to force India to the negotiating table: By bringing the Hizbul onto the centrestage of the peace initiative in J & K, Pakistan might be looking for a bigger role. In this complex scenario, India's cautious scepticism is understandable, but wisdom lies in seizing the opportunity for a lasting solution for the exhausted people of Kashmir.

New hope in Kashmir

THE UNEXPECTED announcement of a conditional ceasefire made by a senior Hizbul Mujahideen leader in Srinagar can be interpreted in several ways. It will also be necessary to wait before all the implications of the offer are known. Only then will it be possible to assess their meaning in full measure. On the face of it, it will appear naive to suggest a sudden change of heart. It needs to be borne in mind that the Hizbul controls about half of the over 1,600 militants still active in the State. Ideologically, it has been firmly pro-Pakistan and has operated in close coordination with the ISI. So why does it suddenly want to give the gun a respite and open a dialogue with the Central Government?

One obvious interpretation is to see the ceasefire offer as a tactical ploy employed as part of a larger game plan. Equally, it may be that the Hizbul is seeking recognition as a party of negotiation with the Centre at a time when Farooq Abdullah's autonomy gambit has successfully sidelined the proposed dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders. A third interpretation is that even the military regime in Islamabad, finding itself at the receiving end of international criticism as an exporter of terrorism, is seeking to change tack. Whatever the case, it cannot be denied that the ceasefire offer by itself is a positive development and should be welcomed for whatever it is worth. Even without lowering one's guard, it should be possible to give it a decent try.

There will be difficulties, of course, in implementing it on the ground. First, so long as militant groups other than the Hizbul Mujahideen remain active and outside the terms of the ceasefire deal, the security forces will have to continue dealing with them. Secondly, the security forces will also have to keep up operations against the foreign mercenaries, no matter whichever group they may be associated with. They cannot be seen as a party to — or beneficiaries from — any ceasefire arrangement. Given these parameters, it should be possible for the Government to take up the offer of a dialogue at an appropriate level in the hope that it will pave the way to end Kashmir's worst decade since Independence.

A GOOD BEGINNING

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THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF a unilateral ceasefire by one of Jammu and Kashmir's most powerful militant groups, the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), brings with it both surprise and hope. Unfortunately, the HM's 'chief commander', Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, has not been able to carry the other leading pro-Pakistan militant outfits with him in this move. Instead of going it alone, the Hizbul could have taken at least another group with it in this effort. Though the HM's decision was taken after extensive discussions at its recent conference in Muzaffarabad in PoK, some of the other leading militant groups such as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Toiba have already rejected it outright and dissociated themselves from it. This could seriously undermine what appears to be well-thought-out strategy by the HM to give peace a chance by opening negotiations with the Government of India. The Hizbul must have taken a broader view of the recent developments, especially the possibility of an imminent dialogue between the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the Centre. It must be remembered that the HM's offer came within a few days of the election of Mr. Abdul Ghani Bhat, president of another pro-Pakistan group, the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, as chairman of the APHC.

Mr. Dar's offer comes with a few conditions which on the face of it do not seem objectionable. He wants a cessation of the military offensive in the State against the militants; an end to all violations of human rights and the freedom for all political parties to express their views publicly. The Centre should have no difficulty in accepting these demands, even if some inflammatory speeches may be made. The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Toiba, the al Badr and the HM have emerged as the key players in the militant world of Kashmir since the early 1990s, functioning out of Pakistan and carrying out daring operations in Kashmir. Mr.

98, 5/5K 149-12

Dar's emergence in downtown Srinagar to make this announcement marks a radical departure in the HM's approach to India and the search for a solution to the Kashmir issue. He spoke of the 'craving for peace' and 'popular feelings'. Instead of rejecting this approach, the other militant groups would be wise to stand by for now and see how the Hizbul fares in this bold venture. If only the Pakistan-based groups, who claim to represent the Kashmiris, heed the silent voice of the people, they could be working for peace. That peace can come only through negotiations, not by waging a "holy war".

The HM's olive branch fits into the Centre's current plan of initiating a comprehensive dialogue with political parties and militant groups in Kashmir to search for a political solution. The Hizbul offer speaks of a one-week deadline to ascertain New Delhi's initial response and the possibility of even extending the three-month ceasefire if any substantive talks can begin. The Centre must adopt a cautious but positive approach to this offer. While the Army, the intelligence agencies and the Kashmir Government can make their own independent assessment of the announcement and what lies behind it, the Centre must prepare the ground for a thorough-going dialogue on all aspects of the problem. There is always the hope that more militant groups will join the process, if it is seen to be making some headway. While talking to the National Conference, the Centre must not make it difficult for the Hurriyat, the HM, or any other party which is willing to join the dialogue. The Centre must evolve a process of informal consultations with all of them before launching a formal dialogue or round table. While talking to the Kashmir groups, the Government must keep the Opposition fully briefed about the developments so that a consensus could be built on both sides for a lasting solution and peace.

LS rejects J&K autonomy resolution

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 26

REJECTING THE Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's greater autonomy resolution seeking the pre-1953 status for the trouble-torn State, Deputy Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Madhavrao Scindia today blamed the Vajpayee Government for forcing Dr Farooq Abdullah to take an extreme position on the issue, in view of the Centre's arbitrary move to start a dialogue with the All Party Hurriyat Conference and other militant groups.

Initiating a special discussion on the autonomy resolution, he said the Centre's ambivalence on the autonomy issue was clearly reflected in the contradictory statements made by the Prime Minister, Home Minister L.K. Advani and other BJP leaders. Their contradictory utterances have raised doubts about the very intentions of the BJP-NC combine, giving rise to the legitimate query whether the autonomy slogan was merely meant to gain political mileage in the State.

Mr Scindia's arguments drew support from several other star speakers, including the CPI-M's Somnath Chatterjee and for-

mer Speaker P.A. Sangma. But former Prime Minister Chandrasekhar felt that Dr Abdullah was the country's best bet in Kashmir in the prevailing situation.

Delving into various constitutional and political developments in the State since 1947, Mr Scindia said that only the 1975 Indira-Sheikh accord could become a basis of any dialogue with the State Government.

Referring to Mr Vajpayee's statement describing the autonomy report as something that was within the constitutional framework, he said the documents with-
tents point to a different direction.

119-15 2777

'Nation within a nation not possible'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 26. The Lok Sabha today spoke up with one voice against the Jammu and Kashmir autonomy resolution, saying there was no question of putting the clock back. Even the bitter critics of the Centre's handling of the issue — and the Opposition benches were full of them — echoed the BJP member, Mr. Prakash Mani Tripathi's line that there could not be a "nation within a nation."

At the same time, there was unanimity that Jammu & Kashmir needed more autonomy and that a dialogue with various shades of political opinion in the State was the only way to resolve the issue.

A point repeatedly made during an inconclusive debate on Kashmir was that while a return to the pre-1953 situation demanded in the resolution was not possible, efforts should be made to consider greater autonomy within the framework of Article 370. The Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord of 1975 was widely commended as the basis for talks.

The Opposition wanted a firm assurance from the BJP that it would desist from pursuing its demand for revoking Article 370 (special status for J&K). There was a view, expressed sharply by the CPI(M)'s Mr. Somnath Chatterjee and the Nationalist Congress Party's Mr. P.A.Sangma, that the BJP's persistent campaign against Article 370 was one of the reasons why the Assembly had come up with such extreme demands.

The BJP's stand had created "apprehensions" in the public mind that there was a threat to the State's autonomy, and the resolution was in a sense an expression of these fears, Mr. Sangma said. He wanted the Home Minister to clarify the BJP's stand. Mr Chatterjee sought an assurance that Article 370 would not be touched.

The Opposition came down heavily on the Government for its "ambivalent," "confused" and "politically hypocritical" position on the autonomy issue. The Congress(I) deputy leader, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, recalled the series of "flip-flops" that had marked the Government's response to the Kashmir issue in general and the autonomy resolution in particular.

He said "something curious" had been going on since the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit, and particularly strange was the release of Hurriyat leaders. It was this that appeared to have pushed Dr. Farooq Abdullah into playing the autonomy card in the fashion he did. The Government had been speaking in conflicting voices — blowing hot and cold alternately — which gave the impression that it was trying to run with the hare and hunt with the hound.

Mr. Scindia said it was difficult to understand the Government's "ambivalent" policy and history would not forgive it for "playing games" on such a sensitive issue. If autonomy meant greater decentralisation and devolution of powers, his party was all for it and the 1975 accord was the best bet to start a

dialogue. But a return to the pre-1953 status was unacceptable and Dr. Abdullah was clearly asking for much more than what even his father wanted. The real issue was development and the demand for autonomy should not deflect attention from that.

Mr. Prakash Mani Tripathi denied that there was any confusion in the Government and said what mattered was that the Cabinet had said "no" to the resolution. But there was still room for a dialogue. He cautioned against turning it into an emotive issue and said what was needed instead was a dispassionate approach.

Earlier, Mr. Scindia wanted to know the Government's response to the Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire offer which the BJP saw as an indication of the militants being "on the run."

Advani denies

UNI reports

Mr. L.K. Advani, the Home Minister, clarified in the Lok Sabha that he had not given any assurance that there would be a discussion in Parliament on the autonomy resolution.

Intervening in the special discussion, Mr. Advani said all that he had stated was that if anything was to be done about the resolution, it had to be done by Parliament.

Mr. Advani was responding to Mr. Somnath Chatterjee's reference to the Minister's reported assurance on his return from Israel.

THE HINDU

27 JUL 2000

Hizbul ceasefire hasty step, says Hurriyat

BY YUSUF JAMEEL

Srinagar, July 26: The Hurriyat Conference on Wednesday described the unilateral ceasefire offer by the Hizbul Mujahideen, a pro-Pakistan Kashmiri outfit, as "a step taken in haste."

It said the truce announcement by the man in charge of the Hizb's military operations, Abdul Majeed Dar, at a press conference here on Monday, and later endorsed by his senior in the outfit, chief commander Syed Salahuddin, could lead to confusion in the ranks of militants.

[In Pakistan, meanwhile, the United Jihad Council, an alliance of 14 separatist guerrilla groups active in Jammu and Kashmir, on Wednesday suspended the Hizbul Mujahideen's membership of the council for having offered an unilateral ceasefire, IANS reports from Islamabad.]

[The UJC also removed Syed Salahuddin, the Pakistan-based supreme commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen, from the post of chief of the council, and asked the Hizbul to withdraw the ceasefire.]

PAGE 4

UK Kashmiri groups in Hizbul welcome ceasefire

■ Talibans want evidence

■ Turn to Page 2



CMS MEEF: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah (centre) presents a copy of the autonomy bill to Bihar chief minister Rabri Devi and RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav in Patna on Wednesday. A photograph by Krishna Murari Kishan

Farooq meets Basu for talks

BY PARWEZ HAFEEZ

Kolkata, July 26: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah on Wednesday said Article 370 of the Constitution was the bridge between India and the people of Jammu and Kashmir and if this bridge was destroyed, relations between the two would be destroyed forever. He was replying to a question on whether in his private talks with the Prime Minister or Union home minister he had urged them to drop the abrogation of Article 370

■ Turn to Page 2

■ Photograph on Page 9

Hizbul ceasefire

■ Continued from Page 1

statement issued at the end of an extraordinary meeting of the amalgam central executive to discuss the truce offer and its fallout said. The meeting was held at the residence of Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the ironman of the Jamaat-e-Islami who was replaced by Prof. Abdul Gani Butt as chairman of the Hurriyat Conference last week. Incidentally, Mr Geelani is known as Syed Salahuddin's "political guru."

The Hurriyat Conference leadership felt the Hizb should have also appreciated the "historical intricacies involved in the situation" and not hurried into taking the unilateral truce decision.

The statement reiterates the amalgam's stand that a meaningful dialogue could well lead to a resolution of the Kashmir problem. "But, unfortunately, the Indian government has always created unintelligible hurdles in the amicable solution of the problem," it alleges, asserting that it was actually in response to this "unrealistic, violent, and hawkish disposition" that the youth of Kashmir turned to the gun.

"Otherwise, history stands witness to the fact that the people of the state always favoured peace, brotherhood and mutual love and, through their actions, proved it beyond any doubt that they religiously believe in their principles," the statement asserts. The Hurriyat says it is an irony that these very people have had to face cruel deeds. "It was against this background that the Hurriyat Conference did not falter in declaring that the so-called militants were not only an integral part of Kashmiri society but also its future, whereas India projected them as terrorists," it says.

"The matter of the fact is that they are freedom fighters and not terrorists, and Kashmir has been recognised as a disputed territory by the international community, which wants that the same should be resolved through peaceful means to ensure the prosperity of the region."

The amalgam pledged that the "sacrifices" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir would not be allowed to go waste, reiterating that only a "meaningful and result-oriented dialogue" should be started to resolve the issue. "Partial, imperfect and unilateral moves can only create fresh hurdles in the way and, therefore, the Hurriyat Conference wants to make it categorical once more that talks between all the parties involved must be started on internationally accredited principles," it added.

Farooq wants Vajpayee to hurry up on autonomy

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 26. — The Prime Minister should find a solution to the complex problem of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir without wasting time, Dr Farooq Abdullah told reporters after meeting Mr Jyoti Basu at the latter's Salt Lake residence here today.

The J&K chief minister did not claim he had countrywide support, but said he had met the Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, and Mr Sharad Pawar regarding the autonomy demand for his state.

Mr Vajpayee would try to convince the BJP-ruled states while Mrs Gandhi would persuade states ruled by the Congress to support the J&K people's demand, he added.

Dr Abdullah said he would also talk to leaders of various regional parties to seek their support. "There is a lot of misunderstanding among the political parties on the autonomy issue. But we have to solve this", he added.

"I have come here to get a solution for the people of my state. I have given him a copy of the Autonomy Committee's report today. The report has already been submitted to the Union Cabinet", the J&K chief minister said.

"Mr Basu will support our demand. The people of J&K are demanding the restoration of Article 370, which is within the framework of the Constitution of the India", he added.

He welcomed the Hijbul Mujahideen cease-fire decision

in support of the autonomy demand and said the Centre should hold talks with it. His party was not like the Hurriyat which was demanding an independent state. "Our stand is against division of the state", Dr Abdullah said.

In Patna, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav today accepted Dr Abdullah's invitation to take part in an all-party meeting at Srinagar to discuss the autonomy resolution passed by the J&K Assembly.

