

Serial blasts shatter Ramzan truce lull

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

SRINAGAR, Dec. 1. — For the first time since the Ramzan ceasefire call, militants today set off a series of bomb blasts and grenade attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, leaving 12 injured.

Two car bombs and two grenades were set off between 11.30 a.m. and 2.45 p.m. at two places in Srinagar and one at Baramulla, an official spokesman said. At least 12 civilians were injured when a grenade, aimed at passing Army vehicles, missed the target and exploded at Pattan Main Market in Baramulla. Three of the injured were in a critical condition.

The two car bombs were detonated near the J&K High Court complex in Srinagar's crowded Jehangir Chowk area. Using tactics similar to the 10 August blast in which a journalist was killed, militants used the first car blast as decoy to attract a crowd, but failed. As security-men were keeping onlookers off the blast site, another car packed with explosives blew up in 15 minutes.

Militants also exploded a gre-

PAK TRACK II DIPLOMAT UPBEAT ON SUMMIT

DUBAI/NEW DELHI, Dec. 1. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Gen Pervez Musharraf may have their first one-on-one meeting in New Delhi after Ramzan if the ceasefire offer holds good and Pakistan responds to it positively, says Mr Mansoor Ijaz, a Pakistani-American businessman and key mediator on Kashmir. India, however, is not impressed by the Track II diplomat's statement and maintains that such a summit is possible only if Pakistan stops encouraging violence.

Hurriyat leader Mr Abdul Ghani Lone has called for greater diplomatic efforts to counter India's "war of wits" following its surprise ceasefire call. — SNS & Agencies

nade in central Srinagar. No one was hurt.

Meanwhile, cracks have shown up within the government over the ceasefire as 'ground level officials' have reportedly raised objections while senior home and defence officials have welcomed it, say North Block sources.

"The feelings of the armed forces have been conveyed to the two ministries. It is up to them to react," said a senior Intelligence official.

A defence official said: "The ceasefire does generate difficulties within the forces. Higher-level officials able to see the bigger picture welcome a political

initiative as they are fully aware that there is no military solution to insurgency. That appreciation of the situation does not always trickle down."

Sources said the forces apprehended militant outfits would use the lull in the offensive to regroup, identify potential security weaknesses and plan assaults on high-profile targets.

Besides, soldiers who have toiled to restore a level of control find it difficult to accept the order to lay off midway. Pointing to these problems, a top Army officer, however, emphasised, that the forces were not opposing the ceasefire in principle.

A high-powered meeting was reportedly convened by the two ministries on Wednesday night to take stock of the post-ceasefire situation and analyse Intelligence reports. "The IB report has blamed the government for demoralising the armed forces, especially in the valley," said an official.

Despite the ceasefire, security-men last night raided a militant hideout in Rajouri and seized some ammunition and explosives. Incidentally, Mr LK Advani, while speaking at a BSF parade today, said "though the security forces had been instructed not to initiate firing, they are duty-bound to prevent killings and infiltration by militants". He also urged Pakistan to seize India's new peace initiative.

Chinese pat: After an initial hesitation, China today welcomed the ceasefire offer, hoping that it would lead to better Indo-Pakistan relations. "We welcome all efforts conducive to the improvement of relations between India and Pakistan," the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

THE STATESMAN

- 2 DEC 2000

MISSION KASHMIR

Respecting The Verdict For Peace

By GURMEET KANWAL

MOST security analysts commenting on the Prime Minister's unilateral declaration of ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir during the holy month of Ramzan have completely missed the primary motivation for the initiative — it reflects the overwhelming desire of the Kashmiri people for peace. The Kashmiri people had spontaneously welcomed the government's quick acceptance of the Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire offer in August. For the first time since 1989-90, a government move had generated an electrifying wave of excitement and a glimmer of hope for the future. Disappointment had soon followed at the abrupt abrogation of the ceasefire at Pakistan's behest. The present initiative will again dispel the pall of gloom that has weighed heavily on the people's psyche for over a decade.

Time was when the Dal lake was constantly dotted with gaily decorated shikaras full of cheerful honeymooners and tourists, Indian and foreign. Houseboats were booked in advance and all the hotels and guesthouses had in-season occupancy rates of over one hundred per cent in Srinagar as well as in Gulmarg, Pahalgam and Sonmarg. In fact, the entire 300-km stretch of the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway 1A resembled one long picnic spot during the summer months. Young Kashmiri couples mingled freely with tourists at the exquisitely laid Shalimar and Nishat Mughal gardens and the beautiful Chashm-e-Shahi retreat. The golf course nestling between the Dal lake and the pine-covered majestic mountains overlooking it was always so full that one had to wait patiently for hours to tee off. The walkways along the lake were crowded with ponies carrying children.

TURNING POINTS

The Kashmiri people revelled in this annual influx because the tourists were their primary source of livelihood. The hardy men rowed the shikaras, walked alongside their ponies, plied their taxis and minibuses and acted as guides. The pretty Kashmiri women sold flowers and vegetables from boats on the Dal lake or stayed at home to embroider *namdās* and weave fine *pashmina* shawls. There was a thriving trade in Kashmiri silk carpets and intricately carved walnut furniture. Lal Chowk was crammed with shoppers and hawkers. It was not the barricaded fortress that it has been for over ten years. Apple and saffron blossoms lent their own enchantment to the verdant picturesque Valley — "heaven on earth" in the words of the poet Firdaus. Kashmiri cuisine was extremely popular and visitors looked forward to the *wazwan*, a traditional feast.

The faithful regularly answered the muezzin's calls for prayers and both Hindus and Muslims joined hands to celebrate Id and Diwali and other Indian festivals. The *Sufi* culture of Kashmir was tolerant and completely secular. *Kashmiriyat* was characterised by a remarkable gentility and respectful accommodation of different shades of opinion. Though there were many political hiccups and much to be

agitated about, the Kashmiris studiously avoided a confrontationalist approach for over 40 years. Then the Kalashnikov culture and Islamist fundamentalism came in from the west through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) and the militants' guns shattered the peace and tranquillity of the fair Vale of Kashmir. The Talibanisation of Kashmir gradually eroded the *Sufi* culture in which the Kashmiris took so much pride. The people's lives were being increasingly governed by *fatwas* and diktats issued by militant organisations. After 10 years of mayhem, the

solution to their problems. Even Amanullah Khan has reportedly said that the Kashmiris had chosen the wrong *vakil* (advocate) to espouse their cause.

Disgusted at Pakistan's shenanigans on Kashmir and its clumsy attempts to derail the peace process through massacres perpetrated by foreign mercenaries, in the post-Kargil period, the Kashmiri people have been increasingly coming forward with "actionable" intelligence about the movements, hideouts and arms caches of Pakistan-sponsored militants. The results of army operations against the militants have been outstanding during the post-Kargil period. There has also been a marked increase in the number of weapons captured from the militants. The credit for this achievement goes as much to the Kashmiri people as to the Army.

By clearly endorsing the Prime Minister's ceasefire offer, the average Kashmiri has given his verdict for peace. Whether in peace marches in the Valley or at a symposium in Gurgaon, the Kashmiri people and their leaders, including most of those in the All Party Hurriyat Conference, have expressed themselves in favour of peace and have implored militant organisations not to fritter away the opportunity provided by the Ramzan respite. By timing its ceasefire offer to coincide with the holy month of Ramzan, the government has signalled its sensitivity to the sensibilities of the Muslim community and has given an indication of its desire to be reasonable in future negotiations. It has also put the Musharraf regime on notice that while India is willing to move forward to find an amicable political solution to the Kashmir issue within the framework of *insaniyat*, Pakistan too has the responsibility of restraining its dogs of war.

THE CHOICE

Pakistan must now prove to the world that it is sincere about the first three Rs — respect for the LoC, restraint and rejection of violence — before it demands the fourth, that is, resumption of dialogue with India, "any time, any where", as its Chief Executive has been saying.

The Kashmiri people's struggle for political autonomy has now reached a strategic crossroads. They can grab the opportunity provided by the Ramzan truce with both hands and, by adopting a proactive stance as they appear to be doing, force at least the indigenous Kashmiri militant organisations (like the Hizbul Mujahideen) to smoke the peace pipe with India. Alternatively, they can treat the present ceasefire as a tactical pause and allow the militants and the terrorists to continue to call the shots and rule their lives with fundamentalist Islamist fervour.

In all likelihood, driven by the futility and the disastrous consequences of 10 years of militancy, the Kashmiri people have made the choice already. They clearly wish to get on with their lives by opting to throw in their lot with a rapidly growing, pluralistic and secular India that is likely to be willing to give them the political autonomy they seek rather than befriend a self-serving, Talibanised Pakistan that is on the verge of becoming a failed state.



Kashmiris now want to piece together their broken lives again and Prime Minister Vajpayee has given them just that opportunity.

Pakistan's ignominious defeat at the hands of the Indian army in the Kargil conflict was a denouement in more senses than one — a turning point in its "proxy war" with India. Realisation dawned on the people of J&K that they had been backing the wrong horse under false assumptions. If Pakistan's regular soldiers could be dislodged so quickly from easily defensible positions on high-altitude mountain tops, what chance did the Pakistan army have of annexing Kashmir militarily? The carefully fostered myth of Mujahideen invulnerability was also shattered. The Kashmiris were forced to ask themselves how a failing state under a military dictatorship that brutalises its own people could help them realise their hopes and aspirations. The recent poll that found almost 70 per cent Pakistanis wishing to leave their country because they see no future in it for themselves, served to reinforce the emerging belief of the Kashmiris that casting their lot with Pakistan and looking to it for help was a blunder.

WRONG ADVOCATE

The Kashmiri people had been appalled at the brutal massacres engineered at the ISI's behest at Chattisinghpura during President Clinton's visit to portray Kashmir as a nuclear flashpoint. The senseless killings of the Amarnath Yatra pilgrims at Pahalgam by Lashkar-e-Toiba mercenaries to scuttle India's acceptance of the Hizbul Mujahideen ceasefire offer further alienated them. They also did not fail to notice how Syed Salahuddin had been pressurised to renege on his ceasefire offer on the pretext of Pakistan not being accepted as a party to the negotiations. The message in Pakistan's stalling tactics was loud and clear — they were motivated only by their own vested interests that clashed with the Kashmiris' desire for peace. The people realised that they had been naive in banking on Pakistan to find a final

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Kashmiris in India better off than those in PoK

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA 4/12

NEW DELHI, Dec. 3. — Leaders from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) have said that the people in PoK were "worse-off" than their brethren in Jammu and Kashmir, and blamed Pakistan for using the area for its "own vested interests".

Terming PoK as a training ground for militants, these leaders said that "development in that part of Kashmir is a distant dream, and people are missing even most important necessities of life."

A senior leader from PoK's Rawalakote area, Mr Mohammed Mumtaz Khan, who was here to attend a seminar, told PTI that the people in those areas were living in a "guerilla warfare school". Speaking on the developmental front in PoK, Mr Khan said that "the area lags by ages behind Jammu and Kashmir, where development had moved at almost the same pace as that of other cities in India."

About Pakistan's opposition to a peace initiative, he said "there is deep-rooted psyche in Pakistan, instilled by its political leaders and military rulers, that Kashmir is the only cause for the people of Pakistan." He also flayed Pakistan for violation of human rights in PoK and northern areas.

Bid on NC leader: National Conference leader Mr Azad Ahmad Khan escaped unhurt after militants fired at him in Chasana, Udampur, a report adds from Srinagar. Mr Khan's guards fired back at the militants, but no one was injured in the shootout.

THE STATESMAN

4 DEC 2003

'It's wait and watch in J&K'

Anil Anand and Agencies
New Delhi, December 3

INDIA HAS asked Pakistan to be "sincere about its declaration of maximum restraint" along the LoC by checking its anti-India activities in Jammu and Kashmir.

In a related development, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (the umbrella group of Kashmir-based parties) felt that Pakistan's response would help thaw relations with India.

"The Centre is trying to ascertain the truth behind yesterday's announcement (of maximum restraint) by Pakistan", Home Minister L K Advani said.

Pakistan should curb infiltration across the border, give up its proxy war and stop training terrorists, Advani said in Ajmer.

In Bangalore, Defence Minister George Fernandes said a dialogue with Pakistan could begin only if it "genuinely stopped" influx of terrorists and cross-border firing.

In New Delhi, Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, the APHC chairman, said the APHC was ready to talk to Indian and Pakistani leaders. Both the countries needed to recognise the "stark realities and rise above prejudices to find a peaceful solution to the problem".

Prof. Bhat's statement came in the wake of a reported visit by a group of APHC leaders to the Pakistan High Commission late this evening to discuss the issue following the latest Pak offer.

The flurry of activity among the Kashmiri political and separatist groups has given rise to the possibility of unofficial intermediaries

of the Centre interacting with the top APHC leaders to size up the mood before initiating a dialogue at an official level.

Prof. Bhat arrived here yesterday, while Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a former chief of the separatist organisation, air-dashed from Srinagar this evening. Another Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik has been camping in the capital for the past few days and had participated

in certain track-II initiatives taken by some NGOs.

The Mirwaiz described the Pakistan offer as positive. "The common factor in the observations of all the three parties—India, Pakistan and APHC—is the stress on negotiations," he said.

He said he was here to talk to "other people" who have been interacting with the Hurriyat leadership. ● Related reports on P11

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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GENUINE PAK. CEASEFIRE IS NEEDED: FERNANDES

Infiltration the issue: Advani

Our Special Correspondent

AJMER, DEC. 3. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today said the country could open a dialogue with Pakistan only if it discontinued its support to militants from across the border. "The crucial thing is infiltration," he said.

The External Affairs Ministry would formally react to Pakistan's suggestion for a dialogue, he said. "The Union Government is trying to know the truth behind yester-

day's announcement of maximum restraint by Pakistan," Mr. Advani said. He declined comment on the demand for talks with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference.

'It is high time they did it'

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, DEC. 3. The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes,

today reacted to Pakistan's announcement of "maximum restraint" along the Line of Control in response to the Centre's Ramzan ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, saying, "It is high time they did it." He said the resumption of dialogue depended on Pakistan stopping the despatch of terrorists into the country and genuinely ceasing fire from across the border.