Earlier, Dr Abdullah met the chief minister, Mrs Rabri Devi, and the RJD chief and handed them a copy of the autonomy resolution.

Dr Abdullah said the autonomy resolution had "nothing against the interest of the nation or the Constitution of India."

THE STATESMAN

27 JUL 2000

Open talks with Hizbul, says Farooq

HT Correspondent
Calcutta, July 26

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THE CENTRE should immediately initiate a dialogue with members of the Hizbul-Mujahideen group to ascertain their true motive, Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah said here today. This, he felt, was imperative since a section of the Mujahideen still owed allegiance to Pakistan while the rest claimed to sympathise with India.

"The talks must begin immediately so that we know what they really want," Abdullah said, adding that the urgency was far more necessary since ISI agents were always ready to subvert any attempt to restore peace in India.

The National Conference leader

arrived here this afternoon after meeting the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Laloo Prasad Yadav and held closed-door talks with Chief Minister Jyoti Basu for about half-an-hour.

Abdullah said he was convinced that Basu felt something needs to be done to restore Article 370, which grants special status to Jammu & Kashmir. On his long relationship with Basu, Abdullah said the two had met way back in 1984 in Srinagar while deliberating



Farooq Abdullah with Jyoti Basu in the city on Wednesday. Photo: HT

think he understands our problem," Abdullah said.

The meeting with leaders of the Opposition parties, Abdullah said, was part of his effort to clear the misconceptions about his party's demand for autonomy in Jammu &

on the special status of Jammu & Kashmir, and later, in Calcutta, while discussing Centre-State relations. "I have given him a copy of the report on autonomy prepared by our

Autonomy Council and he will go through it. I

Kashmir. "There is lot of misunderstanding with people saying that we want a separate Reserve Bank and a currency of our own. This is all false. All we want is restoration of Article 370 as it was, within the Constitution of India," he said.

The Prime Minister, he added, must find a solution to this "complex problem".

Abdullah made it clear that he was not in favour of dividing Jammu & Kashmir in three parts.

"The trifurcation was once suggested in 1950 by Owen Dixon and a similar recommendation was made recently by a US study group comprising members of the US Congress and Senate. I have rejected the plan outright and so has the Union Government."

Pak ultra council - suspends Hizbul

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE and AGENCIES

SRINAGAR, July 26. — The United Jihad Council, an umbrella organisation of 14 Pakistan-based militant groups, today dismissed the supreme leader of Hizbul Mujahideen, Syed Salahuddin, as its chairman and suspended his outfit for announcing unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

Though the newly-appointed Hurriyat chairman, Prof Abdul Gani Bhatt, had yesterday termed the ceasefire as an important development, the executive council of the separatist organisation which met here today at the residence of former party chief, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, discussed the developments. Party leaders including Prof Abdul Gani Bhatt, Abdul Gani Lone, Maulana Subas Ansari and other leaders attended the meeting.

After the meeting, the Hurriyat Conference issued a cautious statement amid

strong reactions from various quarters ranging from the critical to the resentful.

Terming the ceasefire decision taken by the Hizbul Mujahideen as a "step taken in haste", the Deputy Supreme commander, Abdul Majid Dar, expressed fears that it may create confusion in the state.

The Hurriyat statement said the Hizbul commanders should

SRINAGAR BLASTS

SRINAGAR, July 26. — There were four serial blasts in Srinagar city today. Police said all four blasts were of low intensity improvised explosive devices which went off one after another. — SNS

have understood the implications of such an action. "The HM should have kept in view the Indian intrigues and the atrocities it has committed on the people of

Kashmir valley," it said.

Hurriyat leaders felt that at such a crucial juncture of Kashmiri struggle, the sacrifices of the people of Jammu and Kashmir should have also been taken into consideration.

Reiterating that only a peaceful tripartite dialogue was a solution to the Kashmir issue, the meeting felt that Indian government was creating hurdles in the initiation of the peace process and was not sincere in

HIZBUL:

(Continued from page 1)

its dialogue offer.

Hoping that the Indian government will soften its stance on Kashmir and would help in the return of peace and dignity to the valley and its people, the Hurriyat leaders said only a result-oriented dialogue could move the 50-year-old issue.

Meanwhile, many militant organisation continued spurning the HM ceasefire and termed it "treason" on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. While Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, Al Umar Mujahideen, Al Jihad and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen reacted sharply to this development, the Kashmiri women's militant outfit Dukhtaran-a-Millat was most critical.

The outfit's chief, Ms Asiya Andrabi, said Islam did not allow unilateral ceasefire. Accusing Hizbul leadership of betrayal, she expressed her shock and surprise over this development.

However, the mainstream political parties have welcomed the ceasefire and have described it as a step in the right direction.

■ See HIZBUL: page 8

THE STATESMAN

Jamaat severs ties with Hizbul

27/7 By B. Muralidhar Reddy 10-12

ISLAMABAD, JULY 27. The Jamaat-I-Islami, the largest religious party in Pakistan, has severed its ties with the Hizbul Mujahideen following the latter's decision to declare a three-month ceasefire in Kashmir.

The parting of ways between the Jamaat-I-Islami (JI) and the Hizbul Mujahideen is significant in view of speculation in the Pakistani media in the last few days that the Hizbul offer could be linked to the current visit of the JI chief to the United States and his extensive discussions with the State Department officials on a number of issues including Kashmir.

The Hizbul Mujahideen, undoubtedly the most powerful militant organisation working in Kashmir, is considered a JI-backed organisation though its cadre are mostly drawn from Kashmir. The group has been active since the days of militancy in the early 1990s.

The Jamaat-I-Islami chief, Quazi Hussain Ahmed, deemed it necessary to cut short his tour of the United States in the wake of the ceasefire announcement as speculation persisted on his party role in the development, despite clarification that the JI had nothing to do with the Hizbul offer.

After a meeting of senior leaders of the JI in Lahore today, Quazi Hussain Ahmed told reporters that the Hizbul had made the offer without consulting his party and henceforth JI would have nothing to do with the outfit. The JI would continue to support all other groups within the fold of the United Jehadi Council, the Pakistan-based umbrella organisation of anti-India groups.

The council on Wednesday denounced the Hizbul offer as a 'retrograde step' that would undermine the 'freedom struggle' in Kashmir and vowed to continue its 'jihad'. It also expelled the Hizbul from its membership and sacked its chief, Syed Salahuddin, as its chairman.

In a related development, two leading dailies here have reported that the Hizbul announcement was the result of "backdoor channel diplomacy" between New Delhi and Islamabad backed by the U.S. establishment.

The Nation, in a front page item, reported that Pakistan had enforced an "informal and unilateral" ceasefire on its side of Line of Control since June 27 as part of the effort by the Government to regain international sympathy on the Kashmir issue. Quoting Foreign Office sources, the daily claimed that there was a "clear connection" between the month-

old ceasefire and the three-month ceasefire announced by the Hizbul. It said the objective was to regain diplomatic recognition following the Kargil episode.

"The Indian Government exploited the Kargil episode to the maximum, internally to rally its people, and externally to reinforce some of the doubts and fears that began to emerge about the Kashmir struggle itself", the paper quoted an unnamed Foreign Office official. The Hizbul offer and ceasefire on the LoC were taken keeping in mind the reaction of the global community.

Another daily, *Dawn*, in a news analysis of the Hizbul offer, said that it was the culmination of months of "secret diplomacy" between Islamabad and New Delhi through influential Americans with the backing of the U.S. diplomatic and defence establishment.

"It is understood that the next step to follow the ceasefire would be a partial Indian reduction of its combat troops deployed in Kashmir. The Pakistan side committed as early as June to persuade the mujahideen for a ceasefire but the Indians wanted to see it implemented before making any move," the paper said.

It said the Hizbul announcement was the beginning of a series of steps to be taken by India and Pakistan. These would include resumption of trade by conferring the most favoured nation status. "The next item on the agenda of the secret negotiators is to get Gen. Pervez Musharraf and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, together at the U.N. General Assembly session in New York in September".

Salahuddin's threat

Meanwhile, the Hizbul chief, Syed Salahuddin, threatened to revoke the ceasefire declaration unless the Indian Government reviewed its position of talks within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

In a statement here, the Hizbul leader said talks within the framework of the Indian Constitution was not acceptable to his group. "We will revoke ceasefire if India tries to use its traditional tactics of ifs and buts."

In a similar statement issued from Muzaffarabad, the Hizbul spokesman, Mr. Saleem Hashmi, said that India should immediately initiate talks with Pakistan and the Kashmiri leadership to resolve the problem in accordance with the aspirations of the Kashmiris.

THE HINDU

20 JUL 2000

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Farooq defends Article 370 demand

P.P. Singh

GUWAHATI 27 JULY

JAMMU & Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah, on Thursday, attacked Congress and BJP for blaming him and his party for trying to weaken the nation by asking for implementation of Article 370.

Addressing local AGP leaders, Dr Abdullah said so called nationalist parties like Congress called him anti-national only when it suited them. But when it served their purpose, "I was the best man in the country."

He said the Centre did not bother to go through the report published by the National Conference on autonomy and more powers to the state under Article 370.

"If any one can show me one line which will weaken India we will delete it, but you have to go through it at least to comment on it," Dr Abdullah said.

He said it was unfortunate that for the last 52 years, the Centre had been living on the resources of the states and depriving them of development.

It is time the states are given more powers, he said.

Dr. Abdullah called for the abolition of Article 356 which has been misused 112 times in the country, most of the time to dismiss governments in opposition.

He said when there was elected government in J&K there was development. But after the Centre started imposing President's rule, things started deteriorating.

Last time, violating all constitutional provisions, it was kept for six years when the administrators functioned from their offices only.

Later while talking to the media, Dr Abdullah said as far as J&K is concerned implementation of Article 370 to the full will solve major problems.

For the rest of the country, the Sarkaria Commission report must be implemented with more powers to the state. On the question of holding talks with the militants, he said the Union government must hold talks with them at the earliest. so

The Economic Times

28 JUL 2000

With the Hizbul Mujahideen announcing a cease-fire, peace in Kashmir is a real possibility

Light at the end of the tunnel

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUL 2000

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

EVER SINCE the leader of the Hizbul Mujahideen announced a three-month cease-fire on Monday, opinion both inside and outside the Government has been divided on what this could mean for the future of Kashmir. Various unidentified 'sources' have sought to devalue the Hizbul offer and warn the Indian public that there has been no significant change in Kashmir.

These 'sources' claim that the Hizbul is no longer in favour with the ISI and therefore cannot deliver peace in Kashmir; that the initiative in militant violence has passed to that creature of Indian pusillanimity in Kandahar, Maulana Masood Azhar's Jaish-e-Mohammed; and that Pakistan may even be trying to get a toothless tiger to offer peace while the real tigers keep up their marauding activities. This dark interpretation is not correct. But even if it is, the Hizbul's announcement opens up the first real possibility of a return of peace.

New Delhi would be justified not to expect too much of a change in the ground situation in Kashmir, at least in the immediate future. Although the Hizbul's supreme leader in Pakistan, Syed Salahuddin, has wholeheartedly endorsed Abdul Majid Dar's offer, all the other *jehadi* factions based in Pakistan have denounced it and vowed to continue the armed struggle in Kashmir. Thus, there may even be an increase in violence in the next few weeks as the *jehadis* try to provoke reactions from the security forces that further alienate the Kashmiris and undermine the cease-fire. Pakistan's position also remains somewhat obscure for Dar's announcement was blacked out by Pakistan TV. But the bottom line remains that the Hizbul's offer marks two profoundly important changes. One of these is in Pakistan. The other is in Kashmir.

Both the announcement in Srinagar and its endorsement by Salahuddin reflect a strengthening resolve in Islamabad to let the Kashmiris lead in the search for a solution. This position was first clearly articulated by General Musharraf during a stormy encounter with more than 40 Indian journalists in Islamabad on July 2. During a highly confrontational question-and-answer session, Gen. Musharraf repeated three times that any solution

that was acceptable to the people of Kashmir would also be acceptable to Pakistan. Although he qualified this by insisting that Pakistan had to be part of the final solution, this did not merely open up the so-called third option — of independence — that Pakistan had so far refused to entertain, but also, in theory at least, left a range of other options open. This was reiterated by Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar on Tuesday.

Would it strain credibility to suggest that the Hizbul offer might have at least the tacit blessings of the Pakistan Government, even if the latter does not dare to acknowledge it in public for fear of the *mullahs*? The fact that the Hizbul is entirely a creature of Islamabad and, unlike the Lashkar and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, does not have patrons in Pakistan's religious establishment, makes it all the more likely that Gen. Musharraf has used it to reinforce his message to India through the Hizbul.

By far the more important change that the Hizbul's announcement has wrought is in Kashmir. As a Kashmir University professor put it, previously the Kashmiri movement was split into a section that wanted independence and one that wanted to join Pakistan. Today the split is between Kashmiris who want to struggle non-violently for independence and violent outsiders who have come to Kashmir with a pan-Islamist agenda. The JKLF has been opposed to that agenda all along, as have been Mirwaiz Umar Farouq, Shabbir Shah and others.

The Hizbul's announcement makes the rejection unanimous. Indeed if one examines its fine print, one finds that it goes even further. For Dar also categorically rejected the trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. Given the diverse and complex ethnic composition of the State, this is a signal that even the Hizbul is now prepared to accept self-government that falls far short of independence.

The reactions of various pro-Pakistan militant elements in Kashmir, like Al Jehad, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, Al Umar Mujahideen and the Dukhitaran-i-Millat, show that the profound implications of the Hizbul's shift have not been lost upon them. On Tuesday, one or more of them tried to sabotage the impact of the announcement by spreading the rumour in Srinagar that the Kashmir police had raided Abdul Majid Dar's press conference venue in an attempt to catch him. This piece of total disinformation was spread just hours after a unified security command meeting had welcomed the Hizbul's announcement while conceding the need for continued vigilance against the *jehadis*.

If New Delhi wishes to capitalise on the opportunity for peace, it should plan its next steps most carefully. To begin with, New Delhi cannot agree to resume a dialogue with Pakistan till there is some change for the better, preferably a decline in attacks upon security forces in the Valley. But it can use the intervening period to improve the climate for talks with the Hurriyat. Two steps that would go a long way in doing this are to announce a general amnesty for the 31,000 militants who have not formally surrendered but have given up violence, and a strict and well publicised inquiry into some of the custodial killings by security forces.