The Defence Minister was speaking to presspersons after

visiting the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, the Electronic and the Radar Development Establishment and the Gas Turbine Research Establishment.

Asked specifically about Pakistan's ordering its troops to observe "maximum restraint" along the LoC and its willingness to enter into a meaningful dialogue on the Kashmir issue, Mr. Fernandes snapped: "Who will not welcome a move of that nature?... (but) what exactly do they mean when they say restraint?"

He noted that Pakistan, by default, had admitted it had been firing from across the border. As India had always only returned the fire, it had to be a one-sided "restraint".

He declined to react to a question on extending the unilateral ceasefire ordered by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, beyond the month of Ramzan. It depended on the course of events and no positive statement could be made at this juncture. But India certainly wanted the ceasefire to be an all-time affair. "Who will not like an all-time ceasefire?"

He also said negotiations were not related to stoppage of firing from across the border. Besides, Pakistan should also close down the training camps for terrorists in Occupied Kashmir. There should be "normalisation" before India entered into talks with Pakistan.

More reports on Pages 13, 14

THE HINDU

- 9 JAN 2000

Hizb keeps door ajar on truce

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI, Dec. 3. — The Hizbul Mujahideen has said it has kept "doors open for sincere efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue" even as it weighs "various options" before taking a final decision on the Ramzan ceasefire offer. A Hizb spokesman said the outfit had not yet rejected the offer outright.

"Being the frontline militant outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen is well aware of the aspirations of Kashmiris and we have kept our doors open," said 'commander' Masood. He, however, added that there would be no let-up in militant activities unless the government made "sincere efforts" to resolve the Kashmir issue.

Masood said the statement by the new Jammu and Kashmir police chief, Mr AK Suri, to continue raids had made the ceasefire meaningless and "ridiculed" the Vajpayee offer.

While Pakistani daily *The Jung* today reported that Pakistan had formally conveyed to India that its armed forces would exercise "maximum restraint" along the LoC, Mr LK Advani today appealed Pakistan to be sincere in its declaration. "The Union government is trying to know the truth behind yesterday's announcement by Pakistan," the home minister said.

The defence minister, Mr

George Fernandes, said India was not averse to a dialogue with Pakistan if it genuinely stopped firing from across the border. It would have to stop sending infiltrators too, he said. If Pakistan could do these, "then I believe we should be going in a direction which will help. Perhaps it will enable us to sit and talk".

But he quickly added that negotiating with Pakistan would come much later. "This is not related to the mere stopping of firing from across the border. India has been categorical that Pakistan should also wind up the training camps it is conducting for terrorists."

He, too, seemed unsure about the restraint offer. "What exactly do they mean?" he said.

The BJP president, Mr Bangaru Laxman, also said India was ready for talks with Pakistan if it stopped terrorist activities. "We welcome the statement of the Pakistan foreign secretary, Mr Inamul Haq, in which he has expressed desire to hold talks with India."

Two senior Hurriyat leaders, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Syed Ali Shah Geelani, have asked the Centre to initiate tri-lateral talks involving Pakistan to settle the Kashmir issue. Both termed Pakistan as the "primary party" to the issue.

■ Photograph, another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

4 DEC 2000

Hurriyat to discuss rejection of tripartite talks

AD-13
6/12

NEW DELHI, DEC. 5. The Hurriyat conference executive committee will meet in Srinagar soon to formulate an "appropriate" response to the Centre's rejection of Pakistan's involvement in the peace initiative in Kashmir, the senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, said here.

"An appropriate reaction to the (Government's) statement will be given out only after the Hurriyat executive meets to deliberate on it," he told PTI.

A foreign office spokesman earlier today asserted there was no room for tripartite talks involving Pakistan in the peace initiative with militants in Kashmir. The Hurriyat has been insisting that the Kashmir issue could not be resolved unless Pakistan was involved in talks.

Meet Pak. envoy

The Hurriyat leadership today met the Pakistan High Commissioner, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, here and discussed the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and other political developments.

The Hurriyat chairman, Mr. Abdul Gani Bhat, and executive committee members, Mr. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mr. Yaseen Malik, attended the Iftar party hosted by Qazi, who returned recently from Pakistan after Islamabad declared that it would exercise "maximum restraint" along the Line of Control.

"General political developments, including the issues relating to the ongoing ceasefire came up for discussion with Mr. Qazi at the party," Mr. Mirwaiz Farooq said.

Declining to elaborate, he said the stand of both the Pakistan Government and the Hurriyat have already been made public and "there was nothing to discuss on that". — PTI

No contacts with Centre yet, says APHC

The chairman of the APHC, Mr. Abdul Gani Bhat, said no contacts had yet been established with the Centre for initiating a dialogue process on Kashmir. Commenting on reports about his meeting with the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, he said, "Time and again, I have said that there were no contacts but there were no impediments either."

He said, "Some vested interests are not willing to solve the Kashmir issue and are planting such stories which can have wider implications for the entire journey to peace... I have clearly stated that there are no impediments to holding talks for the resolution of the Kashmir issue and all concerned should approach the issue in a spirit of now-or-never."

He said the APHC had taken the position that the concerned parties (India, Pakistan and representatives of people of Kashmir)

should have a positive political dialogue. "We have to rise above prejudices, bitterness in history as well as hostilities rooted in past and find a way out but such speculations can lead us nowhere."

Iftar diplomacy

Three Hurriyat leaders, including Mr. Bhat, met the Pakistani High Commissioner, Qazi Ashraf Jehangir, and are understood to have discussed their future course of action in the context of the Ramzan ceasefire.

Besides Mr. Bhat, former Hurriyat chief, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, and the JKLF leader, Mr. Yaseen Malik, attended the Iftar party hosted by Mr. Qazi, who returned recently from Pakistan after Islamabad declared that it would exercise "maximum restraint" on the LoC. Informed sources said the meeting was expected to discuss the future strategy of the APHC vis-a-vis the announcement of suspension of combat operations by the Prime Minister. Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, which came into effect from November 27.

The Hurriyat leaders have softened their stand and are ready to enter into a bilateral negotiations with the Centre provided it leads to a tripartite dialogue. However, India today firmly ruled out tripartite talks involving Pakistan. — PTI

THE HINDU

6 DEC 2000

6 CRPF men die in J&K gun battle

HTC and Agencies
Srinagar, December 5

MILITANT VIOLENCE continued to rock Kashmir on the eighth day of the month-long Ramzan ceasefire claiming lives of six CRPF personnel and four civilians and targeting of defence forces vehicles. Three Army personnel were also wounded.

In the first incident of its kind since the ceasefire came into effect on November 28, a CRPF camp in Anantnag district of Kashmir was stormed by a two-member suicide squad of Lashker-e-Toiba outfit while the Army foiled such an attempt on its post in Kupwara district since last evening.

Six CRPF personnel and two militants were killed in a 20-hour-long gunfight which followed the storming by two ultras of a CRPF camp located in a defunct cinema hall at Ashajipora in Anantnag, an official spokesman said today.

"It took so long because we didn't know that how many of our men were trapped," said a senior police officer.

Lashkar-e-Toiba has claimed responsibility for the attack. Lashkar is one of those groups that are opposed to the truce. In

fact, it had declared that it would step up its attacks on security forces.

Six CRPF men and an army jawan were injured in the overnight gunfight which erupted at around 5 pm yesterday when the two militants entered the complex by car lobbing grenades and firing indiscriminately.

Security personnel, who had laid siege around the camp from outside immediately

after the militant attack, entered the building this morning where the holed up militant had taken shelter on the top of the multi-storied building restricting movement of the CRPF men trapped inside, said the official spokesman.

He said the militant was killed after a stiff resistance at around 3 pm today, ending the 20-hour long gun-battle. He was in control of the ammunition store at the battalion headquar-

ters and fought with a light machine gun. Another militant was killed yesterday night itself.

One of the killed militants was identified as Abu Hizbullah Hamza, the spokesman said, adding two AK assault rifles, a wireless set, a grenade, ten magazines and 35 rounds of ammunition were recovered from the slain ultras.

'Three's a crowd'

IN ITS first official response to Pakistan's "maximum restraint" announcement, India has ruled out "tripartite talks" on J-K, but reaffirmed its commitment to an early resumption of the composite bilateral dialogue, which, of course, was subject to Islamabad meeting New Delhi's oft-repeated conditions.

Detailed report: P11

Washington: The United States has expressed the view that India, Pakistan and "all residents of the Kashmir region" should be part of the efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue, reports HTC.

6 CRPF men fall to suicide attack

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
and Agencies

NEW DELHI, Dec. 5. — Six CRPF personnel were killed by two Lashkar-e-Taiyaba suicide squad members at Ashijipora in Anantnag after a 20-hour gunbattle that ended today after the two were shot down.

But unconfirmed reports said 15 CRPF personnel were killed and 10 injured in the attack, the first by the *fidayeen* since the Ramzan ceasefire offer. An alert sentry foiled another militant attempt to storm an Army camp in north Kashmir.

An official said the two suicide attackers stormed the CRPF camp of 61 Battalion around 5 p.m. yesterday. They later took shelter in the camp building and began firing upon securitymen from there.

'No tripartite talks'

The Centre today refused a tripartite dialogue on Kashmir even as the Hizbul Mujahideen stuck to its demand for it. The government said it was ready for talks with all parties and groups in the state, including

militants, but made it clear that it would be the one to decide the modalities of the talks.

Reacting to Pakistan's declaration of LoC restraint, a government spokesman said that as there was no "basic shift in Pakistan's policies", the forces would continue vigil. But he admitted that there was a marked reduction in firing. He said the government hoped Pakistan's statement was a precursor of a change in its attitude.

Meanwhile, the Pakistani High Commissioner, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, hosted an Iftar party today which Hurriyat leaders, Mr. Abdul Ghani Bhatt, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Mr. Yasin Malik, attended. "Pakistan is already two steps ahead of India in the peace process," said Mr. Bhatt. The Hurriyat executive committee will soon meet in Srinagar to formulate a peace initiative.

The Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid, Syed Ahmed Bukhari, today welcomed the Pakistani offer of restraint and urged the Centre to take steps to resume a dialogue with Islamabad.

THE STATESMAN

6 DEC 2000

Bringing peace to Kashmir

By Amitabh Mattoo

The Centre's new Kashmir initiative requires patience and determination and should continue to be handled by the top political leadership. More incremental confidence-building measures may be needed.

40-12
37/12

EVEN CYNICS will concede that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's announcement of a unilateral ceasefire by Indian security forces in Jammu and Kashmir has created, after more than a decade, an invaluable opportunity to begin a genuine peace process in the State. The overwhelming enthusiasm with which the announcement was greeted by all shades of public opinion in the Kashmir Valley is just one indication of the timeliness and propitiousness of the Centre's boldest initiative in recent years.

It is also becoming clear that the Prime Minister's announcement is part of a larger rethink on Kashmir, and not merely a tactical manoeuvre to secure short-term advantage. However, the Centre will need to continue to persist with its new Kashmir policy, even in the wake of the manifold provocations and hurdles that it will inevitably encounter in the weeks to come, systematically building on the peace constituency that is beginning to reveal itself. It should be clear also to the Kashmiri separatist leaders and militant groups that moments like this rarely reappear easily, and unless they seize the initiative they will risk not just political marginalisation, but it will also erode the possibility of their playing an important role in bringing back peace and stability to the beleaguered State. No less significantly, it is critical that the ruling regime in Pakistan also realises that there can be few better chances for it to rehabilitate itself internationally, and create the conditions essential for the resumption of a meaningful political dialogue with India.

Shorn of rhetoric and diplomatic gobbledegook, New Delhi's new Kashmir policy seems to combine at least three elements. First, the Centre has signalled that the ceasefire, so far limited to the month of Ramzan, could continue into the New Year. If this happens, it will be by far the most important move undertaken by the Centre in reducing the alienation of the Kashmiri people. In recent years, the public sentiment against the Government of India has intensified, particularly in the Kashmir Valley, because of the harassment faced by the ordinary Kashmiri from the security forces during their counter-insurgency operations. Recall also that for at least the last five years, separatist mo-

bilisation has been made possible only because of human rights violations and rarely have people responded in large numbers to the call of *azadi*. All evidence seems to suggest that the ceasefire is, by and large, being scrupulously adhered to by the security agencies and that there has been a suspension of all pro-active measures against militant organisations. While such a move does carry the risk of making the security forces more vulnerable to militant attacks, may even erode the morale of a section of the forces, and could lead to a re-grouping and consolidation of militants, the long term benefits — given the overwhelming Kashmiri sentiment against violence — are far greater than these short term costs. In other words, not only will the unilateral ceasefire firmly isolate forces that are continuing to perpetuate violence, but may help create the conditions under which the Kashmiri people — rather than security forces — will disclaim and fight those who continue to spread terror and violence.

The Centre has also indicated its willingness to speak to any Kashmiri group or militant organisation. It is significant that no mention has been made of conditionalities and there has been no suggestion that these talks have to be within the framework of the Constitution. Instead, the Prime Minister's formulation, "the framework of *insaniyat*", has signalled that given the human tragedy that Kashmir represents today, the possibilities of peace should be explored not within the codified limits of a legal document but within the bounds of humanism. All those who have been hesitant to talk to the Centre, believing that they would lose their credibility if they accepted conditions right at the beginning, should now get the confidence to respond to this offer of engagement.

Finally, New Delhi has signalled — more clearly than ever before — that it is willing to re-engage Pakistan if Islamabad takes concrete measures to create the conditions in which a meaningful dia-

logue, as envisaged in the Lahore summit, can be pursued. This means, first of all, that the ground reality in Kashmir must show a visible change, and that there is a reciprocal ceasefire by all militant groups that Pakistan has sponsored and trained and which are increasingly now being manned by Pakistanis.

The Centre's new Kashmir initiative requires patience and determination, and should continue to be handled by the top political leadership of the country. More incremental confidence-building measures may be needed in the near future, including the issue of travel documents to Kashmiri leaders who wish to go abroad, the release of political detenus — some of whom have languished in jail for the last decade — and a more explicit invitation for a dialogue to individual separatist leaders. Even if the Centre's gestures continue to be non-reciprocated it has little to lose. For increasingly it will become clear to the Kashmiri people and the international community that forces in Pakistan and a section of the separatist leadership in Kashmir alone stand between Kashmir and peace.

As a body, the All Party Hurriyat Conference has, despite intemperate statements by individual leaders, welcomed the ceasefire. There are also indications that many of the APHC's leaders are willing to enter into bilateral dialogue with India. Pakistan's green signal on this score has probably strengthened the constituency in favour of, first, engaging India. And yet the APHC leadership is hesitating from giving a more positive response for probably two reasons.

First, there is a feeling within a section of the leadership that not enough groundwork has been done and that any step taken by the APHC, without adequate consultation with various shades of Kashmiri public opinion, may be counterproductive. Second, there is a feeling that even before talking to the Centre, the APHC leadership needs to engage the leaders of the militant groups most of

whom are based in Pakistan, and that without the militants' acquiescence any peace process could be derailed. There is some merit in both these arguments, and indeed there should be no objection to giving Hurriyat leaders permission to travel to Pakistan to persuade the militants to cease fire, and in allowing public meetings all over the State. However, the APHC too must realise that the Prime Minister's brave initiative demands statesmanship from them too, as well as the capacity to take risks and hard decisions which have to be rooted in the realisation that, above all, the Kashmiris want peace and an end to the misery of the last twelve years. The APHC leadership must also be prepared to accept that the Indian political leadership may, from time to time, have to make tactical gestures and statements to appease various domestic constituents and to prevent a rebellion from within its ranks. In the final analysis, it should be clear to the APHC leadership that the Kashmiris will not forgive those who squander what may be the last chance for peace for some time to come.

For Pakistan, the choice is even starker. It can either continue on the track of international isolation and regional belligerence, or take steps that will eventually put it back on track as a civilised member of the comity of nations. Half-baked tactical gestures will not do. The need is for an unprecedented response to an unprecedented situation pregnant with historic opportunities. Will General Musharraf now demonstrate, as visitor after visitor from Pakistan seems to suggest, that he is really interested in getting out of the mess that his predecessors have created in Kashmir? Or will he confirm to the stereotype, dominant in the Indian imagination, that the man who destroyed Lahore at Kargil can hardly be interested in peace? Ultimately, it should be clear to all that bringing peace to Kashmir, at least at this stage, is not about goals and the final product but about gradually creating a process in which all the main *dramatis personae* have a stake, and which cannot easily be derailed by the number of vested interests who have made a business out of the conflict in Kashmir.

(The writer is Chairperson, Centre for International Politics, Organisation and Disarmament, JNU.)

THE HINDU

8 DEC 2000

Kashmir: is peace possible?

By Asghar Ali Engineer

410-12 ✓

PEACE SHOULD be the top priority in Kashmir today. Everything else could be settled during negotiations. Ramzan is the month of engrossing oneself in prayers and fasting. It is known as *sharullah* i.e. month of Allah, a month which should be devoted to all causes dear to Allah and dearest to Allah is *salam* — peace. Some militants argue that even the Prophet fought the battle of Badr during Ramzan so what is wrong in fighting during this month? The Prophet fought a short battle to avert danger to the existence of Muslims in Madina and this battle was inevitable. The very parallel cited is wrong. And in Kashmir the violence has degenerated into endless killing.

Every time there is a move for peace, the killing starts. This time too innocent Sikh drivers were pulled out of their vehicles and shot? Extremist violence in Kashmir cannot qualify as *jihad*. First, the Koran does not use the term *jihad* for war or violence or killing, for that matter. For that, *qital* has been used or its derivatives. *Jihad* means utmost efforts to promote justice, goodness, benevolence and to control base desires.

Violence will not solve the Kashmir question. Ultimately, it is a political solution which will bring about the final resolution of the Kashmir problem. In this age of democracy and human rights, violence has a very limited role. The Kashmiri people have made enough sacrifices. More than 50,000 people have already been killed in this senseless violence. How many more will have to lose their lives? And with all this can Kashmir achieve its freedom through violence? Ultimately it will have to be resolved through negotiations. Then why not negotiations now to save many more innocent lives?

The people of Kashmir are also tired of this violence. They desire peace intensely. But they cannot speak out freely. If

the extremists are fighting — as they claim — for freedom of the people of Kashmir, why this fear? Even the newspapers from the Valley cannot publish what they want. Given this culture of violence and extremism what will be the quality of freedom in Kashmir if it is subsequently won?

Violence brutalises the human conscience. Those countries in Asia and Africa which won their freedom through violence — for example Algeria — have a legacy of brutal killings. The people of

In Kashmir, both sides will have to take risks. Social stability is built on a complex set of compromises.

Algeria have never enjoyed real freedom. They have witnessed a highly authoritarian rule right from beginning. There are many more such examples.

India won its freedom through the involvement of the masses and it developed a culture of political democracy which has survived despite hurdles. The people of Kashmir had an excellent opportunity in 1990 to fight for their demands democratic. But they lost that chance by taking up guns. They thought "we will take up guns and *azadi* (freedom) will be ours".

It is in view of all this that Mr. Vajpayee's ceasefire offer should have been built on for peace in the Valley. Four former Prime Ministers, Mr. V. P. Singh, Mr. Deve Gowda, Mr. I. K. Gujral and Mr. Chandra Shekhar, have also welcomed the Ramzan ceasefire. When the offer was made even the Hizbul Mujahideen chief, Syed Salahuddin went into huddle with his top commanders to consider its consequences.

Some Hizb sources said — though off the record — that a majority of those at the strategy meeting viewed the offer as exactly what they had wanted to get the negotiation process started and felt that

the Hizb should respond positively. But the fear was that if any such public statement was issued the outfit might split.

9/12 ✓

It is also reported that the Valley-based commander, Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, was pressing Mr. Salahuddin to take a stand, but the latter had been saying that the Indian Government should take the lead and hold out something more than a "tame surrender". If the latest offer came with a package that could meet some of the Pakistan-based Hizb leadership's concerns, the group could have

welcomed it. But if the package was announced what was there for India to negotiate? The most important thing is ceasefire and this opportunity should be seized by the militants to negotiate a durable solution and build peace.

If the Government of India puts a stop to the gross violations of human rights of the people of Kashmir it will earn further support not only internationally but also from the Kashmiris themselves. The Kashmiris by now know fully well that the militants cannot be their saviours as now they are fighting for their own survival rather than for the freedom of the people.

If there is any honourable solution within the framework of the Indian union they will welcome it. But the very first condition for this is a stop to the excesses by security forces. Today the people of the Valley are deeply alienated from the Government of India.

The ceasefire is a necessary but not sufficient condition for restoring permanent peace in Kashmir. The Government of India will have to reflect deeply on its now policies in Kashmir. And this not only in respect of the behaviour of the armed forces but also about a political

U ✓

solution. By now it should be at least clear that there is great deal of dissatisfaction with the status quo. For a permanent peace, the status quo in Kashmir must change. Whether it is complete autonomy as was demanded by the Kashmir Assembly and going back to the pre-1953 position is matter of detailed negotiation. But the Central Government cannot insist that a permanent solution be found without seriously rethinking the present policy framework.

The people of Kashmir have suffered intensely in the last one decade. The price has been too heavy for them and they cannot be expected to accept too little. As Mr. Vajpayee has displayed statesmanship by offering a unilateral ceasefire he should show further magnanimity by offering a package to the people of Kashmir which would be in keeping with their honour and dignity. It will go a long way to reduce the feeling of alienation, if not eliminate it altogether.

Of course this is easier said than done. Mr. Vajpayee's own party, the BJP, may not go all the way with him. Dissidence is already surfacing in the RSS. Many hardcore elements in the RSS are not happy with the Vajpayee Government on several issues, including the appeal to Muslims to support the BJP. On top of it if he crosses the "Laxman Rekha" on the Kashmir question there may be virtual revolt. In fact it is such dilemmas which continue the conflict in the Valley. It is so difficult to overcome them. The militants also face similar dilemmas. They would split if they accept solution lesser than what they have been fighting for all these years.

But both sides will have to take risks. Social stability is built on a complex set of compromises. The world would have been full of conflict and bloodshed without these compromises. South Asia runs the risk of becoming a nuclear flashpoint if a bold compromise is not made by both sides in the interest of peace.

THE HINDU

9 DEC 2003

Hurriyat differences to the fore

SRINAGAR, DEC. 10. Differences in the Hurriyat Conference on the modality of holding talks with the Centre came into the open today, when uproarious scenes, marked by trading of charges and slogan-shouting, were witnessed during a seminar on human rights here.

The divergence of views surfaced when the Muslim Conference leader, Mr. G.N. Shaheen, criticised the senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, for his recent statements from Pakistan about the presence of foreign militants in Kashmir and for supporting New Delhi's ceasefire. Mr. Shaheen demanded an apology from Mr. Lone.

Mr. Lone's party members started shouting slogans against the Muslim Conference and this set off acrimonious scenes.

The former Hurriyat Conference Chairman, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, presiding over the seminar, took strong exception to Mr. Lone's remarks and said "it was Lone who welcomed the Taliban victory in Afghanistan. He was also the first who said that he would welcome Taliban in Kashmir if they come to the rescue of Kash-

miris." Syed Geelani also criticised the Hurriyat leaders camping in Delhi, saying "they should return to Srinagar as it is against our self-respect to beg for dialogue. If the Centre is willing to initiate talks with the Hurriyat, it (Centre) should come to us and we need not go to Delhi."

After over an hour of slogan-shouting, the seminar resumed.

The spokesman of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Mr. Zahid Ali, in a statement, expressed resentment over Mr. Lone's remarks.

Terming his utterances as "ridiculous and malicious" he said the Jamaat would like to inform Mr. Lone that "religious organisations can never be labelled as fundamentalists as they are working for peace and brotherhood."

"To make the Ramzan ceasefire fruitful we would like the parties concerned to take concrete steps for the resolution of the 50-year-old dispute," he said. — PTI

'Lone unrealistic'

Shujaat Bhukari writes from Jammu:

In an interview, Syed Geelani came out openly against Mr.

Lone, saying the latter was "inconsistent and unrealistic".

"By saying that I am a moderate and others are fundamentalists, he simply is playing into the hands of Western forces bent upon dividing Muslims. It was quite uncharitable to call them fundamentalists."

Ms. Asiya Andrabi, chief of a women's front-ranking secessionist outfit, Dukhtaran-e-Millat (daughters of the nation), reacted to Mr. Lone's remarks in *The Washington Post* and sought action against him.

"Those who ignore the role of foreign militants are ungrateful," she said and expressed concern over Mr. Lone's continuance in the Hurriyat Conference and accused him and others for being ready for a "sell-out".

She blamed Pakistan for the inclusion of people such as Mr. Lone in the Hurriyat and termed it as a "historical blunder". Ms. Andrabi called upon Pakistan to disown these leaders and asked the Lashkar-e-Taiba and other outfits to take "practical steps" against them.

THE HINDU

11 DEC 2000

The hows and whys of the Ramzan ceasefire

Kashmiri tango

WHEN talks between the Government of India and the Hizbul Mujahideen were abruptly terminated in July due to Pakistan's insistence on making this dialogue a trilateral exercise, there was much disappointment. Hizb leader Majid Dar, however, held out a ray of hope when he said that the talks had not been derailed, only delayed, and that he was hopeful about talks being resumed in two or three months. His anticipations appear to have been realised, given a series of initiatives which have been undertaken both through government and non-governmental channels over the last eight weeks to resume discussions on Kashmir and all related issues.

The latest round of overtures have to be assessed in terms of three benchmarks: The motivations animating the current initiatives, the policy stances of the Government of India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri groups underpinning them, and the situation on the ground since November 28, when the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Government of India for the month of Ramzan came into being.

Recalling contacts and discussions which led to the ceasefire decision and the subsequent developments would be relevant. Back-channel contacts between members of the National Security Advisory Board and representatives of Kashmiri dissident groups were continued even after the failure of the effort at dialogue in July. Delegations of former diplomats, retired armed forces officers and women's organisations were exchanged between India and Pakistan over the last six months. Former foreign secretary Rasgotra had a lengthy discussion with General Pervez Musharraf in September. Subramanian Swamy and another retired Indian foreign secretary, Salman Haider, were invited for discussions by Musharraf in November. October and November were characterised by a series of seminars and discussions on the desirability of resuming Indo-Pak dialogue and a dialogue with Kashmiri dissident groups. Repre-

sentatives of the Hurriyat and other Kashmiri groups from Jammu and Kashmir and from Europe and the United States participated in these.

The point in recalling these details is that the Indian government's decision to offer a unilateral ceasefire — and the indications it gave about a willingness to talk to Kashmiri dissidents — did not occur in a vacuum but was, firstly, a consequence of India's desire to come to terms with dissidence in J&K through peaceful means. Secondly, it was a response to a groundswell of public opinion favouring negotiations. Thirdly, it was rooted in the exhaustion and weariness, with violence



J.N. DIXIT

One motivation animates all protagonists in the peace efforts: To show responsiveness to global pressure to resume dialogue and scale down violence

and political volatility, amongst our compatriots in J&K.

What then are the motivations and pressures impelling the protagonists to move to the negotiating table? India is genuinely desirous of restoring normalcy in J&K and strengthening democratic institutions in the state. It is equally interested in having a normal, peaceful relationship with Pakistan. India remains convinced that the political turmoil and violence in J&K cannot be brought to an end through military means, confrontation or coercive force. India wants all political groups and entities representing the people of J&K to return to the mainstream of democratic politics and disentangle themselves from extremist foreign entities.

As far as motivations of the dissident and militant groups in J&K go, they are

complex and politically ambiguous. They have perhaps come to the conclusion that armed confrontation will not achieve their objectives. They may also have sensed a decline in public support in J&K for their violence and military approach. There is an incremental resentment among the people against the incursion of foreign mercenary cadres belonging to extremist religious groups — what compounds this resentment is that these foreigners have more resources and they are attempting to dominate dissident politics in J&K under instructions from Pakistan. The Hurriyat and Hizb cannot but be responsive to this resentment. Reassert-

tional status, which ultimately could become advantageous to Pakistan. Pakistan's support for the dialogue would also remedy its negative image as a disruptive neighbour.