The absence of an amnesty has made the former militants targets for extortion and occasionally murder by rogue elements in the Special Operations Group of the Kashmir police. An amnesty would limit the right of the SOG to descend upon former militants to investigate past crimes. This would lift the pall of fear that hangs over them and their families. By the same token, full cooperation with the State Human Rights Commission in its inquiries into episodes like the killing of the five local people in Pathribal (Anantnag) and the killing of Baqal in the

heart of Srinagar, would start the restoration of the Rule of Law in the State.

The time is ripe for initiating a dialogue with the Hurriyat. The Hizbul's announcement has eliminated the contradiction within it that had made it virtually impossible for the group to act as a representative of Kashmiri opinion. This was between Ali Shah Geelani and Abdul Ghani Butt, who have in the past favoured the trifurcation of J&K with some special intermediate status for the Valley pending a referendum, and Yasin Malik and Mirwaiz who have opposed any change in J&K's borders. Today, no matter what Butt and Geelani might want personally, the constituency for the trifurcation of Kashmir has disappeared.

Lastly, the Hizbul's announcement has given the Hurriyat Conference a historic opportunity to take the lead in the search for peace not only in Kashmir but also between India and Pakistan. It is therefore high time for its leaders to stop sulking and enter into a dialogue with Delhi, even if some of the pronouncements from here, like the Prime Minister's reiteration of his willingness to hold talks "within the frame of the Indian Constitution", are less than ideal from their point of view. This reiteration was both pointless and unnecessary, but since for reasons unconnected with Kashmir, the Government is stuck in this groove, it is now up to the Hurriyat not to let it become an insurmountable hurdle.

Hurriyat leaders must recognise the terrible economic and social price that Kashmiris have already paid, and the once-in-an-epoch opportunity that the IT revolution still holds out for Kashmir if only peace returns to the State. They need to recognise how deeply Kashmir's economy is integrated with that of the rest of India and to acknowledge that a complete severance of ties from India is neither possible nor desirable.

Lastly, they need to bear in mind what the JKLF leader in Pakistan, Amanullah Khan, has been saying tirelessly — that there can be no solution to the Kashmir problem that does not recognise the need to safeguard India's secular character and the future of its 130 million Muslims. If they accept these practical constraints on choice, the way ahead will not be difficult to chart.



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The government must speak

WHAT should we think about the Hizbul Mujahideen's declaration of ceasefire? If we rule out good faith, we are left with, approximately, two explanations. One, the situation on the ground is no longer propitious, the militant terrain having been substantially taken over by organisations manned by non-Kashmiris, whose radical Islamic character is more pronounced and for whom the specificity of the Kashmiri cause is peripheral to its principal ideological concern. If this is true, then one must suppose that the great majority of ordinary Kashmiris are fed up with violence, but are in no position to resist the incursions made by the *jihadis* out of fear or intimidation. The *jihadis* also tap a deeper, albeit less widespread, level of desperation bred by the length and the overall fruitlessness of the struggle. This is part of the logic of militancy. Failure breeds more radicalism: the Hizbul itself took over the terrain vacated by the more catholic JKLF. The Hizbul ceasefire may be a response to this reality, like the Hurriyat's current spell of relative moderation. Two, with the failure of Farooq Abdullah's autonomy resolution, the Hizbul might consider the moment opportune to test India's good faith on the ground, after having come to the conclusion, as the Hurriyat did, that it had already failed on paper: we want peace, you don't want it! They expect reciprocal gestures, failing which they will take to arms again. This is also a challenge directly addressed to India's assumption that it does not hold Kashmir by force, although the strength of this challenge will, ultimately, depend on how much disaffection the Hizbul and its sympathisers in the Hurriyat can rally to their cause.

However, there is a positive message as well in this temporary disengagement from militancy. Both Hurriyat and Hizbul seem to have realised that the Kashmiri cause, especially the militant agenda, was being increasingly hijacked by people who did not belong to the Valley. The fact that these elements are basically nurtured by the *jihadi* axis which operates out of Pakistan and Afghanistan and has a strong nexus with powerful sections within Pakistan's military establishment may also mean that the Hizbul and the Hurriyat have distanced themselves vis-a-vis Islamabad as well. Amanullah Khan of the JKLF thinks Islamabad had nothing to do with the Hizbul's decision. These are changes of attitude that must be recognised by the Government because they translate into a more flexible negotiating stance. The Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq has gone on record to say that "a negotiated settlement...could be anything". It is unlikely he is being sly. It may be useful, at this point, for the Government of India, to stop talking about "the framework of the Constitution", without in any way abandoning it, just to see what possibilities a dialogue with the Hurriyat can throw up. It will be free to reject what it doesn't like or considers unacceptable. Yasin Malik has a point when he refers to the dialogue with the Nagas, but he and his organisation have to ensure that the international profile of such a dialogue is discounted.

THE STATESMAN

28 JUL 2000

New Opening in J&K

No Time For Tricks or Gambits

By PRAFUL BIDWAI

THE dramatic announcement by the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) of a three month-long unilateral ceasefire represents a paradigm shift in the Kashmir situation. Though it comes with conditions, it presents an unprecedented opportunity for New Delhi, which simply must not be squandered. The fact that HM Operations Chief Abdul Majid Dar's announcement has since been backed by the group's top leader Syed Salauddin means that it is not a factional decision. Indeed, it enjoys strong political endorsement from the Jamaat-i-Islam in Pakistan, with which HM has been historically closely linked. All recent pronouncements of the Jamaat's chief Qazi Husain Ahmed, from China, Pakistan and the US — where he is now on a visit — confirm this.

No less significant is the support the ceasefire has drawn from Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, who represents a traditional power centre in Kashmir. Even the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has not condemned it outright. According to political observers in Srinagar, ordinary Kashmiris seem to welcome HM's ceasefire declaration with more optimism than the official announcement three months ago of the government's willingness to release and talk to APHC leaders.

Why is HM important? And why has its move raised hopes in the Valley? Quite simply, HM is the only large militant group which draws its cadres primarily, if not solely, from indigenous or local Kashmiris, as distinct from people in adjacent areas or foreign militants. It is also the only significant militant organisation to be linked to a political party. If it holds for any length of time, the ceasefire could potentially reduce the level of violence and confrontation in the embattled Valley as nothing else has in recent years. HM was not pushed towards this change of stance by India's military pressure. This sets its ceasefire offer apart from that of the J&K Liberation Front in 1994, then under the double-barrelled attack of the Indian military and HM. That does not make it less significant or sincere — only more "political".

Evidently, the Jamaat is keen to be seen to be holding out the olive branch to India — for the first time in the 11 years since the *azaadi* agitation broke out. The Jamaat's motives in doing so may have as much to do with Islamabad's plans — to temporarily reduce support to militants in order to engage India diplo-

matically and overcome its own isolation — as with its assessment of the degree of popular exhaustion with violence in the Valley. It is not excluded that the ceasefire is part of the many complex manoeuvres and counter-manoevres now in progress in preparation for Mr Atal Bihari Vajpayee's forthcoming Washington visit.

It is entirely possible that a new divide is emerging in the militancy — between "locals" who favour a political movement that can accommodate negotiations and peace, on the one hand, and "foreign" outfits dedicated to pan-Islamism and violent *jihad*, on the other. However, what matters is the dilution in the rigidity of HM's stand and the possibility of forward movement after a long interval. It is noteworthy that this new opening has generated more popular interest than the June 26 autonomy resolution or its July 4 peremptory rejection by the Centre.

IN BRIEF

- Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire offer is an important opportunity for peace
- It could reduce violence in the Valley, for the Hizbul is the only large indigenous militant outfit linked to a political party
- The ceasefire is part of Islamabad's plans to bring India to the negotiating table
- The Centre must acknowledge past errors and not indulge in clever manoeuvres

Put simply, New Delhi may potentially have yet another dialogue partner in Kashmir, besides the Hurriyat and the National Conference.

However, for any dialogue to proceed the government must accept four basic premises. First, the Kashmir problem is *sui generis*. Not only do its roots lie in a remarkably messy process of decolonisation and partition; but it has been complicated over 53 years, not least by New Delhi's repeated failure to fulfil its own constitutional commitments and political promises. Pakistan has, of course, cynically exploited the resultant popular alienation. But the thorny nature of the problem enjoins New Delhi to reverse some of the damage caused by the rigging of election after election, imposition of unpopular leaders, financial deprivation, and extension of over 200 Central laws and 42 amendments

(to the Constitution of J&K, no less) — some without legal warrant or propriety.

Second, as part of its pluralist and secular-democratic agenda, India must accommodate not just a generous federalism, but many *types* of federal arrangements, including asymmetrical ones. The State Autonomy Commission's demands are indeed exceptional, although Constitutional. But so is Kashmir or Article 370. This Article cannot even be unilaterally amended by India's Parliament. Kashmir's autonomy cannot be reduced to a subset of a new general Centre-state deal. Third, it is morally and politically imperative for Indian security forces to reduce their offensive operations and respect human rights which are routinely violated. Today, about a quarter million troops confront less than five million civilians in Kashmir. As a recent visit to the Valley confirmed, this is the root-cause of popular alienation, anger and sullen resentment towards India. In particular, the special operations group of Ikhwanī ex-militants, who prowl menacingly in un-numbered, enclosed jeeps, must be disbanded.

And fourth, the entire "palace-politics" strategy of doing deals based on divide-and-rule, elite co-optation, privileging one unrepresentative group over another, offering concessions only to withdraw them, and "buying peace", now stands exhausted. It can resolve nothing. Even before the battle for the hearts and minds of Kashmiris can begin, the government **must** come clean, acknowledge past errors, and start truly inclusive unconditional talks with all currents of opinion. It must effectively counter the impression that it is toying with the state's trifurcation, or playing one ethnic or linguistic group off against another, whether through "Sindhu Darshan" or hill councils. It would be disastrous if New Delhi plays off its Kashmiri interlocutors against one another or conducts a dialogue only to ward off external pressure and appear reasonable without meaning to be so.

It just won't do for Cabinet ministers to play good cop-bad cop or to make solemn "sky-is-the-limit" autonomy promises and then summarily reject that demand. Nor can the NDA government afford to follow double standards: explore the limits of *azaadi* (as yet undefined), talk real autonomy, and accept the BJP veto on Article 370. But will it rise to the task?

War fatigue

Given the plethora of militant organisations operating in the Kashmir valley, first impressions might suggest that the unilateral offer of a three-month ceasefire by the Hizbul Mujahideen does not amount to much. The fact that the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) reacted ambiguously to this development may tend to further heighten this impression. It would be wrong, however, to write off the ceasefire as inconsequential. While it is true that the Hizbul Mujahideen no longer has a dominant position among militant groups in Kashmir, what must not be forgotten is that unlike the groups that have become more active of late — the Lashkar-e-Toiba or the Harkat-ul-Ansar, for instance — the Hizbul is an organisation dominated by natives of the Valley rather than foreign mercenaries. That such a group should have chosen to make a conciliatory move is perhaps an indication of a fatigue setting in among the population in the Valley with the violence that has lasted over a decade and consumed tens of thousands of lives. If so, it is indeed a significant development and one that the Indian State can ill afford to treat dismissively. The Centre's understandably cautious reaction has struck the right note by keeping the option of conciliation open.

As for the APHC's reaction, what is perhaps more significant is that the initial reactions of both Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, the newly elected chief, and Mirwaiz Omar Farooq were guardedly positive. The final position of the APHC as a whole, therefore, clearly conceals significant differences within its constituents. Also, it is more than possible that the APHC feels threatened with marginalisation what with the J&K assembly assuming the mantle of the champions of autonomy and the Hizbul now also seeming to initiate a process of conciliation. The Centre must not allow these adverse reactions to dampen its efforts at solving the Kashmir problem. Peace must be given every possible chance in Kashmir and that means exploring all possibilities, even those which seem to have a slim chance of success.

The Economic Times.

29 JUL 2000

J&K militants invited for talks

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 28. In a significant development, the Centre today invited all militant groups and political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir for talks to restore peace and normality.

The Centre's offer comes in less than a week of the Hizbul Mujahideen's unilateral announcement of ceasefire for three months. Apparently spurred by this, the Vajpayee Government appealed to the Hizbul leadership to come overground and establish contact with the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, to discuss the modalities for initiating a dialogue and preparing the ground for the return of peace.

It is the Centre's first specific response after the announcement by Hizbul, a powerful pro-Pakistan militant outfit. The ceasefire had already been welcomed by the Centre and major political parties.

"The Government has consistently maintained that restoration of peace in Jammu and Kashmir can be achieved only through a dialogue and not by continued militancy," a Home Ministry spokesman said here tonight.

The Centre's offer came at the end of an hour-long high-level meeting tonight, presided over by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee. The meeting was attended by the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Defence Min-

ister, Mr. George Fernandes, the Army Chief, Gen. V.P. Malik and Mr. Pande.

"The Government has already taken cognisance of the support extended to the peace initiative by the people of Jammu and Kashmir," the spokesman said.

'No change in military stance'

PTI reports:

The Army today denied reports from Srinagar attributed to the Chief of Staff of the 15th Corps, Major General Basant Singh, that the military offensive against militant groups had been suspended in response to the ceasefire declared by the Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen organisation.

The Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire offer was still "under deliberation" of the Government and there was no change in the military stance against the proxy war being waged by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir, an Army spokesman said here.

'Operations scaled down'

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JULY 28. The Army has reduced its operations against militants in response to the ceasefire announcement by the Hizbul Mujahideen, the Chief of Staff of the 15 Corps, Major General Basant Singh, said here today and

described it as the first call towards peace.

Talking to reporters after meeting the National Cadet Corps at the Badamibagh cantonment, he said, "there has been no operation after the announcement but we are taking precautionary measures for our own safety."

"A decision on a ceasefire from our side is to be taken by the Central Government. As far as the Hizbul Mujahideen is concerned we have taken heed of its offer but anti-insurgency operations cannot be suspended and we are taking precautionary measures." However, "if they attack us we have to respond. It is difficult to know from 200 metres who is on the other side."

The credit for the Hizbul Mujahideen deciding to call for a ceasefire goes to the State's people, who had borne the brunt of the militancy in the last 11 years. "People are fed up with the violence and are not ready to send their children to be trained in arms and are rather keen on seeing them educated" he said.