One motivation animates all protagonists: To show responsiveness to international pressure to resume dialogue and scale down violence, which the international community feels could precipitate a nuclear confrontation.

The policy stances of India, the Kashmiri dissident groups and Pakistan have to be differentiated from the motivations summed up above. India's policy stance could be described as follows on the basis of recent statements by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Home Minister L.K. Advani. India wants a peaceful solution to all issues related to Kashmir, through a dialogue with Kashmiri dissidents, to deal with internal dimensions of the politics of J&K. India is equally willing to resume a dialogue with Pakistan to resolve those aspects of the Kashmir issue in which Pakistani policies and activities are involved. India seems to be of the view that discussions on Kashmir have to be held separately with our own citizens of that state, and separately with Pakistan. India has no objection, however, if informal non-institutional consultations are undertaken by Kashmiri dissidents with their Pakistani patrons. India cannot and should not condone institutional or formal discussions between Kashmiri dissidents and Pakistani authorities because it would legitimise Pakistan's locus standi in deciding the political status and the future of J&K — which would amount to re-opening issues which were decided upon at the time of Partition.

There are two overriding factors which should influence these positive beginnings, which have led to a perceptible easing of tensions on the ground. First, there should be no dilution of India's territorial integrity. And secondly, India should remain committed to reason both with Kashmiri dissidents and with Pakistan.

INDIAN EXPRESS

11 DEC 2000

Hurriyat row over foreign militants

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Dec. 10. — Noisy scenes, short of physical clashes, were witnessed at the All Party Hurriyat Conference headquarters during a seminar on human rights here today.

Trouble started when a speaker criticised Hurriyat leader, Mr Abdul Gani Lone, for his remarks against the presence of foreign militants in the state.

He said it was Mr Lone who invited Taliban militants to Kashmir.

The supporters of Mr Lone objected and raised slogans against the speaker, Ghulam Nabi Shaheen. Heated exchanges started and warring groups tried to hurl chairs on each other. Order was restored when senior leaders intervened.

Mr Lone had reportedly said foreign militants will derail the peace process in Kashmir.

The J&K Jamait Islami, Dukhtaran Milat and some other outfits have also criticised Mr Lone for his remarks.

Former Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani said the Kashmir issue would be resolved only through tripartite talks.

Kashmir will become part of Pakistan or get independence, Mr Geelani said.

He criticised Hurriyat leaders who visited Delhi recently. He opposed converting the LoC into an international border.

Mr Shakeel Bakshi said the Kashmir issue would not be resolved without the participation of Pakistan.

Some speakers also criticised senior Hurriyat leaders for what they said begging to India for passport so that they could visit Pakistan.

■ Editorial: Peace by
piece, page 6

THE STATESMAN

11 DEC 2000

Lone in Delhi, efforts on for peace talks

H BULA DEVI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 11. — The stage has been set. The scene of action is shifting to Srinagar now, with actors gearing up to receive bouquets and brickbats from the people of Jammu & Kashmir.

The All Party Hurriyat Conference has tentatively decided to hold its executive council meeting in Srinagar this weekend.

The US ambassador, Mr Richard F Celeste, today called on Mr LK Advani and during a 35-minute meeting, he conveyed Washington's "keen interest" in the peace initiative by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The APHC chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Bhat, and former chairman, Mr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, left for Srinagar to do the ground work for uniting constituent groups. The Hurriyat leader, Mr Abdul Gani Lone, returned from Pakistan today to join the peace effort. Mr Lone and the JKLF leader, Mr Yasin Malik, are expected to go to Srinagar in a couple of days.

The purpose, for which the Centre took a soft stand towards Mr Lone's plea to go to Pakistan to attend his son's wedding, seems to have been partially completed. The purpose was to open

doors for talks in diplomatic channels and with militant groups.

Mr Lone has rejuvenated the channels in Pakistan. Some Pakistani leaders are reportedly in touch with Central leaders here.

After landing here, Mr Lone said he had met General Parvez Musharraf, Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin and Lashkar-e-Taiyaba leader Hafiz Mohammed Saeed. He said: "Musharraf came across to be quite well-meaning, accommodative and transparent in his approach. He strongly felt that the Kashmir problem should be solved soon."

(Mr Lone made it clear that all mercenaries would have to leave Kashmir once a political dialogue started and asked militant outfits to give a positive response to the Prime Minister's unilateral ceasefire, adds PTI.

(Asked about a rift in the Hurriyat over his statement that fundamentalists were a threat to peace in J&K, Mr Lone said: "I stand by the statement. I am a heavyweight and I have the guts to stand by what I had said.")

Salahuddin told Mr Lone that India was not keen on considering Kashmiris as a party to the

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LONE:

(Continued from page 1)

dialogue. Lashkar-e-Taiyaba spoke about India "occupying" the area against wishes of the people.

The Lashkar chief has said that India should demonstrate sincerity by withdrawing its troops from Kashmir and that despite Pakistan's announcement for "maximum restraint" on the Line of Control, "our operations are going on uninterrupted."

Salahuddin said: "India's refusal to include Pakistan in its talks on Kashmir endorses Hizb's stand that India's ceasefire is short of sincerity."

Mr Bhat said the key to stop cross-border terrorism lay in the hands of APHC leaders. But the ball is in the court of New Delhi; the Centre has to decide whether it would allow APHC leaders to go to Pakistan for holding consultations with those who rejected the ceasefire. Mr Bhatt said the ice could break if the militants listened to Hurriyat leaders.

THE STATESMAN

12 DEC 2000

2 killed in Kashmir blasts

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, DEC. 11. Continuing with their 'disregard' for the month-long ceasefire, separatist militants today triggered blasts in Srinagar and Chadoora in which at least 19 persons were killed and 19, including six paramilitary personnel, injured. Two special police officials also came under the attack and one of them was killed.

The militants planted an improvised explosive device (IED) on a cycle and detonated it in a busy market at Qamarwari today. The IGP, Kashmir Zone, Dr Ashok Bhan, said five BSF personnel and three civilian were injured. One of the civilians, Mohammad Younus Kawoosa, succumbed to his injuries.

In Chadoora township of Budgam district, the militants tossed a grenade at a CRPF patrol injuring five jawans and 11 civilians, most of them women. The forces, however, did not retaliate.

In Lalpora Kupwara, the militants fired a rocket towards the house of an SPO, Abdul Qadoos Khan. Another SPO, Mohammad Sadiq, was shot dead by unidentified militants in Surankot area of Poonch last night, the police said.

Give peace a chance: Lone

By Our Special Correspondent

New DELHI, DEC. 11 The senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, returned to India this evening and reiterated that he stood by the views he had expressed in an interview to *The Washington Post* a few days ago. Mr. Lone's views have provoked quite a controversy in Srinagar.

"My views are known, and I am not the one to change my views at the first whiff of opposition," Mr. Lone told *The Hindu*. The Hurriyat leader had gone to Pakistan to attend his son's wedding, and during his three-week stay there he had met, among others, the Pakistani ruler, Gen. Pervez



A load carrier damaged by an IED detonated by militants in Srinagar on Monday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Musharraf. Mr. Lone repeated that "peace needs to be given a chance, and all militant outfits should come with a united response to Mr. Vajpayee's initiative for peace." He also suggested that all non-Kashmiri militants would have to leave the Valley, once political dialogue started.

Senior Home Ministry officials as well as those involved in informal consultations with the Hurriyat leaders were keenly awaiting Mr. Lone's return. Since he is perhaps the seniormost Hurriyat leader to have met the Pakistani ruler, his utterances would be judged as reflecting and incorporating Islamabad's revised priorities. "I met him (Gen. Pervez) and he convinced me about the Pakistani stand... but one thing is that he is not happy over the stand taken by the Indian Government," he told newsmen.

After staying for a couple of days in Delhi, Mr. Lone (as also other Hurriyat leaders camping

here) is expected to go back to Srinagar, and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference executive is likely to meet shortly to come out with a coherent response to the peace process. During his stay in Pakistan, Mr. Lone met militant leaders, including the Hizbul chief, Syed Salluddin. He observed that "since I was not having any mandate to talk to them, I would prefer to remain silent on this issue."

It is realised that Mr. Lone has correctly gauged the changed mood in the Kashmir Valley, and that if remains unintimidated he could probably swing the Hurriyat Conference on the side of peace and political dialogue. Mr. Lone, and other Hurriyat leaders, are aware that their organisation cannot afford to be seen as taking dictation from Islamabad. There is also the divide between the foreigner and the indigenous militant groups, with the local (Kashmiri) groups wanting to test New Delhi's sincerity.

THE HINDU

12 DEC 2000

Atal ponders extending ceasefire in J&K

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 12 DECEMBER

68-2 13/12
WITH VIOLENCE in Jammu and Kashmir coming down considerably in the wake of the ceasefire, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is likely to convene a high-level meeting around December 22 to review the impact of his peace initiative.

Accordingly, Mr Vajpayee will consider extension of the ceasefire beyond Ramazan.

According to sources in the government, the likelihood of the Centre extending its unilateral ceasefire are very high, provided there is no let-up in Islamabad's restraint along the LoC and in the hinterland. The extended peace in the Valley is also expected to signal New Delhi's acknowledgment of Pakistan's positive response to its ceasefire call.

Although the initiation of a dialogue with Islamabad might take some more time, continuation of the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir will help to sustain the conducive



BUSINESS AS USUAL: A BSF soldier stands guard in a commercial hub of Srinagar on Tuesday. — AFP

atmosphere created after Mr Vajpayee announced cessation of operations against the Kashmiri militants. Besides, it will give the militant groups enough time to fall in line with the military regime's thinking.

Sources revealed that Pakistan had not only reduced firing along the LoC to "negligi-

ble", but infiltration was also far less than at the onset of the Ramazan month. What is more encouraging is that even the militant groups, despite their public stand of defiance regarding the ceasefire offer, have not been as active in the Valley. "There have been some stray grenade-throwing incidents here and there, mainly targeted at civilian s... attacks on the security forces have come down by one-third after Pakistan responded to Mr Vajpayee's offer assuring maximum restraint along the LoC," said an official monitoring the observation of the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

The official's favourable observations regarding the impact of the ceasefire were on Tuesday echoed by Army chief Gen S Padmanabhan who noted that the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir was holding "remarkably well" with firing from across the LoC coming down to negligible levels and interiors also not witnessing any major clashes.

The Economic Times

13 DEC 2000

Myopia in the Valley

THE SPACE generated by New Delhi's unilateral cease-fire in Kashmir and the expectations of talks with leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) have exposed the first signs of differences among the constituents of this umbrella group. Founded at a time when the various outfits were indulging in internecine killings, the APHC was expected to patch up the divisions between them, making them focus on an adversarial agenda against New Delhi. This job was so deftly done with some help from Islamabad that even groups that had basic differences on the nature of a solution of the Kashmir crisis — such as the JKLF and Hizbul Mujahideen — were obliged to fall in line. Now, with the prospect of a dialogue emerging on the horizon, some of the leaders are bound to articulate their specific party positions.

However, it is impossible to miss the point that despite the cease-fire, the foreign flank of Kashmir militancy led by extremist groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, have continued to target the security forces. These provocations might be designed to make the forces react in a manner that could later be portrayed as a violation of the cease-fire. Besides, a few among the Hurriyat leaders, who had initially been somewhat reluctant to take up the cease-fire offer, are not averse to using the foreign mercenaries or the mujahideen as a pressure group even within the Hurriyat's internal power politics. Indeed, Jamait-i-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani's insistence that foreign militants too must play a role in the dialogue process in Kashmir is outrageous.

His argument defining such a role on the basis of an analogy with the United States is fundamentally flawed. For one thing, the US position is that the two South Asian neighbours should sort out the issue on a bilateral basis, and that it would not mediate unless asked by New Delhi and Islamabad to do so. For another, even if there is room for facilitation of the process with the help of a third party, such a role can hardly be played by foreign mercenaries who have been involved in daily acts of violence in Kashmir. Geelani's argument also proves the hollowness of the Hurriyat claim that the Kashmir issue has to be decided by the people of the state and no one else.

AREAS OF DARKNESS

Kashmir: By far the most distressing aspect of more than half a century of confrontation between India and Pakistan is the widening disjuncture between its human cost and the mechanisms for conflict resolution. While the former has escalated horrifically, there has been no corresponding movement either towards the enforcement of the decisions of the United Nations on the most divisive issue between the two South Asian neighbours or the articulation of a bilateral or regional security structure where the antagonists can negotiate first a containment and then, an eventual resolution of their differences.

In fact, we are witnessing a particularly dark period in the history of the region. The last ten years have resulted in an appalling rise in the civilian casualties in Jammu and Kashmir which considerably exceed the casualties suffered by the combatants in all the armed conflicts between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, the two countries have demonstrated their possession of considerable arsenals of nuclear weapons and delivery systems. In the post-Kargil period India has increased its defence budget by more than 28 per cent and entered into massive contracts for the acquisition of sophisticated conventional weapons systems from the Russian Federation and other sources.

This military build-up has exacerbated regional tensions and raised the stakes in a possible future conflict but it has hardly brought any dividend to India in so far as its war on the Kashmiri Mujahideen is concerned. The limited diplomatic advantage that India had gained from the Kargil episode was partially nullified by the audacious tactics subsequently used by the militant groups: the international community continues to regard Kashmir as one of the major flashpoints in the world and urges India to seek a negotiated settlement with Pakistan.

If statesmanship was not such a scarce commodity in South Asia, the main attributes of the current situation would dictate an earnest return to a purposeful dialogue between India and Pakistan. These attributes include the human and material cost of the Kashmir con-

flict for all the parties involved in it, the economic implications for the entire region of the absence of a rapprochement between India and Pakistan, the increasing deficit in social development and above all, the spectre of a nuclear confrontation. Such ad hoc arrangements for bilateral interaction as were available even two years ago have simply collapsed.

What had emerged was the dimly lit outline of a structured dialogue. Nearly a decade of chequered diplomatic contacts at the level of foreign secretaries had produced an agenda and the basic modality of working groups to address it. There was also a certain groundswell of the desire for peace in the civil society in both India and Pakistan. It would have been naive to expect the prime ministers of the two countries of studiedly rid themselves of studied equivocation when they met in Lahore in February 1999 but they did authenticate the emerging contours of a peace process and undertook to energise it with their political will. This led to a worldwide hope that the subcontinental diplomacy was finally settling into a matrix of peace and conflict-resolution.