Holding Pakistan responsible for the ongoing proxy war in the State, Gen. Basant Singh said it had made a number of attempts to snatch Kashmir away from India. This was done in 1965 and 1971 as also through the Kargil misadventure last year, but "we will not allow this to happen and will ensure that Pakistan cannot succeed."

J&K autonomy: the sooner the better

By Muchkund Dubey

A VERY small proportion of the people in Kashmir are for India. There are not many for Pakistan either. The overwhelming majority is for *Azadi*. But *Azadi* for them means cessation of atrocities and humiliation by the Indian state, and not being at the mercy of India in shaping their destiny. If these conditions are met under any other rubric, say autonomy, there is a fair chance of their taking it as *Azadi*. There would still remain some groups, such as the Jamaat, and leaders, such as Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who will raise pro-Pakistani slogans from time to time, but we will have to live with them as we are doing in the rest of India. A democracy must tolerate dissent, even if at times it goes against the very ethos of the nation.

The uppermost thought of the ordinary Kashmiri is to find deliverance from the present fear and insecurity. A Kashmiri constantly lives under the fear of security personnel entering his house and carrying out a search. He is afraid that he or his relative might be the next one to be picked up and never be heard of again. Custodial deaths for the rest of India is a matter of contested statistics. For a Kashmiri, it is associated with the name of a dear friend or colleague or a close relative. A Kashmiri feels threatened by the omnipresent bunkers — near the mosque, in the centre of the market place, in the heart of the residential area. Practically every family has lost lives. Business is disrupted. A large part of the social and physical infrastructure is a shambles. The economy is shattered. A Kashmiri sees the Indian state arrayed against him at every step.

There was a real window of opportunity in 1996 when the National Conference under Dr. Farooq Abdullah came to power on the autonomy slogan. If the State and the Central Governments had together worked out an autonomy package then there would have been a qualitative change in the situation. The emotional integration of Kashmiris with the rest of the country would have begun, Pakistan's proxy war would have been rendered in-

alienated from India nor is there a popular urge for a special status. These Chief Ministers have spoken up because they wanted to take advantage of the latest developments in Kashmir to put pressure on the Centre to devolve more powers to the States.

Pluralistic societies everywhere, particularly in the Third World, are under pressure. They can survive only if they devise new, ingenious and differentiated means to satisfy ethnic aspirations. This may call for different modes of association of different ethnic entities. If we do not reach a settlement on Kashmir on the basis of autonomy, we will soon be forced to go in for a superimposed artificial solution. There will be both internal and external pressure to embrace any solution that is feasible.

There are reports that the Government might stumble upon a political fix such as the trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir based on religion. There seems to be an unholy alliance of the RSS, the Hurriyat conference, Pakistan and outside forces in support of this artificial solution.

The RSS has come out openly in favour of the trifurcation of the State based on religion. This may be seen as leading to greater homogenisation of India towards the Hindutva ideology. But this will not prove to be so. Besides, this will have dangerous implications for the unity and survival of the country.

The Centre's position on trifurcation is not clear. The fact that it has not so far denied any such move is matter of concern. This concern is heightened by statements purporting to be in favour of trifurcation made by some Union Ministers. Besides, since the Government has summarily rejected autonomy and since it cannot openly accept *azaadi* for Kashmir or its accession to Pakistan one wonders what is the basis on which it is engaged in informal talks with the Hurriyat Conference.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary.)

If we do not reach a settlement on Kashmir on the basis of autonomy, we may soon be forced to go in for a superimposed artificial solution.

Besides, they cannot but take note of the fact that India has demonstrated once again in Kargil that it is prepared to make any sacrifice to retain every inch of territory on its side of the Line of Control. Finally, though there is a revival of indigenous insurgency, the fatigue from violence that set in the mid-1990s still persists.

It is, therefore, extremely important to take a bold new initiative to take advantage of the opportunity available in Kashmir. And autonomy provides the minimum practicable basis for such an initiative. Kashmir acceded to India in 1947 under unique circumstances. A unique provision had to be made in the Constitution for the territorial integration of Jammu and Kashmir into the Indian Union. Today we need another unique political contract for the emotional integration of the Kashmiri people into Indian nationalism. This is a supreme political imperative and not a matter of legal or constitutional quibbling. Referring the autonomy proposal to an expert committee or to the Constitution Review Commission is not the answer.

The argument that autonomy for Kashmir will give rise to similar demands from other States and lead to disintegration is a red herring to divert attention from the main issue. No other State signed an Instrument of Accession; J & K was the only State which acceded to India; other States merged with the Union. When special dispensation was provided for Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370, no other State raised objections or sought similar special status. The recent demand by the Chief Ministers of Punjab and Assam for greater devolution should be taken for what they are worth. They have not asked for the grant of special status. Unlike in Kashmir, people in these States are not

MONDAY, JULY 31, 2000

A JUDICIOUS MOVE

THE INITIATIVE FOR peace in Jammu and Kashmir, triggered by the unilateral announcement of ceasefire by the Hizbul Mujahideen a few days ago, seems set on course, with the Government of India sending positive signals by extending a specific invitation to the militant outfit for talks, with a plea to come overground, and by suspending military operations against its cadres. More significant is that the Government has judiciously avoided tagging on to its talks offer the usual "within the Constitutional framework" condition, something that has been anathema to the militant groups. Whether or not this calculated move came as a response to the Hizbul chief, Syed Salahuddin's reported threat to revoke the ceasefire if the Government insisted on the conditionality, it does provide the much-needed leeway to the HM which had come under heavy fire from other insurgent groups, besides of course serving to demonstrate the Centre's readiness to respect their sensibilities. Given the by-no-means insignificant presence of hardcore terrorist elements controlled by such outfits as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Taiba who have reacted sharply to the Hizbul's ceasefire move, any scaling down of anti-insurgency operations does carry an element of risk and the security forces undoubtedly have quite a task on hand. But there can be no question of avoiding that risk and missing the current opportunity to push for peace in the traumatised State.

The emerging scenario, sombre as it still remains, is not without its silver lining. Although initially the Pakistan-based militant organisations condemned the HM for its ceasefire declaration, calling it a "sell-out", some distinct signs of softening have been discernible in the stated positions of at least quite a few of them since then; the criticism is generally in the nature of expressing disapproval of and dissociating from the decision — it would be too much to expect anything like an endorsement of the HM's initiative. No less significant is that the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an um-

brella outfit of separatist groups which had dubbed the Hizbul move "hasty", has now welcomed the "unconditional" talks offer. In fact, now is the most opportune moment for the APHC to play its part, a leading part at that, in bolstering the peace process and this would require its leadership cementing the fissures within itself and projecting a cohesive policy line that will facilitate an enduring solution. Above all is the speculation — in the media and among the Pakistan watchers — of the Hizbul's ceasefire declaration having had the 'blessings', even if tacit, of Gen. Pervez Musharraf. If that is the correct reading and if the message goes out, the jihadi elements are less than likely to make any determined attempt to scuttle the peace process, although there could be some high-profile subversive attacks by way of reaffirming their identity.

All this is not to say that the road to peace and freedom from terrorist violence in Jammu and Kashmir is going to be smooth. Far from it. Given the multiplicity of the militant groups operating in the Valley — each with its own agenda and loyalties — and the mind-boggling complexities the Kashmir problem has acquired historically, the path cannot but be bumpy and the journey arduous. The point is only that the overall atmosphere seems conducive, as never before, to a favourable turn, provided the key players make the right moves. Now that the Centre has set the ball rolling, one should expect the Hizbul to open the dialogue via the Home Secretary and the immediate task will necessarily have to be the laying down of ground rules for the ceasefire and settling the modalities of interaction. At the appropriate stage, the Vajpayee regime would have to come up with imaginatively calibrated confidence-building measures and, needless to say, that while formulating the package and during the negotiations, it would have to take into confidence the various segments of political opinion, not to speak of the democratically-elected government in Jammu and Kashmir.

Bid to isolate foreign mercenaries

Talks offer to wean away J&K militants

VINAY JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 29. — Mounting pressure to respond to the ceasefire offer and the opportunity to drive a wedge between 'home grown' militants and foreign mercenaries prompted the Centre to ask the Hizbul Mujahideen to come overground for talks.

The government is now waiting for Intelligence agencies and unofficial channels to assess the impact the move has had on other militant outfits and their leadership across the border.

The growing impatience of the Hizbul leadership and the Centre's belief that an early response would bring favourable public opinion forced the government to move faster than it would have liked to.

The drop in the Hizbul's attacks after it made the ceasefire offer may have clinched the issue in its favour. Senior officials said the outfit had stopped violence, and the recent incidents were the handiwork of groups opposing the ceasefire.

(The Hizbul Mujahideen today welcomed the government's

offer of talks, but said a formal reaction would emerge only after the meeting of its supreme council ends, reports PTI.)

"The advantages of taking up the offer are many," a senior home ministry official said. Since Hizbul was a home-grown outfit, a formal ceasefire might pressure locals working for other militant groups.

The decision also bought time for crucial ground work and assessment, top officials said.

Security forces had been advised restraint even before the Centre took its decision last night. Sources said the forces had been going soft on the Hizbul since the beginning of the week.

By deciding not to attach conditions — like talks within the framework of the Constitution — the Centre reportedly wanted to take some heat off Hizbul Mujahideen, which is already facing flak from other militant groups.

The government's initial joy at the Hizbul offer was tempered by its need to gauge the mood of the people, and the fear that other terrorist outfits might spoil the party.

Army suspends offensive

SRINAGAR, July 29. — The Army today formally announced it was abandoning offensive operations against the Hizbul Mujahideen.

"In keeping with the direction given by the Centre, I have issued instructions to all field commanders of security forces in the valley to suspend operations against the Hizbul Mujahideen", Lt Gen JR Mukherjee, GOC, 15 Corps, said. — SNS

■ Details on page 10

THE STATESMAN

30 JUL 2000

Cabinet to discuss talks with militants

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 30. The Union Cabinet is likely to discuss on Tuesday the proposed dialogue with the militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir. It is only after this discussion that the incipient Kashmir diplomacy can be presumed to have the collective endorsement of the Vajpayee Government. For now, there is considerable confusion about the "within the framework" of the Constitution format.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, met the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and publicly endorsed the Centre's decision to hold a dialogue with the Hizbul Mujahideen. Dr. Abdullah's discussion with Mr. Advani is part of the conscious decision to keep the Chief Minister informed and involved at every stage.

After his consultation with the Home Minister, the Chief Minister left for Srinagar. Before leaving, he told reporters that the "ceasefire offer should come from all the militant groups in order to bring peace in the Valley. Pakistan should encourage other militant outfits such as the Harkat-ul-Ansar and the Lashkar-e-Taiba to shun the path of violence and resort to peaceful means as this would help in holding of a dialogue between the two countries."

Confusion over format

The Chief Minister's endorsement of the "dialogue process" notwithstanding, there appears to be considerable confusion within the Vajpayee Government. For instance, on Saturday, a ranking member of the Vajpayee Government informally told a number of senior journalists that it was part of the strategy to keep quiet about the "dialogue within the framework of the Constitution" caveat.

But within hours the same official found

himself constrained to tell a television channel that there could be no dialogue outside the framework of the Constitution. This assertion has been picked up by the Hizbul Mujahideen to demand a clarification.

Was this reflective of pressures and counter-pressures within the National Democratic Alliance Government or a structured vagueness? It is suggested, in some quarters, that no representative of the Government of India can legally enter into any kind of discussion "outside the constitutional framework"; on the other hand, non-official interlocutors — and there are many, though none with any governmental mandate — need not necessarily

ily get hobbled by the "Indian constitution" framework.

In the light of considerable confusion about the Government's thinking, the expectation is that during the course of his intervention in the on-going discussion in the Lok Sabha on the "autonomy resolution", the Home Minister would be able to clarify the matter.

Demand on 'outside' help

Not only the BJP, the Left parties are also going to demand an assurance that there be no "outside" interference (read American); for the public consumption, the Vajpayee establishment would have to keep on denying any American role, whereas no

breakthrough is likely to come about without Washington's blessings.

The strategy, for now, is to create conditions of "peace" (which means a cessation of hostilities on both sides, the militant groups as well as the security forces) before there could be progress in any dialogue. The success of such a strategy necessarily hinges on the Vajpayee establishment's capacity to convey to all the interested players — in and out of the Valley — that it had the requisite domestic political support to sustain this process of peace.

Talks will be unconditional

Dr. Farooq Abdullah told Star News tonight that the proposed talks between the Centre and the Hizbul Mujahideen would be unconditional, but ruled out a solution outside the Indian Constitution.

He said Pakistan might ask other groups to join the talks if the initial dialogue with Hizbul went in the direction they wanted it to go. "If the talks go in the other direction, Pakistan will continue with its games," he added.

Talk with us: Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 30. Pakistan tonight urged India to heed the call of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) for a "complete halt to the brutal repression of the Kashmiri people" and enter into a "meaningful and result-oriented talks with Islamabad for resolution of the Kashmir dispute."

In a statement here, a spokesman of the Foreign Office termed India's announcement that it has instructed its forces not to target the Hizbul Mujahideen while continuing operations against other groups as an "attempt to placate international opinion and divide the freedom movement, while continuing military operations."

Man who turned the tide: Page 13

Hizbul names team

Control to discuss the modalities of the proposed talks. "We need assurance from India that it is sincere to hold talks only on the Kashmir issue." He said his organisation would not set a deadline for getting a reply from India to its ceasefire offer, but New Delhi should immediately come up with a response.

Reacting sharply to other militant groups' attack on the Hizbul for its offer, he said "we are sorry for their shortsightedness. They are giving a sentimental reaction. After seeing the international reaction, they will also agree with our decision. We have let them watch and decide."

On why the Hizbul did not consult other militant groups as well as the Hurriyat Conference leadership, he said "I am sorry for that. There was a communication gap and contacts could not be made because of the prevailing situation".

MUZAFFARABAD, JULY 30. The Hizbul Mujahideen today named a three-member team which it would like to be present in the proposed negotiations between the Indian Government and "Kashmiri leadership".

The Hizbul spokesman, Mr. Kalim Siddiqui, told AFP that the group's top leader, Mr. Syed Salahuddin, named Mr. Ghulam Ali, Mr. Mushtaq Gillani and Mr. Mohammad Ali Saqib for the talks.

"There can be other people as well, but these three have raised the issue around the world and we want them in any negotiations between India and Kashmiri leadership," Mr. Siddiqui said.

'We want quick response'

In Islamabad, Mr. Salahuddin told PTI in an interview at his residence that India should facilitate a meeting of the Hizbul leaders from both sides of the Line of

MPs discuss J&K autonomy pitfalls

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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WEEK IN LOK SABHA

Part from a day of shouting and adjournments on the Jethmalani issue, the Lok Sabha witnessed some action from members on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's autonomy demand for the state. The State Reorganisation Bills for the creation of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhatisgarh were also finally introduced.

It was disappointing that Mr Somnath Chatterjee, veteran parliamentarian and senior CPI-M leader, could not rise above petty politics while analysing the grave implications of the autonomy demand. Dr Farooq Abdullah, Mr Chatterjee said, was living in a fool's paradise to imagine he would get autonomy from the BJP government which had all

along stood for abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. That "autonomy" is dear to the Marxists in West Bengal is a well known fact and Mr Chatterjee's plea for stronger states had nothing new in it.

It is not known whom Mr Madhavrao Scindia, the deputy leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party in the Lok Sabha, was trying to impress. However, his oratorical skills could not conceal his scant understanding of the subject. Nevertheless, he was able to impress some members both in the Treasury Benches and in the Opposition by presenting the chronology of Jammu and Kashmir from the day of its accession to the Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi accord of 1975.

A question mark was put on the autonomy cry by Mr Chandra Shekhar and Mr PA Sangma who wondered what would happen to the country if every state was granted more autonomy. Maybe, India would disintegrate as a nation. It was a reversal of the political trend when the two leaders questioned the justification and desirability of a federal state.

Mr Sangma questioned the demand for more autonomy when J&K already enjoyed special status under Article 370 of the Constitution. Autonomy did not mean autonomy for the Kashmir Valley alone. What about the people of Ladakh and Jammu who had left in the wilderness by the Central government now and in the past while handling the Kashmir

issue?

A special mention must be made of Mr Vaiko, MDMK leader, who almost beat his chest to declare, "I am really proud to be an Indian citizen". He reminded the House how Tamil Nadu, which had launched an agitation in the 1960s for independent statehood, finally abandoned the idea and is now firmly entrenched in the Indian Union. Mr Vaiko, while asking for more powers for the states, cautioned against any move to weaken the country in the name of autonomy.

It was a poor reflection on the elected members of the Lok Sabha, who in their excessive zeal to oppose the creation of three new states, used words like "partition" of the country while participating in the discussion on the introduction of the State Reorganisation Bills.

Hizbul threatens to review truce if Centre sets terms

ISLAMABAD: The Hizbul Mujahideen on Sunday threatened to review its ceasefire if India set conditions for the proposed talks a day after the government said that it was suspending operations against the Pakistan-based militant body.

"The beginning of the talks process will be impossible unless India categorically announces unconditional talks. Hizbul Mujahideen will have no other option but to review its ceasefire declaration," Hizbul's supreme commander Syed Salahuddin said in a statement.

The HM, he said, has already made it clear that the Kashmir issue could be settled "only through tripartite talks that include Kashmiris, India and Pakistan". It must be noted that National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra had made it clear on Saturday that tripartite talks were absolutely ruled out.

A spokesperson of the HM, Saleem Hashmi, told Associated Press "we won't accept any conditions which say that talks should be within the ambit of Indian constitution or without involving Pakistan."

He said the Hizbul central command council, which met here, had asked India to bring flexibility in its stand towards Pakistan.

Meanwhile, it is learnt that the HM has discreetly started contacting other Kashmiri leaders to discuss their next move, sources said. They said it was likely that some Kashmiri political leaders would meet in the United Arab Emirates

to discuss a strategy for the rapidly changing scene in the Himalayan region. "The contacts have started for a meeting of Kashmiri leaders," said a source close to Hizbul Mujahideen. The ceasefire drew scathing criticism from other militant groups operating in the region.

But some of the other groups are realising they could face difficulties operating in Kashmir without the help of Hizbul Mujahideen.

The source close to Hizbul Mujahideen said the group has contacted Kashmiri figures in the United States, Canada and Europe

after getting in touch with Kashmir's leading separatist alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). The APHC has welcomed India's

unconditional invitation to talks as a positive move towards resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Meanwhile, a faction of Hizbul Mujahideen announced it would not abide by the ceasefire of its top leadership. The central advisory council of Pakistan chapter of Hizbul at its emergency meeting here vowed to continue Jihad against India, a statement released by the chapter said. The meeting was chaired by its chief Muhammad Osman Mujahideen.

Farooq meets Advani: In the backdrop of these late developments after the ceasefire announcement by the HM, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah met Union home minister L.K. Advani to discuss the issue. (Agencies)

PEACE PAINS

- Hizbul says talks have to include Pakistan
- Begins secret parleys with other militant groups worldwide
- Meeting of Kashmiri leaders planned in UAE

Autonomy is about empowerment of the people, not azadi

Six points that make sense

5-12
28/7
AMITABH MATTOO

The histrionics that followed the passing of the autonomy resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly continue to distort the real debate. Even while Farooq Abdullah and Atal Behari Vajpayee seemed to have finally made up, or at least cuddled up to each other for photo opportunities, public hostility to the idea of the Jammu and Kashmir state autonomy commission report has never been stronger. Autonomy is being viewed as secession, a march towards *azadi*, and an idea whose fulfilment could lead to the balkanization and disintegration of India. This is an absurdity being perpetuated by those who are either tragically ignorant about the theory and practice of federalism or have a vested interest in perpetuating rubbish.

Autonomy is about empowering people, making people feel that they belong, and about increasing the accountability of public institutions and services. It is synonymous with decentralization and devolution of power, phrases that have been on the charter of virtually every political party in India. In Jammu and Kashmir, autonomy carries tremendous resonance with the people because puppet leaders from the state colluded with the central leadership and gradually eroded the autonomy promised by the Constitution.

There is no contradiction between wanting Kashmir to be part of the national mainstream, and the state's desire for autonomous self-governance. Separatism grows when people feel disconnected from the structures of power and the process of policy formulation; in contrast, devolution ensures popular participation in the running of the polity. Bluntly put, autonomy is the only recipe for good governance in the 21st century. If autonomy weakened states, the United States would have disintegrated many decades ago.

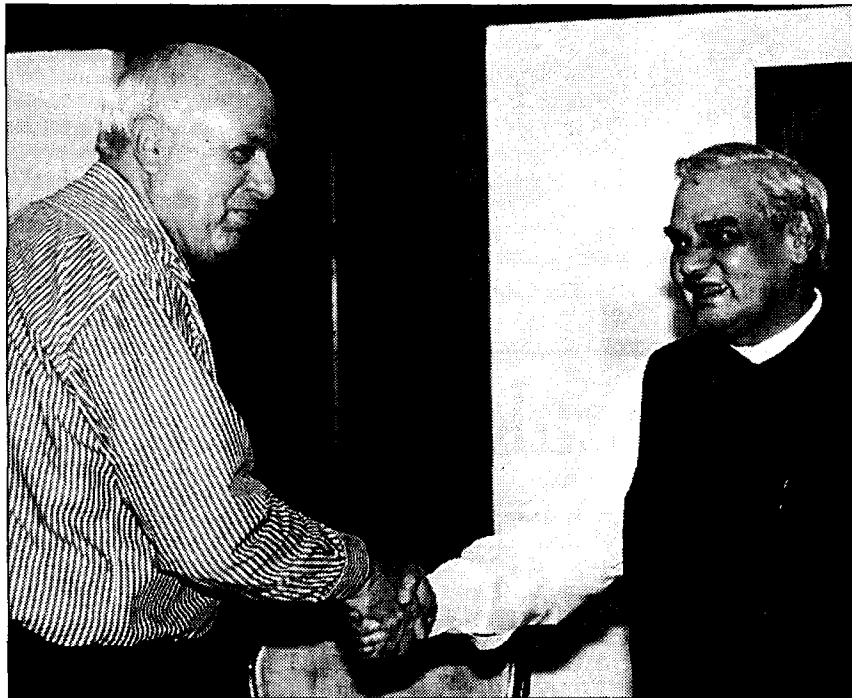
Restoration of autonomy in Kashmir, however, does not require elaborate reports or reference to past agreements and accords. They obfuscate rather than clarify the issue of meaningful self-governance. Autonomy can be achieved in the state through a simple six-point plan. One, restore the nomenclature. The terms *sadar-i-riyasat* and *wazir-e-azam*, which were used, until 1965, for the governor and the chief minister, still have important symbolic value for people of the state. Literally translated, they stand for head of state and prime minister. This nomenclature should be restored. In substance, this change will neither enlarge nor diminish the powers of the governor or the

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chief minister. This will also not lead to a shift in their order of precedence.

Two, give the state a role in the selection of the governor. According to Article 155 of the Indian Constitution the "governor of the state shall be appointed by the president by warrant under his hand and seal." Until 1965, the *sadar-*

While some might argue that it would be imprudent and impractical to exempt Jammu and Kashmir from the purview of the article altogether (although the state was brought under its purview only in 1964), it is still possible to modify it significantly, to prevent its misuse, without compromising on mea-



Even while Vajpayee and Abdullah seemed to have made up, public hostility to the idea of J&K autonomy has never been stronger

i-riyasat in Kashmir was elected by the state legislature, but it was clear that he should be a person acceptable to the Centre and be appointed by the president. The governor is widely viewed in Jammu and Kashmir as an instrument through which the Centre — and more often the political party in power — has furthered its interests in the state.

The office of the governor, in whom the Constitution vests the executive power of the state should be above narrow partisan politics. The governor could be elected by the state legislature and be appointed by the president and, by virtue of Article 156(1), hold office at the pleasure of the president. Alternatively, the state government could submit a panel of names and the president would appoint as governor the person he finds most suitable from the panel, and would hold office at the president's pleasure.

Three, prevent misuse of Article 356. This article deals with "provisions in case of the failure of the constitutional machinery in states". The misuse of Article 356 is a matter that has caused widespread concern in all the states. The matter is being considered by the inter-state council and some agreed modifications and safeguards might emerge.

Four, give state services more authority and increase the quota in the all India services. Part XIV of the Constitution, which deals with the services, did not apply initially to Jammu and Kashmir. But the provisions of Article 312, relating to the all India services were extended in 1958. Under the scheme, entries into the Indian administrative service

and the Indian police service are both by direct examination and selection of promotees from the state civil service by the Union public service commission. In most states the state quota has been around 33 per cent, but in the case of Jammu and Kashmir this has been 50 per cent. The bulk of direct recruits to the Indian administrative service, Indian police service, Indian forest service is from just about 25 colleges and universities in India.

There is reason to expect that, as elsewhere, with improvements in the quality of education in Kashmir, the number of direct recruits from the state will increase in the years ahead. Even otherwise, that the Jammu and Kashmir selection quota (from within the state services) increased for a period of 20 years to 75 per cent, given the disruption that the educational system in the state has faced over the last decade. The Kashmir administrative service and the Kashmir police service have suffered severe neglect and marginalization over the last decade. Part of the problem has to do with training but it is crucial that KAS and KPS officers are given promotions and positions of authority and have a career track similar to IAS and IPS officers.

Fifth, appoint a regional election commissioner for the state. The impartiality of the Election Commission has come to be gradually respected, despite certain past electoral aberrations, particularly in Kashmir. However, it would be prudent if a regional election commissioner is appointed for the state, as provided for in Article 32 (4) of the Indian Constitution, to assist the EC in conduct of elections in the state. This appointment should be made on the recommendations of the state government before each election.

Six, provide guarantees for the future. Many people genuinely feel that even if a package of autonomy is worked out, a future central government may, in collusion with the state's political leaders, renege on an agreement that is made today. This is based on the past experience of the state's relationship with the Centre. It is essential, therefore, that special constitutional guarantees are introduced to ensure that the state's autonomy is not eroded. It may be necessary, for instance, to introduce a provision in the Constitution which would provide for a referendum in the state, before any major amendment that would affect the state's ties with the Union becomes a law.

This package of autonomy must, of course, be followed by devolution of power within the state: from Srinagar to Jammu and Leh and eventually to the *panchayats*. As the nation marks the 25th anniversary of Emergency, let us at least not forget the follies of over-centralization of power.

Mission Kashmir

ANYONE WHO has followed the course of Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir will find nothing unexceptional in the outbreak of violence on the day New Delhi's offer of cease-fire during the month of Ramzan came into effect. It had been customary even when the Indo-Pak talks were held for Islamabad to indulge in more intensive shelling across the border. At the time of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Lahore visit, too, there were incidents of violence in the Valley. Indian officials have long suspected that these were not coincidences but carefully planned attempts at sabotaging any peace initiative. The reason is also no secret. Whether it was Benazir Bhutto's shrill '*azadi, azadi, azadi*' call or General Musharraf's Kargil misadventure, Pakistan's foreign policy has always revolved round the idea of annexing Kashmir. If anything, Islamabad's intentions have acquired greater urgency since the Bangladesh war for it wants to do to India what it believes India did to Pakistan in 1971.

Since the Hizbul Mujahideen is Pakistan's creation, it can only be expected to obey its masters' dictates through acts of terrorism, thereby signalling its virtual rejection of the cease-fire offer. In effect, this refusal to give peace a chance is in line with the Hizbul's earlier hasty withdrawal of its own cease-fire proposal. The basis of this obdurate attitude is the realisation, both in Islamabad and among the terrorist groups trained and armed by it, that a prolonged cessation of hostilities will seriously undermine their project of keeping Kashmir on the boil. Their fear is perhaps all the greater now because Pakistan appears to have realised that despite all its denials, its close involvement in the trouble in Kashmir is recognised by the international community.