There was always the nagging doubt that in the absence of any known shifts in the respectively held positions on the core issue of Kashmir, India and Pakistan would engage only in a Sisyphean task if the dialogue remained rigidly bilateral and devoid of external stimuli and encouragement. In Pakistan, there was the traditional desire for international mediation, or more specifically, a full-blooded engagement by the United States. The Oslo process had spawned a whole industry on developing mechanisms and modalities for a progressive settlement of seemingly intractable issues. It was recommended, as a model worth emulating by politicians, diplomats and academics of diverse backgrounds. Amongst the leading politicians, Benazir Bhutto had repeatedly advocated recourse to the Camp David model.

The main elements that appealed to its exponents included the presence of a committed mediator or

BY TANVIR AHMAD KHAN



India has stubbornly refused to return to the bilateral dialogue. It has forbidden even secondary level exchanges such as cricket matches. Instead, it has flaunted concepts of limited war as well as the huge accretions in its military capability. It has also pursued a relentless policy of spurning and isolating General Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan



VIEW FROM PAKISTAN

olution of relatively less difficult problems towards the core issues, distancing the determination of the "final status" from significant inter-

There was always the nagging doubt that in the absence of any known shifts in the respectively held positions on the core issue of Kashmir, India and Pakistan would engage only in a Sisyphean task if the dialogue remained rigidly bilateral and devoid of external stimuli and encouragement

terrorists, this change needs to be critically evaluated. The Indian track record being so dismal, these initiatives invite dismissal as tactical ploys in the propaganda war and as moves calculated to sow discord in the ranks of the Mujahideen. They have also been marred by blatant efforts to deny Pakistan its inevitable place at the negotiating table. However, considered in the light of the failure of the Indian policy of relying exclusively on brute military force, the Indian offers need to be assessed as possible signals of a new mindset. If there is any valid reason to treat them as intimations of change, the response from the Mujahideen and Pakistan should be carefully calibrated and nuanced.

How should Pakistan test if the Indians have at all moved beyond the counter-productive game played by them in August? Obviously, the answer lies in multiple channel assessments. Be it as it may, time has also come for Pakistan to attach higher importance to the exploration done by the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). If there were a modicum of sincerity in Indian initiatives, New Delhi would provide the APHC with all the free-ranging negotiations on the Kashmir issue are now within the grasp of statesmen.

If the history of the last eleven years is any guide, this exploratory phase would not necessarily bring about or strictly enforce a ceasefire. But a steady reduction in the instances of use of force by either side, and in the so-called "counter-urgency" operations by diverse Indian security forces, would be an important indicator whether a framework for a peaceful settlement is at last emerging. The conflict in Kashmir can easily spiral out of control. The present deadlock between India and Pakistan demands that such fire-breaking arrangements as would prevent a general conflagration should be put in place. If the true representatives of the people of Kashmir can take the lead in doing so, India and Pakistan should talk to them earnestly and constructively.

By arrangement with Dawn

im advances in clearly visualised stages, and above all the prospect of finding a collective structural response to the challenge of globalisation through the creation of a co-prosperity zone. If Israel, Egypt and Jordan, the admirers of the Oslo process, could provide the centrepiece in a grand design of economic cooperation in the West Asia, India and Pakistan, upon reconciliation, could act as the bedrock of a South Asian Free Trading Area of no small a magnitude.

For reasons, which have been exhaustively debated since Kargil, India has stubbornly refused to return to the bilateral dialogue. It has forbidden even secondary level exchanges such as cricket matches. Instead, it has flaunted concepts of limited war as well as the huge accretions in its military capability. It has also pursued a relentless policy of spurning and isolating General Pervez Musharraf's Pakistan. Meanwhile, the flaws in the Oslo process have exploded into a major crisis in the West Asia. It has been discredited as a deliberate exercise in averting the core issues and as a means of legitimising the gains made by the stronger party, Israel. The analogy in South Asia would be the fear of the US led international community opting for a similar strong state vs weak state paradigm and promoting an unjust solution by validating the Indian conquest of Kashmir.

Is there any ray of hope in this bleak scenario? Should one just surrender to deterministic despair or go beyond the bilateral stalemate to find a locus of peace in the internal dynamics of the situation in Kashmir itself? In a scenario fraught with grave risks, would it not be incumbent upon all the interested parties to make sure that they do not miss the faintest of signals for breaking the logjam.

Twice in the last six months, India has expressed its readiness to enter into a ceasefire arrangement with the Mujahideen preparatory to political talks with them. Considering that the main thrust of Indian diplomacy since the Strobe Talbott-Jaswant Singh meeting in London on January 19, 2000 was to get the international community to brand the militants as

Govt keen to extend ceasefire before end of Winter session



PEACE PRAYERS: An armed policeman stands guard as Kashmiri Muslims conduct their Friday prayers in Srinagar on Friday. — AP

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 15 DECEMBER

THE GOVERNMENT is keen on announcing the extension of its ceasefire offer in Kashmir before the end of the Winter session of Parliament.

This was indicated by Union home minister L.K. Advani during a meeting of the consultative committee of the home ministry on Friday.

Mr Advani feels if the post-ceasefire thaw persists in the Valley, then the government wants to announce the extension before December 22, the last day of the Winter session.

The ongoing peace initiative in Jammu and Kashmir came in for detailed discussion at Friday's meeting of the consultative panel, which included Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Madan Lal Khurana, Mr Viduthalai Virumbi, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr G.M. Banatwalla, Mr Jayanta Rongpi and Mr Anadi Charan Sahu.

At the meeting, Mr Advani said there has been a "perceptible change" in the Kashmir situation after the ceasefire. He said militants have scaled down their operations while infiltrations

have been reduced due to drop in Pakistani shelling.

Stating that the decision to cease operations against Kashmiri militants followed wide-ranging discussions at the Centre and with the Jammu and Kashmir government, the Union home minister said the government was closely monitoring the impact of the ceasefire and "some decisions will soon be taken to strengthen the peace initiative". To this, the members agreed and called for initiation of a political dialogue on Kashmir as a follow-up to the ceasefire.

However, the consultative panel members insisted that not only the Hurriyat, but also the other parties in Jammu and Kashmir, be it the political parties, representatives from Jammu and Ladakh, or other groups, be involved in the dialogue with the Centre.

The other issues discussed at today's meeting were the law and order situation in the north-east with special reference to the string of massacres of Hindi-speaking people in Assam and the militant activities of the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO) in north

Bengal.

The members expressed concern at the targeted killings in Assam but agreed that they reflected the frustration in the Ulfa cadres. They demanded "a proper initiative to enlist the people's support to put an end to such violence," even as an MP from Assam demanded a white paper on the accords signed in the north-east and the status of their implementation. Mr Advani, on his part, informed the consultative panel that a high-level meeting had been convened by him on Assam and a decision taken to send additional Central forces.

CPI(M) member Somnath Chatterjee also raised the Kamtapuri agitation issue during the meeting. He said the KLO, militant wing of the Kamtapuri People's Party that is demanding a separate state of Kamtapur comprising parts of North Bengal and Assam, had become very active of late and its cadres were being trained by Ulfa. To his request that deployment of forces in parts of North Bengal be continued to tackle the Kamtapuri agitation, Mr Advani assured that the necessary steps were being taken.

'Decisions soon to strengthen peace in J&K'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 15. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, today expressed the hope that some decisions would be taken soon to strengthen the peace initiative in Jammu and Kashmir.

Maintaining that there was a perceptible change in the situation in the State after the Prime Minister's ceasefire announcement last month, Mr. Advani said militant activities had declined and infiltration from across the border had come down.

Briefing MPs at a meeting of the Consultative Committee of the Home Ministry, Mr. Advani said:

"Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir is essentially a proxy war incited by our neighbour and it is not indigenous. Therefore, the Ramzan ceasefire is another opportunity for Pakistan to take positive steps so that peace talks could be considered."

The Government was monitoring the situation in the State, he said and hoped some decisions would be taken soon.

Members cutting across party lines appreciated the Government's move to give another opportunity to the militant groups in the State to help usher in

peace. On the North-East situation, some members mentioned the killings of non-Assamese people by the ULFA in Assam and said people were fed up with militancy. Demanding an initiative to enlist people's support to end the violence, they felt that the recent killings only reflected the frustration and desperation in the ULFA.

Mr. Advani said the Government had reviewed the situation in Assam at a high-level meeting convened by his Ministry and attended by the Defence Minister, the State Governor, the Army Chief and the Assam Chief Minister. Additional security forces had

been deployed in the State.

Another move: Farooq

PTI reports from Jammu:

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, has said that the unilateral Ramzan ceasefire announced by the Prime Minister would be followed by a second move in pursuit of peace. A dialogue with Pakistan in the wake of the ceasefire was welcome but no solution should be expected within days as "the issues of 52 years are too complicated to be untangled so soon," he said at a function organised by the Kashmir foundation for peace and developmental studies here.

THE HINDU

16 DEC 2000

'Hurriyat leaders can travel to Pak.'

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, DEC. 16. The Government has no problem if some of the Hurriyat leaders want to travel to Pakistan, according to responsible sources in the Vajpayee administration. It is pointed out by these sources that at least two the APHC leaders, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Mr. Abbas Ansari, have travel documents, and even Mr. Abdul Gani Lone's Pakistan-travel documents are valid for three months. "If these people want to go to Pakistan, nobody is preventing them," the sources said.

However, what is not acceptable is the Hurriyat leaders wanting to go to Pakistan to broker a peace between New Delhi and Islamabad, or being allowed to go because Pakistan chooses to anoint the APHC as the "recognized" Kashmir group.

At the same time, the Government is aware that the Hurriyat leaders themselves are not very keen on travelling to Pakistan. For example, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhatt, Hurriyat Chairman, is reported to have informed some of his unofficial interlocutors that the APHC leaders

had done some plain-talking when they recently met the Pakistani High Commissioner here. Prof. Bhatt is believed to have told the diplomat that there would be little point in them going to Pakistan because "Islamabad would not do what the Hurriyat will want it to do, and Hurriyat would not do what Islamabad will want it to do."

APHC stance crucial

In fact, the official sources suggest that the APHC can create congenial conditions for a dialogue between India and Pakistan by taking a responsible and independent stance in its executive meeting, scheduled for Sunday. The Hurriyat stance would be one of the elements that could determine the Vajpayee Government's decision to enter into a dialogue with Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

The sources point out a slight change in the Government's formulation, as spelled out by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, yesterday at the Consultative Committee of the Home Ministry. Mr. Advani, it is pointed out, has opened a possibility by talking of "the

Centre's preparedness to talk to Pakistan if the violence ended or was reduced drastically." The insistence on an end to cross-border violence no more seems to be complete and total.

The Vajpayee Government seems to have overcome its inhibition about talking to a military regime. "We have dealt with military regimes before, and a general saheb in Islamabad is no novelty for us," the argument goes. What has inhibited the dialogue is cross-border violence.

It is recalled that a few days before he was ousted Mr. Nawaz Sharif called up Mr. Vajpayee to congratulate him on the election victory and invited the latter to resume the "Lahore process"; and, in his reply, Mr. Vajpayee, it is pointed out had drawn Mr. Sharif's attention to cross-border violence.

For now, before it decides whether the time is ripe for a dialogue with Pakistan, New Delhi would also want to understand for itself how the military regime tackles the challenge from the fundamentalist forces in the post-Nawaz Sharif exile phase.

Bhat's warning: Page 8

THE HINDU

17 DEC 2000

Hurriyat to hold crucial meet today on strategy

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, Dec. 16: The executive committee of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference is scheduled to meet at Srinagar on Sunday to take stock of the situation arising out of the Vajpayee government's rejection of tripartite talks on Kashmir at this stage.

The leaders, who had been camping in New Delhi for several days, have finally left to take what they all said would be a "common stand" on the dispute.

Hardliner Ali Shah Geelani of the Jamaat-e-Islami is not against a dialogue with Delhi, but is only worried about the sincerity, or otherwise, of the government. Hurriyat sources insisted he was not going to part ways with the APHC but would use the meeting to insist on caution and a certain degree of wariness in dealing with the government. Mr Geelani has been visibly upset about what is seen by his organisation as a "clean chit" being given by some APHC leaders to the government.

Sources said he has not been supportive of JKLF leader Yasin Malik, who had reportedly described Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in "glowing" terms at the last Hurriyat executive meeting. In fact, Mr Geelani commented sarcastically about "certain leaders'" favourable description of the Prime Minister while speaking to *The Asian Age* during a recent visit

■ Turn to Page 2

Suicide attack by Lashkar kills 2 jawans

BY YUSUF JAMEEL

Jammu, Dec. 16: Two soldiers were killed and three others wounded in a suicide attack mounted by militants on an Army camp in the frontier region of Mendhar, in Poonch district, early on Saturday morning.

According to official sources, two militants on a suicide mission sneaked into the Army camp at Mendhar around 2.30 am and started firing indiscriminately at the soldiers inside the camp, killing two of them on the spot and wounding three others.

The soldiers returned fire but the militants managed to escape. Search operations followed but yielded no results.

The Lashkar-e-Tayyaba has claimed responsibility for the attack. A Lashkar spokesman of the group told reporters on telephone that his group's activists were responsible for the action against the security forces. He claimed that the two activists, Abu Sayaad and Abu Rizwan, had come out safely after inflicting casualties on Army personnel. Ac-

■ Turn to Page 2

Hurriyat meet

■ Continued from Page 1

to New Delhi. He is also reported to be a little unhappy with Mr Abdul Ghani Lone's uncritical endorsement of the government position while in Pakistan to attend his son's wedding.

Mr Lone made it very clear before leaving for Srinagar that there would be no split in the Hurriyat and the final decision taken at the meeting would be by consensus. Mr Malik was also adamant on this, saying he would not like to give his personal view as it was important that the final view was that of the APHC in its entirety. He did not expect any falling out, maintaining that the executive members would tide over their differences to take a holistic view of the situation.

The final resolution is expected to ensure that the ball is now seen to be in New Delhi's court and to call upon the government to spell out details of the peace process immediately. The APHC leaders were all agreed that the people of Kashmir are in no mood to wait indefinitely and that it was imperative for the ceasefire call to be followed by a specific programme of peace.

The resolution will also reject New Delhi's refusal to hold tripartite talks with the APHC reiterating its long-standing position that a final settlement can be possible only with a trilateral dialogue involving Pakistan. The details, all leaders, including Mr Geelani, had agreed, could be worked out with the first stage involving only Delhi and the Kashmiri representatives if this was felt necessary. The final wording of the resolution will depend largely on which group — moderate or hardline — holds sway over this particular meeting.

Sources admitted that while the APHC was not expected to take any hard, irrevocable position, it could pass a resolution insisting on a time frame and specific terms of action from the government. These modalities will be worked out at Sunday's meeting, which is scheduled to begin in the afternoon. Significantly, Pakistan has been restraining the Hurriyat from taking any extreme position and to keep the doors open for a dialogue. Pakistan high commissioner to India Qazi Ashraf Jahangir has been playing a very active role and has had several meetings with the APHC leaders during their stay in New Delhi.

THE ASIAN AGE

17 DEC 2000

Hurriyat leaders ready for talks

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, DEC. 17. The All Party Hurriyat Conference, reiterating its stand on ceasefire, today swore by unity and said it would join any of the comprehensive, meaningful and result-oriented political process aimed at finding a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue.

"If the announcement is in tune with peace, prosperity, restoration of good neighbourly relations and serious efforts devoid of traditional politics are made to resolve the issue, it reflects the positive change in the thinking of Indian leadership," a statement issued after the meeting of the APHC executive, which witnessed clashes between supporters of the pro-independence JKLF and the pro-Pakistani groups, said. At least six persons were injured when police intervened to quell the clashes which erupted soon after the meeting ended.

Reports said that though the meeting ended on a positive note with all the seven members agreeing to what was said in response to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's ceasefire announcement on November 21, the rival supporters took to sloganeering, leading to scuffle. While pro-Pakistan supporters raised slogans like "Pakistan Zindabad", those from the JKLF responded with "Kashmir Banega Khudmukhtar (Kashmir will be independent)". Initially, the sloganeering was confined to the APHC headquarters at Rajbagh, but both the groups later came on the street and indulged in fist-fighting. Police intervened and resorted to baton charging. The SSP, Srinagar, Dr. B. Srinivas, confirmed that police

had to intervene in order to maintain law and order. One supporter of Mr. Mohammed Yaseen Malik was injured in the clash, he said and denied that any of them was arrested. The Hurriyat spokesman, however, was silent on this development.

The pro-Pakistan groups which are in Hurriyat include the Jamat-e-Islami, People's League, Islamic Student's League and the Muslim League.

Earlier, the APHC spokesman, Sheikh Abdur Rash-eed, read out a statement after the meeting chaired by its chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Butt, and attended by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Syed Ali Geelani, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, Mr. Mohammad Yaseen Malik, Moulvi Abbas Ansari and Sheikh Abdul Aziz. He said that the latest situation arising out of the ceasefire and maximum restraint announcement by India and Pakistan was discussed.

The Hurriyat understands that besides holding a dialogue with the Indian and Pakistani Governments, its leadership should also be given a chance to interact with militant leaders so that this process is made meaningful. But no formal request was made to the Government for allowing the leaders to visit Pakistan.

Some leaders may be allowed

PTI reports:

The Centre is likely to allow some of the representatives of the 23-party conglomerate to travel to Pakistan. The statement of the executive council of the Hurriyat Conference after its meeting in Srinagar today welcoming the ceasefire was seen as a positive development, informed sources said here tonight.

THE HINDU

18 DEC 2000

Hurriyat meet on talks put off

Arun Joshi

Jammu, December 18 HT-11

DIFFERENCES WITHIN the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) are apparent despite its assertions to the contrary after Sunday's inconclusive meeting.

The Hurriyat has neither said anything regarding bilateral dialogue with the Centre nor proposed a team that would visit Pakistan. It is not yet clear what it wants to achieve - peace or a lasting solution to Kashmir crisis?

The Conference has deferred all these sensitive issues to its Thursday meeting. The fact that this was first postponed to Tuesday and then to Thursday makes it obvious that the APHC is trying to gain time and cool the tempers

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that had run high on Sunday.

The differences within APHC threaten to snowball into a major crisis, as Jamait-i-Islami ideologue Syed Ali Shah Geelani is understood to be working on his independent strategy: to 'honour the sacrifices made by the youth of Kashmir'.

His strategy appears to be to show that he is committed to the cause of Kashmir and to expose all those who, according to him, are compromising on the basic agenda of the APHC.

If Geelani's isolation within the Hurriyat Conference is his weakness, it is also his strength. It is seen as a weakness because he is unable to enlist support of his other colleagues within the secessionist conglomerate. This percep-

tion has deepened because a section of Jamait-i-Islami, which he represents within the Hurriyat Conference, is against his hard-line approach.

The section led by Kashmir's Jamait chief Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, currently waiting in Delhi to fly out to Saudi Arabia, is in favour of talks, irrespective of whether they are bilateral and within the Indian Constitution of India.

Geelani, however, is uncompromising on these matters. Geelani draws his strength from those hard liners who believe that peace should come with honour.

They are waiting for the things to crystallise so that they can float a separate forum to continue with what they call their struggle for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 DEC 2000

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PM reviews J&K ceasefire

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. Ahead of a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs expected later this month to review the current ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and decide whether to extend it or not, an informal meeting was convened by the Prime Minister today where the issue is believed to have been discussed.

Today's meeting was attended by the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, the National Security Adviser and Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, and the Army chief, General S. Padmanabhan.

Official sources described the meeting as informal, but what has been indicated by Mr. Advani earlier was that a full-fledged meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs would meet before the end of Ramzan later this month when the unilateral ceasefire announced by India ends.

Indications are that the Government would like to extend the ceasefire and give some more time for a more conducive atmosphere to prevail in the Valley in which meaningful talks could

take place. In fact, government sources have indicated that if the situation proceeds positively, as it has been doing so far, the Prime Minister may even make a statement in Parliament before the winter session ends on December 22.

BJP terms Hurriyat stance 'good sign'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. The Bharatiya Janata Party today described the Hurriyat stance welcoming the ceasefire initiative and expressing its readiness for talks as a "good sign" which "could lead to peace in the Kashmir Valley".

But the party noted that even in the last few days some innocent lives of civilians had been lost, our security forces had been attacked in Jammu and Kashmir, and activities of the Pakistan intelligence agency, the ISI, had spread in the Northeast and elsewhere.

Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, party spokesperson, said it would seem "Pakistan is not yet ready to end the proxy war" it had been waging against India for more than a decade.

There could be no meaningful talks "unless Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism, winds up the training camps for militants being run in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and stops ISI activities in India," Mr. Malhotra said.

"We want peace" he emphasised adding that the BJP fully endorsed and approved the view of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee. But for peace to have a chance, Pakistan would have to create the "right conditions" for talks.

The Hurriyat leadership had shown its readiness for talks, but it was for the Government to reach a conclusion when and if conditions for a serious dialogue were ripe.

Pakistan would have to mend its ways, and as conditions exist "the question of talks with Pakistan does not arise", Mr. Malhotra said.

Questioned on the BJP's views on the Shiv Sena chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray's suggestion that Muslims be disenfranchised to end votebank politics, Mr. Malhotra said he had not seen the statement and therefore was unable to condemn it.

As for the controversy generated by the remarks of Cabinet Min-

isters, Mr. L.K. Advani and Ms. Uma Bharti, on the functioning of the CBI, Mr. Malhotra pointed out that Mr. Advani had denied making any comments and if Ms. Bharti had said something, the press should get a clarification from her.

The "Government will not withdraw the cases (against the three Ministers in the Babri Masjid demolition case), for if it had wanted to do this, it would have done it by now," Mr. Malhotra added. This despite the fact that the Prime Minister thought the charges brought against them by the CBI (which functions under him) were "against the established facts (of the case)."

Hurriyat meet

PTI reports from Srinagar:

The Hurriyat Conference today said that its seven-member executive council would resume its meeting on Thursday. Yesterday's stormy meeting was followed by a factional feud. But the Hurriyat Conference chairman, Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, termed it as "small incident" and said: "the Hurriyat is united and strong and there are no differences among its leadership".

Hlzb denial: Page 14

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2000

A WELCOME MOVE

THE GOVERNMENT OF India's decision to extend the unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by one month, up to January 26, 2001, is a welcome development, made possible by a perceptible reduction in the scale of terrorist violence as also in cross-border firing and infiltration. The limited ceasefire initiative announced by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on November 19, to be in operation during the month of Ramzan — seemed to be shaky initially, what with sections of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference sending conflicting signals and the pro-Pakistan militant groups, like the Laskhar-e-Taiba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, threatening to scuttle the peace endeavour. It is to the credit of the security forces and the peace-craving people of the State that, despite provocative attacks by these terrorist elements on soft targets and the security forces, the ceasefire could hold. To a considerable extent, Pakistan's response by way of exercising "maximum restraint" along the Line of Control — even if under international pressure stemming from the all-round appreciation India's Ramzan initiative had received — has contributed to the improved situation on the ground. And this is apparent from the statement Mr. Vajpayee made in Parliament on Wednesday announcing the extension of ceasefire, where he acknowledged a "marked improvement" in incidents of exchange of fire and the prevalence of "relative peace" along the LoC.

What is profoundly significant, albeit implicit, in the Prime Minister's statement is the recognition of the intrinsic link between the search for an enduring solution to the vexatious Kashmir problem and a substantive engagement with Pakistan. While reiterating New Delhi's commitment to the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, he said the Government would "initiate exploratory steps" as are considered necessary, "so that the composite dialogue process" between India and Pakistan could be resumed. All along, the Vajpayee regime had

been maintaining that insurgency in Kashmir was an issue strictly between the Indian state and some 'misguided' elements in the Valley and, for that reason, any peace effort would necessarily have to involve only such militant groups, implying there is no role for Pakistan. Given this context, Mr. Vajpayee's declared commitment "as the initiator of the dialogue process with Pakistan" marks a distinct and salutary attitudinal shift, which if sustained and pursued in all seriousness, could well make for a breakthrough. At this stage, however, optimism has to be tempered with caution.

Basically, 'ceasefire' is an opportunity to build trust among the adversaries and create an atmosphere conducive to the initiation of the dispute-resolving process. Making it hold for a long enough period is undoubtedly a far more complicated and trickier task where the militant elements constitute an amorphous lot working independently and at cross purposes, as in Jammu and Kashmir. Even the APHC, which is recognised by Pakistan as a true representative of the Kashmiris, seems to be riven by serious differences at the leadership level — not surprising perhaps for an umbrella outfit encompassing as many as 23 groups, some pro-independence and others pro-Pakistan. There are, of course, the mainstream political parties like the National Conference which cannot obviously be shut out of any negotiation process. Considering that the current ceasefire initiative has come at a time when the people are longing for peace and at least many of the militant groups have turned pragmatic, no effort should be spared to make a success of it. Complex as any dialogue process is, it could undergo changes at different stages, but one has to be absolutely firm about what is sought to be achieved, and this has necessarily to be a solution that fulfils the aspirations of the people in regard to political empowerment, peace and development. Above all, the principal interlocutors should be unflinching in their commitment to that objective.

THE HINDU

21 DEC 2000

Cautious but keen on progress, Delhi wants say in team selection

Hurriyat sets Pak visit date

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, Dec. 21: The separatist All Party Hurriyat Conference decided today to send a delegation to Islamabad for talks with the Pakistani government and leaders of militant groups active in Kashmir.

"If the Indian government issues us the travel documents and clears our visit, the delegation will leave for Pakistan on January 15," Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said.

In Delhi, the government reacted cautiously, saying an official response would be given tomorrow, but there were indications that at least some of the Hurriyat leaders would be allowed to go.

"After all, the government is serious about the ceasefire and talks with Pakistan. It will be an inch-by-inch process and giving permission to Hurriyat leaders will form part of that process," an official said.

The decision to send the delegation to Pakistan was taken after a seven-hour meeting, which was attended by all Hurriyat executive members. The meeting was held at the residence of former chairman Moulvi Omar Farooq.

In a statement after the meeting, the Hurriyat said: "The ceasefire extension by the government of India and the withdrawal of troops to barracks from the Line of Control are praiseworthy."

"This is a positive development, which will finally lead to the resolution of the Kashmir dispute," the statement in Urdu said.

The Hurriyat said: "The purpose of our visit to Pakistan is to initiate the political process by holding discussions with leaders of various militant groups active in Kashmir."



The Hurriyat leaders after the meeting in Srinagar. (Reuters)

Bhat said the executive would finalise the names of the members to visit Pakistan. "The executive will meet in the second week of next month to finalise the names and other details of the visit."

The government will want to have a say in the composition of the team and is likely to insist on having Bhat, Abdul Ghani Lone and Yasin Malik, who form the moderate core of the Kashmiri leadership. But in the continuing season of goodwill gestures, it may even allow a pro-Pakistan leader like Syed Ahmed Shah Ge-

lani to be part of the team.

By setting a date for travelling to Pakistan, the Hurriyat has given enough time to the Centre to take a favourable view. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee has already been on record saying that the government would consider any request to visit Pakistan.

During its stay, if allowed by the Centre, delegation members will meet "government people, leaders of various religious groups, human rights activists" and "our boys with guns", Bhat said.

"We will try to convince them

about solving the problem politically," he said and hastened to add: "Their apprehensions are grounded in history. Their apprehensions are to be dispelled".

"We will plead our case with the boys in the interest of peace and resolution of the Kashmir problem permanently," he said. "We all have to make sacrifices. India, Pakistan and the people — all have to make sacrifices to resolve the dispute once for all."

He said: "Pakistan has taken positive steps towards normalising the situation." Bhat invoked

the threat of a nuclear war, underlining the urgency of choosing the "path of peace". Bhat said "the Hurriyat is one... there are no differences". "We will take this struggle to its logical conclusion."