The second reason why Pakistan and the terrorists are scared of peace is the palpable desire for an end of the insurgency among the ordinary people. This craving for a return to normality is the reason why the local Hizbul leaders are often more responsive to the peace overtures than those operating from Islamabad. What is also significant in this context is that India's unilateral gesture has demonstrated its willingness to go the extra mile for the sake of peace whereas Pakistan's and the terrorists' continued reliance on violence has exposed their intransigence in stark terms. Despite provocations, therefore, India only stands to gain by its present policy under which it will only retaliate but not adopt a pro-active approach.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 NOV 2000

J&K firing: 7 policemen suspended

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, OCT 31. The Jammu and Kashmir Government has accepted the Justice S R Pandian commission report on the Brakpora police firing on April 3 and also the report of the probe into the firing at Amarnath pilgrims on August 1. While seven police and CRPF personnel have been found involved in the Brakpora massacre, excessive firing by the CRPF personnel at Pahalgam is the highlight of the probe, conducted by Lt. Gen. J.R. Mukherjee, GOC 13 Corps.

The Government has ordered suspension of all the police personnel including an SP and two Dy.SPs. The Chattisinghpora massacre and the killing of five civilians in the Pathribal "encounter" would also be probed by Mr. Justice Pandian as these were linked with the Brakpora incident.

Releasing the reports at a news conference here today, the Chief

Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said: "we have accepted the report in toto as well as the recommendations that have been made by Mr. Justice Pandian." Three officials of the Special Operations Group of the State Police and four CRPF personnel were found responsible for the firing at the procession near Brakpora on April 3 this year.

Around 2000 persons were marching towards the office of Deputy Commissioner in Anantnag demanding an inquiry into the killing of five civilians at Pathribal when police opened fire. Nine persons were killed and several injured. The Government had ordered a probe the same day, rejecting the police claim that the militants had first opened fire at security personnel.

"We are going to register an FIR and a team of investigators will be constituted which will prove the case in the court," Dr. Abdullah

said. The Government would also take into account the suggestions made by Mr. Justice Pandian in order to prevent such incidents in future. The commission has also recommended an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakhs each to the kin of the deceased and the injured.

However, he said then SSP Anantnag who along with the SHO, Achabal was suspended and now found not guilty, would not be reinstated though the commission has asked the Government to do so. "The SSP will not be reinstated until the fresh enquiry is completed as he was the SSP at the time of these two incidents as well." The Government has not yet received the DNA tests conducted on the bodies exhumed in Pathribal. On the Amarnath probe, Dr. Abdullah said it proved that excess firing by the CRPF personnel had caused the deaths. An FIR under section 302 had been registered against them. The re-

port was being sent to the Union Home Ministry for appropriate action. Four State Government officials have been placed under suspension as recommended by the committee. A high-level committee, headed by the Chief Secretary, would ensure foolproof arrangements for the "yatra" in advance.

Two militants had opened fire at the Amarnath pilgrims in Pahalgam on August 1 which was followed by indiscriminate firing resulting in the death of over 35 persons including 30 pilgrims.

Dr. Abdullah said trifurcation was not a solution to any problem and it would result in disintegration of the country. With a degree of autonomy on both sides of Kashmir, the only solution to the problem was that "this part is India and that part is Pakistan." "There should be more autonomy here and tremendous autonomy there", he said.

THE HINDU

1 NOV 2000

Lone gets passport to attend son's wedding

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 14. — It's official now. The external affairs ministry has issued a passport to Mr Abdul Gani Lone so that he may attend his son's wedding in Pakistan on 19 November.

The Hurriyat leader's son, Sajjad, will tie the knot with Asma, daughter of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman, Mr Amanullah Khan.

A spokesman for the ministry of external affairs said issuance of passport is not related to the larger issues between the two countries.

The Hurriyat spokesman, Mr Abdul Banday, said Mr Lone received his passport today after he returned from Srinagar where he had gone to attend the wedding of a friend's daughter. The passport is country-specific and will remain valid for three months.

The NHRC had issued notices to the home and external affairs ministries, asking them to respond to Mr Lone's application by 16 November, indicating its decision in the matter.

This is the second time Mr Lone sought the NHRC's intervention in getting a passport. The first time he had applied for a passport to travel to the USA for a bypass surgery.

Hurriyat leaders, Mr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mr Moulvi Abbas Ansari, are also expected to attend the wedding. Both have passports and are at present attending the Organisation of Islam Conference meet.

THE STATESMAN

15 NOV 2000

OIC wants special envoy on J&K

By Kesava Menon

MANAMA, NOV. 14. The Organisation of Islamic Conference, which concluded its summit in Doha today, asked its Secretary-General, Mr. Azzedine Laraki, to appoint a special representative on the Kashmir dispute and to send a fact-finding mission.

In its final communique, the OIC also expressed its concern over what was described as "the massacres of civilians and material losses caused by heavy Indian bombing across the Line of Control" and urged the international community, including the United Nations, to mediate in the conflict "which now threatens to lead to a nuclear confrontation".

In the five paragraph reference to the Kashmir issue, the OIC expressed support for the initiative taken by Pakistan to resume negotiations with India to resolve all

questions "at origin of conflict, in particular the essential Kashmir question".

Reaffirming its support for the right of the people of Kashmir to self-determination, it condemned the violation of their human rights. It called on member states to take "all necessary measures to convince India to put an immediate end to the violations and to enable the Kashmir people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with U.N. resolutions".

The Conference adopted the recommendations made by the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir, which held a meeting at the Ministerial level on the sidelines of the summit. It also took cognisance of the memorandum, submitted by the "true representatives of the people of Kashmir", to the Contact Group.

Musharraf call: Page 14

THE HINDU

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KASHMIR PROBES

Farooq Farooq Abdullah shows the way

FAROOQ Abdullah has not received his share of credit for prompt action on reports of the Justice Pandian and Lt General Mukherjee enquiry commissions. The judge and the general investigated, respectively, the bloody fallouts of Chattisinghpora and Pahalgam. The 20 March massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chattisinghpora was followed by claims that "foreign mercenaries" responsible had been killed in an encounter. That claim, however, was disputed by local people whose protests included a 2,000-strong march in Barakpora. Security forces had fired on that demonstration, and Justice Pandian's enquiry has found that police action in that April incident was far in excess of reasonable response. The same finding has been reached by General Mukherjee's report on the Pahalgam tragedy, the culprit this time being CRPF personnel, whose retaliatory fire was found to be excessive and therefore contributory to the tragedy. Confronted with these two indictments of men in uniform, Dr Abdullah could well have stalled or even sought to bury the findings. He has, instead, taken quick and firm action and, therefore, restored a measure of public confidence in a state that sorely needs it. The Pahalgam tragedy report is now with the Centre, which has to decide on the course of action against CRPF personnel. The home ministry should follow Dr Abdullah's lead and act quickly, more so since the home minister himself had publicly commented on the shocking nature of the Pahalgam tragedy.

The broader lesson would be that governments, Union and in the states, need to recognise the need for timely and fair responses to allegations of depredations by security forces. This is especially true of terrorist-afflicted regions where, typically, the level of mistrust between the administration and the people is far higher than the norm. Enquiry reports such as those by Justice Pandian and General Mukherjee and follow up action send the message that police or the paramilitary cannot make insurgency a blanket excuse for excesses. Security personnel in Kashmir will be a little less cavalier and the people, a little less sceptical of official intentions. If this is backed up by an inquiry into the Chattisinghpora massacre itself, the credibility of official efforts in Kashmir will increase substantially.

Even better would be a more open attitude on the part of the Union and the J&K government to reports on abuse of human rights by security forces. The argument that security personnel work in conditions of often extreme provocation is well understood. But equally important is the fact that the onus of good behaviour is on the official side, not on terrorists. Official India has been insensitive on this score, often equating concern about human rights to sympathy for the terrorists' cause. The result has been a massive erosion of public confidence in the administration. A few well publicised and punitive actions towards erring security personnel will be a big first step in any corrective action. Surely, if Farooq Abdullah can do it, so can LK Advani.

THE STATESMAN

5 NOV 2000

LASHKAR SQUAD STRIKES AT ARMY CAMP

3 jawans, 2 Pak. ultras killed in shootout

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, NOV. 5. Two Pakistani militants, believed to be members of the *Fidayeen* (suicide squad) of the Lashkar-e-Taiba were killed within minutes of their storming an army camp at Magam in Handwara and shooting dead three jawans early this morning. Four jawans were injured in the shootout. (A PTI report said four soldiers were killed in the battle.)

The Lashkar militants barged into the army camp of 24 Rashtriya Rifles at 4 a.m., lobbing a grenade on the security picket. This was followed by indiscriminate firing, leading to the death of a junior commissioned officer and two jawans. Security forces, however, prevented their entry within the barrack and both the militants — identified as Abu Abdul Rahim and Abu Tulha Siyani — were killed in retaliatory firing.

Meanwhile the fierce encounter continued at Batpora in Budgam district 72 hours after it started. Brig Baldev Singh, commanding officer, 12 sector Rashtriya Rifles, briefing mediapersons, said the bodies of four militants had been recovered.

Brig Singh, who had a miraculous escape when militants fired at him during a visit to the site said three soldiers and two civilians also lost their lives.

Giving details here, Brig Singh said that on November 2, the troops received information that four or five militants were hiding in the house of one Ali Mohammad Wani. "We immediately cordoned off the house. During a search, militants fired at the troops. In the retaliatory fire two militants were killed on the first day. Later the militants shifted their position and the encounter prolonged. In the gun battle three of our men also got killed."

Brig Singh said the intelligence inputs were inadequate and that was why the army suffered some casualties. "Had there been accurate information about the number of militants present, we could have ended this operation within hours and minimised the casualties," he said.

The commanding officer did not rule out the possibility of some militants having escaped. "We are sure that the number of militants present in the area was 10. We have killed four and are expecting to recover two more bodies."

Elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir, three persons including two militants were killed in the last 24 hours.

At Kandi Kupwara, Abdur Rashid Lone of Terath Kandi and Safi Khan of Pakistan were killed in an encounter with the troops of 10 Madras. Two AK-47

rifles and some ammunition were recovered from their possession.

Reports from Sopore said ultras gunned down a surrendered militant — Mohammad Ramzan, son of Abdul Razak, at Rebon village. At Machil in Kupwara district, jawans of 7 Para allegedly barged into the house of one Abdul Ahad Wani and resorted to indiscriminate firing. He is battling for life in hospital. A police spokesman, however, said Wani was injured in a militant attack.

Divisions among separatists

PTI reports:

Friday's killing of the Shia leader, Agha Syed Mehdi, has apparently created divisions among separatist organisations in Kashmir with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference condoling the death and two other groups lashing out at the APHC for its reaction.

A Hurriyat spokesman said in a statement that mischievous elements used such situations to execute conspiracies and wreck the public harmony, but the people "shall give a fitting reply by maintaining amity."

On the contrary, Syeda Asiya Andrabi, president of the *Dukhtar-e-Millat* (Daughters of the Nation), alleged that the APHC expressing grief clearly indicated that the Hurriyat had a close rapport with pro-Indian elements.

A spokesman of the pro-Pakistan Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen said militants only killed the anti-movement elements without considering whether they were Shia or Sunni.

Curfew continues

In the capital's curfew-bound Saidakadal area, police fired several rounds in the air and burst teargas shells to disperse a group of agitated Shia youth, who went on the rampage early this morning. The youth, protesting the killing of Agha Syed Mehdi on Friday, smashed windowpanes of several houses.

Immediately, Sunni Muslims came out of their houses and retaliated leading to a brick-battle. However, police immediately intervened and fired several warning shots after repeated lathicharge and teargas shelling proved ineffective, the sources said. However, none was hurt in the incident.

The curfew imposed on parts of Shia-dominated areas of Srinagar including Zadibal, Rainawari, Naheen, Habbak, Alamgari Bazar and Saidakadal on Friday night continued as a precautionary measure.

THE HINDU

6 NOV 2000

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Violence mars Shia clergyman's funeral

9 81-96K

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, NOV. 4. Thousands of followers bade a tearful adieu to the politician and Shia clergyman, Agha Syed Mehdi, at Budgam today, amid incidents of violence, arson and police firing reported in Shia-dominated localities. Mehdi, along with five others, was killed when suspected militants detonated a landmine in a Budgam village yesterday.

Authorities imposed curfew in select localities falling under five police stations in Srinagar and some places in the countryside as mobs set alight over a dozen houses and killed a young man late last night. While small demonstrations were reported from various places within and outside the city, a gathering of over 35,000 followers attended the burial this afternoon.

Some of the mourners resorted to arson and damaged Government offices in Budgam district. Police fired several rounds in the air to control them. The SSP, who was in the police station, was attacked and the police had to fire in the air.

Police and para-military forces have been deployed in full strength to prevent escalation of violence.

In certain old city areas of Srinagar, the mourners threw bricks and even set afire some houses belonging to the majority community. Besides raising anti-Pakistan slogans, they shouted



The coffin of Syed Agha Mehdi, Shia leader killed in a landmine blast yesterday, being taken for burial in Budgam district of central Kashmir on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Qatilon Ko Pesh Karo (Present the killers). Police fired in the air to quell the violent mobs.

Last evening, at Hartrath village on the Srinagar-Baramulla highway, a mob lynched 20-year-old Meraj-ud-Din. He was buried in the forenoon today after the police fired scores of rounds in the air. Within minutes of the burial, curfew was imposed on the entire belt. In the same locality, mobs set alight half a dozen residential structures. There were reports of arson from some remote Bandipore areas.

Neither the Chief Minister, nor Agha's cousin, Agha Syed Mahmood, a Minister in the Farooq Abdullah Government, was seen at the funeral prayers. All APHC leaders were present. Earlier, led

by its Chairman Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, the APHC executive met in the morning and condemned the killing. The Congress leaders, Mr. Gulam Nabi Azad and Mr. Ahmed Patel, visited the bereaved family.

Agha Mehdi, who belongs to the influential Agha family of Budgam, was a long-time Congress leader.

Sonia expresses anguish

PTI reports from Delhi:

The Congress president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, today expressed deep anguish at the killing of top Shia leader Agha Syed Mehdi.

In a condolence message, Mrs. Gandhi said the Congress appreciated the dedicated work done by Agha for the uplift of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

THE HINDU

5 NOV 2000

Keeping Pak pleased, Hurriyat wants direct talks with Centre

TARIQ BHAT
SRINAGAR, NOV 8

FOR the first time after the Hizbul initiative collapsed, efforts are on within the Hurriyat Conference to go in for direct talks with New Delhi. And to ensure that the talks don't end before they begin, Hurriyat leaders are considering the possibility of getting Pakistan to agree to stay away, at least in the initial stages.

But to take the Pakistanis into confidence and win their approval for this stand, the top brass has reached the capital to meet the Pakistan High Commission.

The decision to hold direct talks, sources said, was one of the highlights of the three-day special session from October 23. Hurriyat chief Abdul Gani Bhat, sources said, asked his colleagues in the ex-

ecutive council to first get the proposal vetted by their respective executive bodies — the Majlis-e-Shouras. It is learnt that most of the 70 members, ten each from the seven executive parties, spoke in favour of a dialogue with the Cen-

Iran. Umar Farooq, Abdul Gani Lone, Yasin Malik, Abdul Gani Bhat are camping in New Delhi.

While Lone is trying to get permission to attend his son, Sajad Lone's marriage with Asma Khan, daughter of the JKLF (A) chair-

“bless the proposal and help break the ice.”

The leaders will assure the Pakistanis that the question of being sidelined does not arise and the move was only a tactical one, sources said.

Meanwhile, the JKLF has planned to hold a convention in Jammu, Rajouri, Poonch and Doda this week.

The party, sources said, has plans to receive its Chairman, Muhammad Yasin Malik, at the Jammu airport who is coming from New Delhi. Javid Mir, the party vice-chairman led a delegation for Jammu.

The convention is aimed at mobilising public opinion in these areas and also demonstrate against the parties who, of late, have demanded the trifurcation of the state on communal lines.

Leaders of the organisation want to get Pak to agree on staying away for a while as they begin talks with Delhi

tre. But the consensus was that Pakistan needs to be informed of the decision and should be taken into confidence before any such move takes off.

Except for Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the entire top brass of the conglomerate is out of station. Moulvi Abass Ansari, the only Shia leader in the secessionist coalition, is in

man, Amanullah Khan in Pakistan, Umar is planning to travel to Qatar for a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Conference.

Sources said the leadership will brief the Pakistani High Commissioner on what happened in the special session.

The Hurriyat leaders will reportedly ask the Pakistanis to

INDIAN EXPRESS

9 NOV 2002

NC, ANC for tripartite talks on J&K

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, NOV. 11. In a significant development the ruling National Conference and the Awami National Conference (ANC) headed by the former Chief Minister, Mr Ghulam Mohammad Shah, today favoured a tripartite dialogue on Kashmir saying Pakistan was an important party to it.

In separate meetings both the parties urged the Centre to start negotiations with Pakistan in which the people of Kashmir shall also have a right to participate.

Mr. Sheikh Nazir Ahmed, general secretary, NC, said, "Pakistan is the most important party to the settlement of Kashmir issue. India should try to start negotiations with Pakistan without wasting time so that complete peace is restored in South Asia," a statement from the party headquarters said quoting Mr. Nazir, who addressed workers of Baramulla district today.

"The people of the State are real and have a right to settle the issue," he said adding "the people of Kashmir want to live like the crown of India and not slaves." Mr. Nazir said no one could rule "us as supreme power and India should fulfill her promises given to us in the past." He also lamented that the annual plan for J&K was yet to be finalised.

Addressing a public meeting organised by the ANC here, Mr. Shah criticised the Centre for



MASKED SUPPORT: Some women supporters of the Awami National Conference shy away from being photographed at a rally in Srinagar on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

adopting a rigid attitude on the inclusion of Pakistan into a meaningful dialogue. He said both Mr. Vajpayee and the Pakistan chief executive, Gen. Parvez Musharraf, were 'enemies of Kashmiris'. When towering personalities like Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi could talk to Pakistan why not Mr. Vajpayee, he asked. "When an atmosphere of dialogue is set in motion guns will automatically fall silent," he said.

Appreciating the Hizb-ul Mujahideen for announcing a ceasefire, the former Chief Minister

said "but due to the rigid and bureaucratic attitude of the Government that opportunity was lost."

Mr. Shah who recently wrote to political parties asking them to join hands to find an amicable solution to Kashmir problem, said the response was satisfactory. "Besides 33 trade unions, 11 political parties including the JKLF (Aman) and some individuals responded to my suggestions and now we are working on a convention in which further discussion will take place," he said. However, the separatist conglomerate All-Party Hurriyat Conference

(APHC) or the Democratic Freedom Party chief, Mr. Shabir Shah, have not responded to his letters.

The ANC chief said his party would soon start 'peace march' to inform the people about the importance of resolving the issue. He coined a new slogan for his partymen, *Seh Fareeqi Batchheet Karo, Masala Kashmir Hal Karo* (Hold tripartite talks to resolve Kashmir issue).

The meeting passed a 14-point resolution unanimously urging the Centre to initiate a tripartite dialogue to settle the Kashmir issue.

THE HINDU

12 NOV 2000

IT'S a picture-perfect hermitage. Perched atop a low hill dwarfed by massive barren mountains enclosing a valley 14,000 feet above sea level in the remote fastness of the Himalayas, 14,000 ft above sea level, the Ringdom Buddhist monastery is serenity itself. But the 20-odd maroon-robed monks in this isle of peace amid troubled Jammu and Kashmir find it difficult these days to meditate. Late last July, three of their colleagues and a German tourist were killed by Islamic insurgents and the lamas have since lived in fear.

"There isn't a soul for miles around and we are scared. It was 8.30 pm on that fateful occasion when a truck approached our gompa (monastery) from Zanskar, on its way to Kargil," recalled the bespectacled 50-year-old Chireng Tendup. "Four of us rushed down to the road to check out."

Kargil district police chief Syed Javaid Gillani explained, "The monks usually block the road after dark to prevent trucks from shipping out dung from Zanskar, used as heating fuel and precious in the cold, barren mountains. Finding the road closed, three men got off the truck, and following an altercation with the four lamas, took out their guns and, according to Tendup, ordered them to line up near the gate, then began firing." Three died, but a young lama escaped by hiding under a bridge.

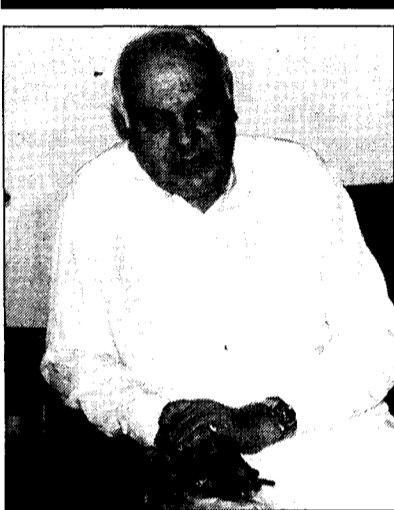
The incident touched off paranoia: this was the first time Kashmiri insurgents had infiltrated the peaceful Ladakh region and launched a campaign of terror. East of strife-torn Kashmir valley, the barren, mountainous Ladakh region (see map), comprising the districts of Kargil (predominantly Shia Muslim) and Leh (predominantly Buddhist), had so far been unaffected by the bloody 12-year secessionist insurgency that has wracked the Sunni-Muslim Vale of Kashmir and also affected Hindu-majority Jammu region. Would Ladakh too go the same way?

"The three terrorists, according to our investigation, were from the Lashkar-e-Toiba (a Pakistan-based secessionist outfit) and had trekked across the Himalayas from mountainous Doda in Jammu region to Kargil district," said Gillani. "Led by the Lashkar's Doda district commander, a short-tempered trigger-happy Pakistani national called Hafiz, the three were guided by some *Bakarwals* (herdsmen) who bring flocks of sheep every summer to Kargil for grazing. One *Bakarwal* they stayed with told us the militants wanted to take some foreign trekkers hostage. They were also possibly exploring the area as a safe hideout. They couldn't find any foreign trekker, and ended up commandeering a truck that happened to be giving a lift to the German tourist. After gunning down the monks at Ringdom, they abandoned the truck some miles away and decided to trek again. When the German pleaded he could not walk any more, Hafiz shot him dead."

If the incident shocked the nation, it was grist for the mill of the Ladaki separatists seeking the region's detachment from Jammu and Kashmir. "We will be the next target after the Pundits (Kashmiri Hindus, most of whom fled the Kashmir valley in 1990)," said Tsering Samphel, president of the

What road to settlement?

If Farooq Abdullah's autonomy package for Jammu and Kashmir has raised hackles in New Delhi, a recent incident in Ladakh has added fuel to the fire. PARTHA S BANERJEE reports



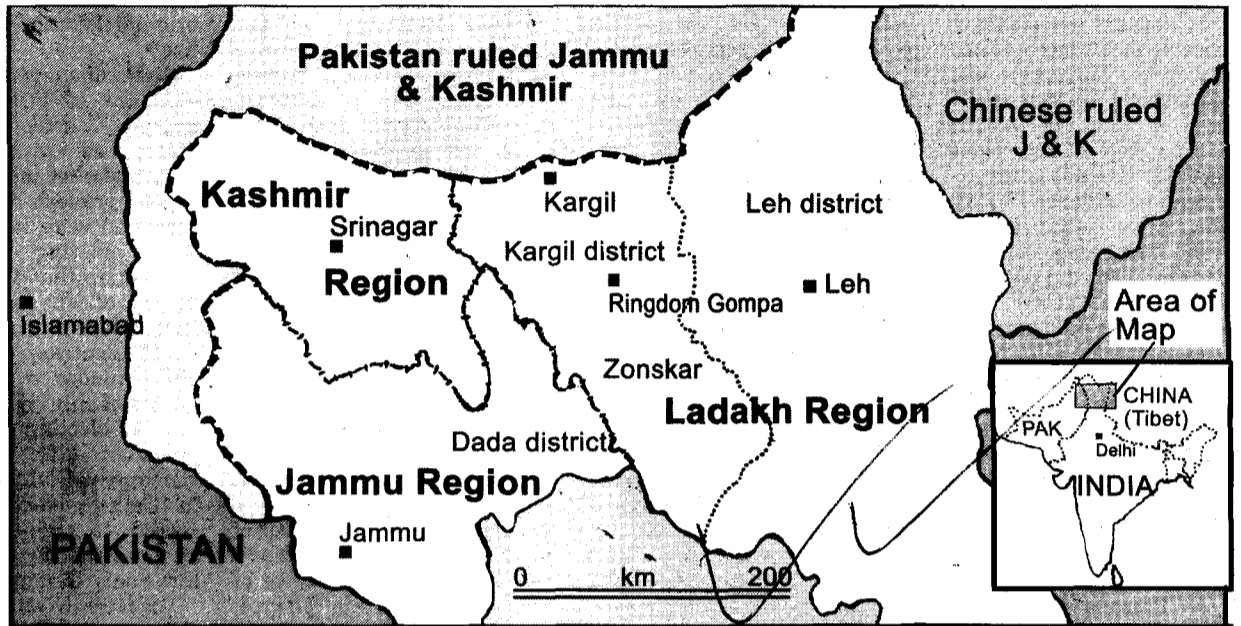
Farooq Abdullah: odd man out?

Ladakh Buddhist Association which is seeking a federally-administered union territory status for the region. "The first aim of the militants is Islamisation. They want to force other communities out of the state. In Ladakh, they want to drive out the Buddhists, many of whom live in isolated villages where a scare can lead to migration. The four Buddhist families living in Jolde, the village nearest Ringdom monastery, would have fled after the July incident had we not reassured them and spoken to the police for security."

Rigzin Jora, an articulate local Congress leader, reasoned, "It's time someone in Delhi calls a spade a spade. To solve the Kashmir problem, India has to grant autonomy to Kashmir. That's what was promised when the state acceded to India. So give Kashmir autonomy, but leave out Jammu and Ladakh. Ladakh wants to be a union territory, Jammu probably a state in its own right."

Jora's trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir is one of several plans being considered as a possible solution to the Kashmir dispute. For the first time since Pakistan-backed militant secessionism overtook picturesque Kashmir Valley in 1989, there is serious talk, at least in New Delhi, of resolving the intractable issue which divides India and Pakistan, both now nuclear powers.

Last April, soon after President Bill Clinton's visit to the Indian subcontinent, New Delhi released several leaders of the Hurriyat Conference, an umbrella organisation of over-ground separatist Kashmiri politi-



cal parties, and proposed a dialogue. Some secret negotiations probably followed but these were overshadowed by the unilateral ceasefire that the Hizbul Mujahideen, Kashmir's largest militia, declared in July. Indian officials met Hizbul representatives in a much publicised preliminary round on 3 August 3 negotiations broke down when the Hizbul chief in Pakistan, Syed Salahuddin, was asked by Islamabad to impose a new condition: the inclusion of Pakistan in the negotiations, which India predictably refused to entertain.

But what if the talks had continued? What if they resume, as many people predict? What kind of solution could be hammered out? What really are the options?

One option New Delhi could be considering is to recognise the Line of Control that divides the India- and Pakistan-ruled parts of Jammu and Kashmir as the official boundary between the two countries, and grant more autonomy to Indian Kashmir, or at least to the Valley, and ask Islamabad to allow a similar degree of self-rule to its part of the state. The Line of Control is where invading Pakistani irregulars were stopped by Indian troops flown into Kashmir in October 1947 as soon as the Maharajah of then independent Jammu and Kashmir merged his state with the Indian Union.

The controversial merger was supposed to be referred to the people of Jammu and Kashmir, largely Muslim, but the plebiscite, despite being mandated by the United Nations, was never held and it is this that is at the root of the Kashmir dispute. Kashmiris claim they were denied their right to self-determination, and in the early years of the Pakistan-backed militant uprising, then led by the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, most insurgents sought *azadi* (independence). But by 1991, the JKLF had been usurped by the Islamist Hizbul Mujahideen which called for Kashmir's merger with Pakistan.

The Hizbul has today surely climbed down from that stand or otherwise, as Jammu and Kashmir

chief minister Farooq Abdullah said, even the first round of talks with India would not have taken place because India could not consider such a proposal. Instead, the Hizbul and some of the other secessionist groups, including the over-ground Hurriyat Conference, could now be looking at a proposal to create a sovereign Kashmiri entity that would not have an international personality, or, as Fazal Haq Qureshi, the intermediary in last August's Hizbul-India talks put it, sovereignty without independence. Independence, Qureshi added, was a dream but it was unrealistic. It meant taking on the might of two nations, India and Pakistan.

The concept of sovereignty without independence was conceived by the Kashmir Study Group headed by businessman Farooq Kathwari who lives in the USA and is described as the world's richest Kashmiri. Having close links with the US establishment, he reportedly tried to reason with the militias and Pakistan that even after being backed by 15 Islamic countries, Palestine could not achieve total independence, so how could Kashmir. The KSG proposal essentially calls for reconstituting the Muslim areas of Jammu and Kashmir to form the sovereign-but-not-independent Kashmiri entity (or entities).