Combat dress sale ban

The government has banned the manufacture and sale of combat clothing in Srinagar following suicide attacks by militants wearing battledress, adds Reuters. The ban will be in place for two months.

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THE TELEGRAPH

22 DEC 2000

Hoping against hope

THE ATTEMPTS to find a solution to the Kashmir tangle have seen so many false starts that it is difficult to be hopeful about any new venture. The cynics will be even more doubtful in the context of the Kargil conflict which dealt such a crucial blow to the Lahore initiative. What is more, the number of *jehadi* outfits practising terrorism in the name of Islam has proliferated in such a manner in recent years that even the less aggressive militant groups may feel scared about responding to the offers of peace. For instance, two shadowy organisations — Al Badr and Jamiatul Mujahideen — have warned the Hurriyat Conference against pursuing what they have described as the Indian agenda. Even if their influence is limited, they can still cause enough trouble to create doubts about the peace process.

Arguably, such groups which follow only their own counsel will always be there. But the difficulty is that they may also represent the suppressed views of influential segments within the polity and the administration. It is no secret, for instance, that one reason why peace efforts have run into so much difficulty is that there are elements in Pakistan who consider the acquisition of Kashmir as the unfinished agenda of the Partition. They also seem to regard enmity towards India as the very *raison d'être* of Pakistan. They have been relentless in the pursuit of this hostile agenda. The involvement of foreign, mainly Afghan, mercenaries in subversive activity in Kashmir is another complicating factor if only because they have little understanding of either the Kashmiri ethos or the background of the Indo-Pakistani disagreements.

Clearly, therefore, the extension of the Ramzan cease-fire can only be a first step — and a very tentative one — on the road to reconciliation and peace. Nevertheless, the Vajpayee Government has shown the same broad vision in extending it as it did when it said that the talks with the militants need not be held within the parameters of the Indian Constitution but within those of *insaniyat* (humanity). If its latest gesture meets with a favourable response, it will be for a combination of factors, of which the most significant is the evident war-weariness in the Valley. In addition, Pakistan seems to have realised that it should not compound its diplomatic setbacks on this front by a display of stubbornness, as it did when it made the Hizbul Mujahideen withdraw an offer of cease-fire within days of making it. Hence, its decision to pull back its troops from the LoC, for which wintry conditions alone may not be responsible.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 DEC 2000

Pandits slam peace process, say it undermines national security

Anil Anand
New Delhi, December 21

UNHAPPY OVER the Centre's indifference towards the minority communities of Jammu and Kashmir — comprising 40 per cent of the State's population — the displaced Kashmiri Pandit community has questioned the very basis of the ongoing peace process.

It feels that initiative was misplaced and could prove detrimental to national security.

A two-day meeting of the migrant community, which had aligned itself firmly with the BJP

after being driven out of the Valley, is slated to open on December 24. The objective? To express disagreement with the Centre's Kashmir policy.

Planned under the aegis of the Kashmiri Samiti, the meet is likely to impress upon political parties to view the Kashmir problem in a proper historic perspective and not rush into any quick-fix solution.

Describing the national response to the peace initiatives as "unscientific," Samiti chief C L Gadoo expressed shock that the Centre was prepared to "appease" the gun-totting militants at the cost of

those forced to leave their homes by the very same elements.

He said normalcy could be restored in the State only through a broad-based initiative involving various ethnic groups such as the Kashmiri Pandits.

The meet assumes significance as it coincides with the Government's efforts to find a solution to the Kashmir problem. Terming the NDA's Kashmir policy as "shifty", the Samiti chief declared that it was difficult for the community to support a process which ignored the existence of minority groups of the State such as Kashmiri Pandits.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 DEC 2000

Dar offers govt 'fullest' help

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Dec. 22. — Hours before the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba raid on the Red Fort, the Hizbul Mujahideen's chief commander in Kashmir, Mr Abdul Majid Dar, had today announced "fullest cooperation" to the Centre's peace efforts.

In his first reaction since the 28 November ceasefire announcement, Mr Dar — who had announced a failed ceasefire in July — said: "Though peace moves initiated by India and Pakistan are not enough to resolve the complicated Kashmir issue, Kashmiris will extend fullest cooperation if the issue is resolved within the framework of insaniyat (humanity)."

But soon, one of his top commanders made a dramatic appearance at the Jamia Masjid here to dismiss the ceasefire initiative while Hurriyat leaders offered Friday prayers inside.

Self-styled 'district commander' Abdul Basit, armed and speaking from behind a mask, said the Hizb wants a peaceful end to the Kashmir dispute, but suggested the only solution was merger with Pakistan. He said he had come to hear the Hurriyat leaders' plans which were unclear. Then he and his seven associates fired a few shots in the air and left.

Mr Dar, though, took a much softer line, saying

the peace moves would be judged on merit, and rigid attitudes or false prestige wouldn't be allowed to stand in the way.

His statement to local newspapers said that Indian and Pakistan "feel the time has come to find a lasting solution to the Kashmir issue".

"The leadership of Hizbul Mujahideen on both sides of the LoC is in constant touch with each other and supporting or opposing the peace moves will not be based on rigid attitude or prestige but on merit of peace moves.

"Even as Hizb is continuing its militant activities, we are keeping a watch on developments and the situation" in Kashmir.

But Basit, standing before the Jamia mosque and facing reporters, laughed off the ceasefire. "It is not the solution to the issue," he said. "The Kashmir problem cannot be resolved through ceasefires as has been witnessed in the past."

Basit said he had come to the mosque "to listen to what message the Hurriyat leaders would give to the Kashmiris".

On the Hurriyat's plans to travel to Pakistan next month, he said they may proceed "to hold talks with the leaders there and explain their stand to the leaders of militants in Pakistan." He went on to say that the Hurriyat leaders had not clarified whom they wanted to talk to in Pakistan besides the militant leadership.

THE STATESMAN

23 DEC 2000

23 DEC 2000

Hizb leaders demand meaningful talks

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, DEC. 22. After a prolonged silence over the ceasefire and its subsequent extension, developments a group of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen leaders appeared at the Jamia Masjid in Srinagar today and vowed to fight against any "sell-out" on Kashmir. The group's chief commander (operations), Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, termed the India and Pakistan initiatives "sincere and important".

Led by the district commander, Mr. Mujahid Basit, a group of four gun-wielding militants appeared in the compound of the Jamia Masjid when the entire leadership of Hurriyat Conference was present there to address the congregation in connection with Jumatul Vida (last Friday of Ramadan). Holding a green banner "Hizb-ul-Mujahideen zindabad" (long live Hizb-ul-Mujahideen), the militants briefly spoke to mediapersons.

"We do not oppose the Hurriyat leaders going to Pakistan," said Mr. Basit adding that a ceasefire alone would not solve the issue. A meaningful dialogue had to be initiated and any solution must be in accordance with the people's wishes.

He said the Hizb was bound by its constitution, which was for the State's merger with Pakistan. A militant then fired a few shots in the air and the group left. Later, the Hurriyat leaders in the process of making speeches, said they would not work towards a "sell-out".

In a statement, Mr. Dar said any discussion on Kashmir could not

ignore the Hizb. On the extension of the ceasefire by India and the subsequent withdrawal of troops from the LoC by Pakistan, he said, "these two decisions reflect the feeling both the countries have vis-a-vis finding a permanent solution to the Kashmir dispute."

The Hizb while continuing its activities was keeping a close

watch over the situation, said Mr. Dar.

'India has to talk to Pak.'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 22 India has little option but to talk to Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir conflict, the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez

Musharraf, has said. Talking to a group of newspaper editors at an Iftaar dinner he hosted last night, Gen. Musharraf said "India is not sincere as it is not talking of the settlement of the Kashmir issue rather it wants to end tension".

In contrast, Pakistan was keen on resolving the long-pending dispute through a meaningful dialogue. "Ultimately India has to talk to Pakistan". To a question, Gen. Musharraf said Pakistan's offer of "tripartite talks" on December 2 had made a good impact on the world community. "It has been described by the world as a bold step and now all the pressure is on India." The Kargil episode had brought Kashmir into world focus, and it had emerged as the flashpoint.

Pakistan wanted the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to participate in dialogue with India and Pakistan, he said adding the APHC team would be given a warm welcome here. He quoted the Indian Army Chief as saying that the Indian Army was tired of the situation in Kashmir and ruled out any threat to the nation's security as a result of the partial withdrawal of troops. In a related development, the former Finance Minister, Dr. Mubashir Hasan, said India, Pakistan and the APHC had taken laudable steps to explore through dialogue possibilities of bringing peace to Kashmir. A window of opportunity had opened for Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Gen. Musharraf and the leadership of Kashmir to achieve what leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru, Indira Gandhi, Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto could not achieve.



Abdul Basit, "district commander," of the pro-Pakistan Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, speaks to the media while one of his associates fires in the air, outside the Jamia Mosque in Srinagar on Friday — AP

THE HINDU

23 DEC 2000

RAMZAN, RED FORT TO R-DAY

9.8.3 av 24/12
A slow march to sanity

THE Lashkar-e-Toiba strike at the Red Fort emphasises the continued importance of withstanding provocation and persevering down the difficult path towards peace in Jammu and Kashmir. It is clearly a bid to test that capacity, and the response must be mature. No complacency but no haste either. There will be more challenges in coming weeks. The cautious reaction to Pakistan's declaration that it was pulling some of its troops away from the LoC is not difficult to understand after Kargil had doused the sparks of Lahore. A tactical military appreciation would point to there being little significance to the move since the primary role of those deployed in forward areas was to cover infiltration bids which have currently tapered off because the passes and routes are blocked with snow. Even then the pull-back is not to be ignored; it confirms that India secured much diplomatic advantage with the cessation of pro-active operations during Ramzan, and then extending the cease-fire to Republic Day. Pakistan could not afford to be seen as non-responsive.

For common folk, those living in the Valley particularly, there has been some relief. Unfortunately the killings and violence have not ended and could take a while to dwindle to levels at which India feels it is worth reviving bilateral negotiations. The Prime Minister did indicate that the climate was improving. The Chief Minister of J&K was not so sure; death still stalked the Valley and he cautioned against undue optimism. That the problem is not restricted to militancy was reflected in his lashing out at the All Party Hurriyat Conference and saying that to talk to them was as good as talking to Pakistan. For New Delhi the dilemma lies in identifying who projects the genuine feelings of the Kashmiri people. Government has blown hot and cold in the Hurriyat's direction, it has yet to accept their credentials and this might degrade the status of the National Conference. Yet until a single voice speaks for Kashmir the situation will remain terribly complex.

Difficulties go beyond the political. It is common knowledge that the administrative machinery in the state is both inefficient and corrupt. The functioning of the administration has been a major factor in the people's indifference or apathy towards the government. It is against that background that every little sign of change has to be assessed. It might not have set a peace process in motion but it has at least got the various players in the game to start thinking on those lines. As this newspaper has consistently counselled, it would be dangerous to conclude that the ball is rolling now. The baggage of the last 50-odd years cannot be dumped overnight, no quickfix solution is possible. It would be best to allow the complexities to slowly unravel, there are no self-imposed deadlines to meet. As a military ceremonial would prove, a slow march has a distinct solemnity.

THE STATESMAN

24 DEC 2000

Hurriyat denies playing mediatory role

Sumir Kaul

NEW DELHI 24 DECEMBER

HURRIYAT CONFERENCE on Sunday denied playing any "mediatory role" between India and Pakistan in resolving the Kashmir issue but said it wants to apply the "keys with a purpose of unlocking the doors of goodwill and understanding."

"I do not agree (to the role of mediator), we are a party to a dispute and no party to a dispute can pass for a mediator. We would, however, as the principal party choose to apply keys with a purpose to unlocking the doors of goodwill and understanding," Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said over telephone from



Bhat: Sticking to his ground

Srinagar. About the conflicting signals emerging out from the camp of Hizbul Mujahideen where a self-styled commander of the

outfit demanded annexation of Kashmir with Pakistan, Mr Bhat said "everybody is onto himself. We should have a large heart in India and Pakistan because we are undertaking a stupendous task of easing out tension."

The Hurriyat chairman, however, feels very encouraged with the recent developments of India announcing extension of ceasefire and Pakistan deciding to withdraw its troops from the Line of Control.

"Considering the positive steps, Pakistan has taken in response to Indian initiative, I feel encouraged to trust that whatever steps Pakistan is required to take, will be taken in the right earnest," Mr Bhat said, adding "a word in

Delhi is transmitted into a deed in Islamabad."

About Hurriyat team going to Pakistan for holding talks with militant leaders, Mr Bhat said "the team is yet to be decided and the government should now give us the travel documents."

Former chairman Mirwaiz umer Farooq has a passport while travel documents of Jamaat-e-Islamia leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, People's Conference leader Abdul Gani Lone and Shia leader Maulana Abbas Ansari have been impounded. While Mr Bhat had applied for passport in 1994, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Yaseen Malik applied for it this year. — PTI

The Economic Times

25 DEC 2000

Nine killed in Srinagar Army HQ explosion

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE &
Agencies

SRINAGAR, Dec. 25. — In yet another strike targeting Army installations, militants today blew up an explosive-laden car outside the Army headquarters here killing nine people, including five securitymen, and wounding 26.

A suicide bomber drove the car, bearing a Delhi registration number and stuffed with 30 kgs of explosives, to the headquarters of 15 Corps this afternoon and blew it up outside its main gate. This is the first attack of its kind since the Ramzan ceasefire came into force on 28 November and second in eight months.

A defence spokesman said the militants detonated the car bomb at Batwara in front of the main gate of the Army headquarters around 2.20 p.m., killing a soldier and three civilians, and injuring 12.

However, security sources said five securitymen, three civilians and the suicide bomber were killed and 26 injured.

An Army spokesman said mutilated limbs were found from the blast site and they were suspected to be those of two suicide squad members.

Jaish-i-Mohammad, headed by Maulana Masood Azhar, has claimed responsibility. Azhar was released in exchange for the IC 814 hostages last year.

The spokesman said the blast triggered fire in Batwara Bazar — the main market in the Cantonment area on the Srinagar-Jammu national high-way — and damaged seven vehicles.

The sources said the suicide bomber was stopped by military police personnel at a check point near the main gate. But ignoring the signal, the bomber

went ahead and blew up.