Based on a plan formulated 50 years ago by Sir Owen Dickson, an Australian jurist deputed by the UN in 1950 to facilitate the proposed plebiscite, the KSG prescription, published a year ago, envisages three possible configurations for the proposed entity (or entities). First, an entity on either side of the Line of Control, each with its own government, constitution and special relationship with India and/or Pakistan. Second, a single entity straddling the LoC with its own government, constitution and special relationship with both India and Pakistan. And third, one entity on only the Indian side of the LoC. The LoC itself, the KSG suggests, could be rationalised — that is, redrawn at places on cultural, economic and other considerations.

The KSG plan has drawn flak from India for seeking to reconstitute the

state on clearly religious lines. The Kashmiri entity it wants to create, say critics, carves areas out of predominantly-Hindu Jammu region that have large Muslim populations, like Doda district. "What the plan essentially says is that Muslims and Hindus cannot live together," remarked chief minister Farooq Abdullah. Balraj Puri, a Jammu-based former politician and a veteran commentator, added, "I take exception to the proposal to reconstitute the state. Once you accept Jammu's division, you are going to end up with the minorities on each side fleeing to the other side as happened when British India was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. We cannot afford another round of migrations and massacres."

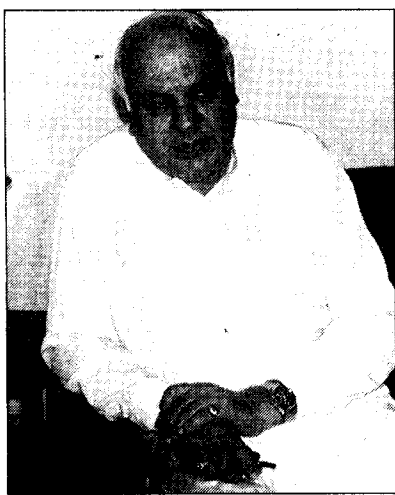
Countering the KSG contention that the areas included in the proposed entity/entities aren't just Muslim-predominant but are imbued with *Kashmiriyat* (the cultural ethos of Kashmir), Rekha Chowdhary, a political science professor at the University of Jammu, argued that the Doda Muslims had never been close to the Kashmiris in the Valley. There there was little *Kashmiriyat* in Doda or neighbouring Udhampur, or indeed Kargil in Ladakh, she added.

For that matter, another analyst said there was no *Kashmiriyat* in the Pakistan-ruled part of Jammu and Kashmir where virtually nobody spoke the Kashmiri language, and it made little sense to carve out a *Kashmiriyat*-imbued entity there.

Most Indian analysts and policy makers, like Puri and Chowdhary, abhor the idea of Jammu and Kashmir's break-up into states and union territories. But in Jammu and Kashmir itself, outside Kashmir Valley, there is a growing demand for slicing up the multi-ethnic state. Apart from Ladakh, a movement for separation is also brewing in Jammu with support from Hindu nationalist groups like the RSS (National Volunteer Force). That seems to have provoked the Jammu region Muslims, who say that if Jammu secedes from the state their area (Doda and neigh-

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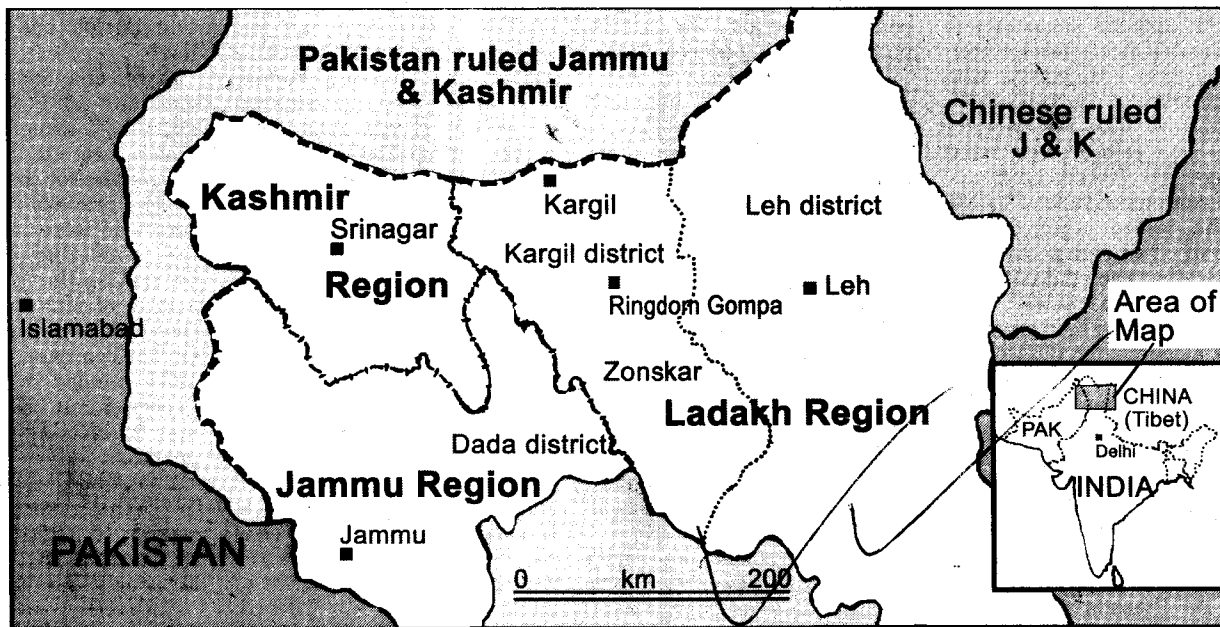
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chief minister Farooq Abdullah said, even the first round of talks with India would not have taken place because India could not consider such a proposal. Instead, the Hizbul and some of the other secessionist groups, including the over-ground Hurriyat Conference, could now be looking at a proposal to create a sovereign Kashmiri entity that would not have an international personality, or, as Fazal Haq Qureshi, the intermediary in last August's Hizbul-India talks put it, sovereignty without independence. Independence, Qureshi added, was a dream but it was unrealistic. It meant taking on the might of two nations, India and Pakistan.

The concept of sovereignty without independence was conceived by the Kashmir Study Group headed by businessman Farooq Kathwari who lives in the USA and is described as the world's richest Kashmiri. Having close links with the US establishment, he reportedly tried to reason with the militias and Pakistan that even after being backed by 15 Islamic countries, Palestine could not achieve total independence, so how could Kashmir. The KSG proposal essentially calls for reconstituting the Muslim areas of Jammu and Kashmir to form the sovereign-but-not-independent Kashmiri entity (or entities).

Based on a plan formulated 50 years ago by Sir Owen Dickson, an Australian jurist deputed by the UN in 1950 to facilitate the proposed plebiscite, the KSG prescription, published a year ago, envisages three possible configurations for the proposed entity (or entities). First, an entity on either side of the Line of Control, each with its own government, constitution and special relationship with India and/or Pakistan. Second, a single entity straddling the LoC with its own government, constitution and special relationship with both India and Pakistan. And third, one entity on only the Indian side of the LoC. The LoC itself, the KSG suggests, could be rationalised — that is, redrawn at places on cultural, economic and other considerations.

The KSG plan has drawn flak from India for seeking to reconstitute the

state on clearly religious lines. The Kashmiri entity it wants to create, say critics, carves areas out of predominantly-Hindu Jammu region that have large Muslim populations, like Doda district. "What the plan essentially says is that Muslims and Hindus cannot live together," remarked chief minister Farooq Abdullah. Balraj Puri, a Jammu-based former politician and a veteran commentator, added, "I take exception to the proposal to reconstitute the state. Once you accept Jammu's division, you are going to end up with the minorities on each side fleeing to the other side as happened when British India was divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. We cannot afford another round of migrations and massacres."

Countering the KSG contention that the areas included in the proposed entity/entities aren't just Muslim-predominant but are imbued with *Kashmiriyat* (the cultural ethos of Kashmir), Rekha Chowdhary, a political science professor at the University of Jammu, argued that the Doda Muslims had never been close to the Kashmiris in the Valley. There there was little *Kashmiriyat* in Doda or neighbouring Udhampur, or indeed Kargil in Ladakh, she added.

For that matter, another analyst said there was no *Kashmiriyat* in the Pakistan-ruled part of Jammu and Kashmir where virtually nobody spoke the Kashmiri language, and it made little sense to carve out a *Kashmiriyat*-imbued entity there.

Most Indian analysts and policy makers, like Puri and Chowdhary, abhor the idea of Jammu and Kashmir's break-up into states and union territories. But in Jammu and Kashmir itself, outside Kashmir Valley, there is a growing demand for slicing up the multi-ethnic state. Apart from Ladakh, a movement for separation is also brewing in Jammu with support from Hindu nationalist groups like the RSS (National Volunteer Force). That seems to have provoked the Jammu region Muslims, who say that if Jammu secedes from the state their area (Doda and neigh-

bouring zones) would secede from Jammu. And in Shia-Muslim dominated Kargil district, the Buddhists of Zaskar in the south want a merger with adjoining Buddhist Leh district which, of course, is itself aspiring to union territory status. Since June, every fourth day, the Ladakh Buddhist Association has been staging rallies before the district chief's office in Leh — each rally representing a particular village — to press for union territory status.

The separatist movement in Leh and Jammu really took off in June after Farooq Abdullah announced he would table a committee report on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir in the state legislature.

"Autonomy would mean greater power in the hands of the Valley politicians who dominate state politics, and Ladakh and Jammu would have none of it. We are already discriminated against by Srinagar," said Leh Congress leader Rigzin Jora. "After autonomy, it will be worse. Besides, what do we share with the Valley Muslims? Nothing. For that matter, we Buddhists of Tibetan stock share nothing with mainstream India. But we know minorities can flourish in this country. Seeing the plight of the Tibetans, we consider ourselves lucky we are in India."

If Abdullah's autonomy report spurred separatism in Ladakh and Jammu, it created a storm in Delhi. The report recommended the restoration of the autonomous status that Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed before 1953, status that was part of the 1947 merger deal but which had over the years been diluted by India. Restoration of the status would obviously have gone some way in appeasing separatist Kashmiris, but New Delhi rejected it outright, surprising some observers, and then went on to talk to the secessionist Hizbul.

"Autonomy is the only — and final card — India holds," observed Amitabh Mattoo, a Kashmir expert (and a Kashmiri Hindu himself) at Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University. "But we don't know how and when to use it. Or whom to grant autonomy — chief minister Abdullah or the Hurriyat. Or the Hizbul Mujahideen."

But Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institution, Washington, who is an expert on the subcontinent, isn't sure autonomy is the best bet unless Pakistan's cooperation is guaranteed. For, as he said, an autonomous Kashmir could continue to be infiltrated by Pakistan-based *jihadists*, like those from the Lashkar-e-Toiba. Indian officials, however, believe that once the Hizbul Mujahideen signs a peace deal, militias like the Lashkar can be tackled, since without the ground support of Hizbul's local cadres, the foreign jihadists wouldn't be able to operate with ease. No wonder the Indian government went the whole hog to engage the Hizbul in talks, and no wonder Pakistan, realising its implications, forced the group to abandon the dialogue.

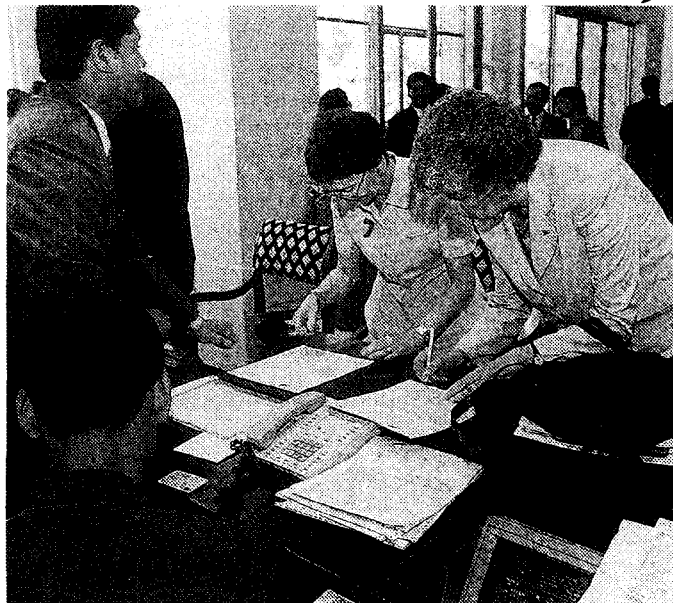
"But India is still trying to resume the talks. New Delhi realises it has to win over the Hizbul Mujahideen for a permanent solution on its terms," said a senior government official. "That's top priority. Autonomy or any other plan can come later."

— World News Link.

OIC to focus on Kashmir issue

DOHA, NOV. 10. The contact group of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Jammu and Kashmir today made a strong plea to India and Pakistan to address the Kashmir issue through bilateral dialogue. The group, comprising Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Niger and Pakistan, which met here for more than two hours to review the situation in the troubled state, felt that continuation of the Kashmiri problem would worsen the security scenario in South Asia. Talking to mediapersons after the meeting, representatives of Turkey and Pakistan said dialogue was essential for peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue.

Pakistan has said the summit will focus on Kashmir and may consider two separate draft resolutions on the issue. — UNI, PTI



With the World Bank President, Mr. James Wolfensohn, busy, his wife, Mrs. Elaine Wolfensohn, settles the hotel bills before leaving Hyderabad on Friday. — Photo: P. V. Sivakumar

Elaine's day out

By Dasu Kesava Rao

HYDERABAD, NOV. 10. Ms. Elaine's day in and around Hyderabad was quite memorable. She managed to hog a good chunk of the limelight even with her husband, the World Bank president, Mr. James D. Wolfensohn, around.

On Thursday, she mixed freely among rural women at Medchal and shelled out Rs. 50 to become member of a thrift group. This morning in Hyderabad, she played 'pachisi' with 'lambada' tribal women and hopped on to a tricycle driven by Mr. Wolfensohn.

She topped it at the Hotel Grand Kakatiya on Friday by walking up to the reception counter, fishing out her credit card and settling the bills for herself and husband. Another member of the World Bank team paid the bills for the others.

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