Soon after the explosion, the Army sealed the entire area, particularly the exit points at Sonawar and Pandrethan.

Centre's response: The Centre is yet to chalk out any fresh strategy to counter militant attacks in J&K. It denied that the attacks, including today's explosion, will create a negative impact on the ceasefire.

Admitting that suicide squads have increased and are out to sabotage the peace mission, a home ministry official said in Delhi: "Those who are opposing the ceasefire have now (it seems) targeted Army and military personnel."

The Union home secretary, Mr Kamal Pandey, said it was a "miraculous escape" for Army men in Srinagar today. Mr LK Advani refused to comment on the militant attack.

Pak blasts: A series of bomb blasts in three Pakistani cities today injured 45 people, a report from Lahore said.

A bomb ripped through a crowded Lahore market, injuring 36 people. Another exploded at a railway station in Faisalabad, wounding three. The third explosion occurred in a bus in Hyderabad, injuring six.

No group has claimed responsibility for the blasts but police blamed India. "We were expecting Indian-sponsored terrorist activities after the attack on New Delhi's Red Fort," a police official said.

Lashkar man killed: A Lashkar-e-Taiyaba man was among three people killed in J&K where security forces averted a tragedy by defusing an anti-tank mine.

■ Another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

25 DEC 2000

Hizb refuses to lay down arms

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Dec. 25. — The Hizbul Mujahideen today ruled out laying down arms to participate in talks with the Centre. The outfit, however, said it would support peace moves if it realised "that justice is being done to the aspirations of Kashmiris."

Reacting to yesterday's statement of Mr LK Advani that talks could be held with Hizbul militants after they lay down arms, Masood, spokesman of the outfit, said: "To expect Hizbul Mujahideen to lay down arms and participate in any political activity is useless."

"Even if the ongoing process is on the right track and Hizbul Mujahideen decides to extend

its support, guns will not come down from our shoulders because complete independence of Kashmir is the foremost goal set by the outfit," Masood said in a statement.

He said the Hizb "has not taken any decision to support or oppose the peace process." The outfit is monitoring the steps being taken by India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat.

Advani stand: In Ahmedabad, Mr Advani said discussions between the National Conference and the Centre would precede talks with militants.

The home minister said there was no question of holding any dialogue with Pakistan before an assessment was made of its behaviour during the ceasefire.

Musharraf backs militants: Despite the ceasefire, General Pervez Musharraf continues to harp on ceasing of "brutal acts" in the Valley before militants can halt their operations.

In an attempt to justify militants' indifference to the ceasefire, Gen Musharraf told reporters in Karachi yesterday: "Indian forces are committing atrocities on the Kashmiri people, which are being countered by these groups."

The General, who responded to the ceasefire with restraint along LoC and still unverified partial troops withdrawal, said: "I have done what I could have."

On storming of the Red Fort, Gen Musharraf said he would not comment, it being India's internal concern.

He said Pakistan and India had taken initiatives to start a dialogue. "But what remains to be seen is how much sincere India is in resolving the Kashmir issue," he said.

Saudi role: Saudi Arabia is playing a role in finding a mechanism for the Kashmir issue, claims Mansoor Ijaz, a banker of the USA and self-styled peacemaker between Pakistan and India.

In an interview to *The News*, Ijaz said: "It is no accident that Jaswant Singh will visit Riyadh in early January, just a week after Kashmiri militant leaders return from Jeddah and a week before Hurriyat leaders are scheduled to meet Hizbul supremo Syed Salahuddin in Islamabad."

THE STATESMAN

26 DEC 2000

HC 10 Glimmer of peace 26/12

DESPITE THE adverse signals sent out by last week's militant attack on the Red Fort in New Delhi, there are several hopeful signs suggesting that some kind of a forward movement is possible on the Kashmir issue. Foremost among them is Pakistan's willingness to wait for starting a dialogue with India till the latter's talks with the Hurriyat makes some headway. Considering that the Hizbul Mujahideen's earlier abandonment of a cease-fire offer unless Pakistan was involved in a tripartite dialogue was believed to have been a part of Islamabad's efforts to sneak in by the back door, the latest evidence of responsible behaviour by the Musharraf regime points to a dawning of sense. Irrespective of whether it is under American pressure or because of Pakistan's continuing ostracism from the international community, it undoubtedly marks a change from what made it embark on the Kargil misadventure.

No less important than the latest hopeful signs emanating from Pakistan is the view of the RSS that the conversion of the LoC into the international border between India and Pakistan can form the basis of a dialogue between the two countries. Although this very suggestion has been made from time to time, it has never been taken up seriously for it went against the belief — articulated, among others, by Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister — that the only unfinished business of Partition is the recovery of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) by India. This attitude is rooted in the belief that if India had not called for a cease-fire in 1948, then the Indian troops could have driven the Pak raiders from what is now PoK and there would not have been any Kashmir problem at all.

However, it has also been felt that since there is little point in fighting past battles, it is better to come to terms with the existing reality and accept the LoC as the border. The RSS' endorsement of this proposal indicates that the Vajpayee Government can use it to end the Kashmir impasse. There are other corollaries to this move, such as a porous border. What is of immediate importance is that some of the earlier barriers to the talks are being lowered. At the same time, the activities of the foreign mercenaries remain a matter of concern, especially because it is uncertain whether the *jehadis* are acting on their own or at the behest of the ISI which may be pursuing a course parallel to that of the Pakistan Government.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 DEC 2000

Pandits assail move for talks with separatists

NEW DELHI, DEC. 25. Expressing scepticism over the success of the Centre's peace initiatives in Jammu and Kashmir, the State's Pandits today criticised the moves to hold talks with separatists who do not recognise the Constitution "ignoring" the minority in the State.

Seven organisations of Kashmiri pandits, at a conclave here, adopted a resolution asserting that "the 5,00,000-strong minority community of Kashmir will not remain a silent spectator if it is not involved in talks on the future of the valley. The conclave denounced all attempts to view Muslim separatism and secessionism as well as autonomy as a part of the commitment to secularism," leaders of the Kashmiri Samiti, the All-India Kashmiri Pandit conference (AIKPC), the All-State Kashmiri Pandit conference (ASKPC), the All-India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKC), Jammu-based Kashmiri Pandit Sabha, Chandigarh-based Kashmiri Sahayak Sabha and

Bangalore-based Kashmiri Visthapit Seva Samiti told a press conference here.

The Kashmiri Samiti president, Mr. C.L. Gadoo, said the pandits were yearning for return of peace in Kashmir but were sceptical about the success of the ceasefire and 'negotiations with representatives of militant groups without any preconditions.'

Alleging that the Government was "conceding the wishes and fancies" of the separatists, particularly the Hurriyat Conference, he said "this conglomerate (Hurriyat) of self-appointed committees of diametrically opposite political aspirations is so emboldened as to assert that no parleys would be possible under the Indian Constitution."

The leaders regretted that the Centre had "not till now sought our views, since we are the main victims of terrorism in Kashmir and have been thrown out by the same people whom the Government wants to talk."

THE HINDU

26 DEC 2000

J&K peace process gains momentum

By Dileep Padgaonkar

NEW DELHI: Undeterred by the recent acts of terrorism in the capital and in the Valley, India will consider holding talks with Pakistan after it completes a review of the overall security situation in Jammu & Kashmir at the end of January. New Delhi will, in the meantime, allow the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan and begin discussions with them as soon as possible.

According to a senior government official, who spoke to *The Times of India* on Tuesday, the review will seek to establish whether the three objectives that

underscored Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's decision to announce a unilateral ceasefire during Ramzan, and then to extend it by a month, had been met.

The first objective was to keep alive the yearning for peace in the troubled state which had surfaced in the wake of the ceasefire last July.

The second objective was to give Pakistan another chance to curb violence on the Indian side of the Line of Control "even without owning up that it was instigating it in the first place".

And the third objective was to persuade the international community that "we are sincerely try-

ing to resolve the problem" and that it "should put pressure on Pakistan to reciprocate".

The official said that New Delhi had been "quite successful" in meeting the first and third objectives, but only "partially successful" in meeting the second one.

The incidents of terrorist violence had continued on Indian territory. He added, however, that even though Pakistan had financed, trained and provided sanctuary to the terrorists, it could well be that certain groups were acting autonomously.

The official said that Pakistan's Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, would not like to miss

this opportunity for engaging in a dialogue with India, particularly if he could do so "without facing violent opposition from the fundamentalists and extremists on his soil".

This, in the official's view, was possible. The general had taken on the political parties as well as fundamentalists who were critical of his decision to send former prime minister Nawaz Sharif into exile. "If he showed boldness on this issue, there is no reason why he cannot take on his critics, if he chooses, to reduce, if not end, cross-border violence and begin a dialogue with India," he said.

► Continued on Page 8

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 DEC 2000

The Saudi connection

AMONG THE several new developments marking the Kashmir scene is the rather open involvement of Saudi Arabia in the affair. A meeting of militants and other Islamic organisations from Kashmir and Pakistan is being held there against the background of suggestions that the Islamic kingdom is engaged in moderating the *jihad* being waged against India. If true, the event represents a turning point from the earlier belief that the Saudis bankrolled the militants while Pakistan trained them on its own territory and on that of Afghanistan. If there has been a change of focus, it may be because of, for a start, US pressure to which Riyadh will presumably be more susceptible than Islamabad. Although both have been long-standing allies of Washington, Pakistan has lately earned US displeasure because of its links with Islamic terrorism. Besides, Pakistan's growing internal problems relating to the faltering economy, the army's diminishing clout and the realisation that its proxy war in Kashmir is failing may have persuaded it to turn to Saudi Arabia to bail it out.

Another important factor is that the *jihadis* are not too popular with the Islamic regimes themselves. Since most of these countries are run by corrupt oligarchies which pay no more than lip-service to the puritanical Islamic precepts, the leaders of these Governments, including that of Saudi Arabia, are never sure when the wrath of the militants will be turned on them. It may be all right to patronise a few Taliban-type outfits to keep them involved in 'causes' such as Kashmir or Chechnya. But it is a matter of tactical calculation to rein them in when diverse factors — unpopularity in the area of operation, as in Kashmir, international opprobrium because of terrorist outrages — advise against keeping the *jihadis* in business. Some of the latter, too, may realise that they are fighting a losing battle.

India, of course, cannot complain if Saudi Arabia, or any other country, chooses to restrain the subversives. New Delhi's relations with the Islamic countries have been traditionally cordial, a factor which — along with India being the home of more Muslims than Pakistan — may have influenced policy makers in Riyadh. But the fact remains that it is a matter which has finally to be discussed by India with the militants' outfits and other organisations in Kashmir and also, at a later stage, with Pakistan. The Saudi involvement, therefore, has to be of a limited nature.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 DEC 2000

A BOOST TO 'PEACE INITIATIVE'

Decks cleared for Hurriyat leaders' travel to Pak.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 28. In a move intended to lift the "peace initiative" to a higher level of engagement, the Vajpayee Government is believed to have decided to let the All-Party Hurriyat

Conference (APHC) leaders travel to Pakistan, where they are likely to have a dialogue with the "boys" on how to sustain the peace process. For now, four Hurriyat leaders are to be granted travel documents.

Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, Mr. Ya-

seen Malik, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq are likely to travel to Pakistan on January 15, in accordance with a resolution passed by the APHC executive on December 17. Of these, the Mirwaiz already has a passport, while Mr. Lone has a

Pakistan-specific three-month travel document which would be extended; Mr. Malik's application for a passport, made last September on medical grounds, is being processed while Prof. Bhat's application is awaited. Only Syed Ali Shah Geelani has not made a request for passport, and none is likely to be given to him in the absence of such an application.

However, it has been made clear that as far as the Government of India is concerned, the Hurriyat leaders get the travel documents to go out of India and they are free to visit any country of their choice. In other words, they would be travelling as private citizens, not entrusted with any official brief or assignment. These leaders would not even be able to claim that they were visiting Pakistan as Hurriyat representatives.

The Hurriyat executive is likely to meet in the first week of January next, when the conglomeration will be in a position to finesse its "travel to Pakistan strategy". It is believed that the overwhelming majority within the Hurriyat is in favour of giving peace a chance, and the message they are likely to take to Pakistan is to tell the "boys" that the gun has not worked, let us test the efficacy of the dialogue.

The Centre's thinking is predicated on an assessment that the Prime Minister's peace initiative has created a constituency for peace in the valley, and that the APHC leadership would find it difficult to ignore this sentiment. The Centre also believes that the Hurriyat leaders have no choice but to convey this popular sentiment to the strategists and Generals in Pakistan.

The Centre has, by default, made it clear that it does not subscribe to the Hurriyat's claims, often repeated by Pakistan, of being "the sole representative of the Kashmiri people". In the last few days, for example, the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, has asserted that the Centre would also be talking to the National Conference as well as other political groups and voices in Jammu and Kashmir.

At the same time, the Centre is aware of the international community's preference for starting some kind of communication with the Hurriyat leadership. Informal contacts between the Centre's emissaries and the Hurriyat leadership have already been established, and it is possible that the formal dialogue could begin once these leaders come back from Pakistan after discovering the mood there.

Onus is on Pakistan: Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 28. The Centre has indicated in reasonably clear terms that though it is no longer insisting on a complete end to "cross-border" terrorism before it can talk to Pakistan, it believes the onus is on Islamabad to rein in foreign militant outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, operating out of Pakistani soil. This was stated in unequivocal terms by the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, while addressing the jawans and officers of the Central Reserve Police Force this morning.

In his remarks which were meant for audience beyond the police officials, Mr. Advani said "Pakistan says we cannot do anything about these foreign militant outfits. But nobody can trust this statement". Asserting that these groups enjoy financial, logistical and other support from the ISI, he said "if Islamabad wants, killings by these militant outfits can end".

Making a linkage between terrorism and resumption of the dialogue with Pakistan, Mr. Advani said that while it was ready to talk with Islamabad, it must see to it that terrorism ended. "If it wants, it can do it (end the terrorists' activities)." He acknowledged that the incidents of cross-border infiltration as well as firing along the Line of Control had come down quite noticeably, he did point out that there was no slowing down of the foreign militants' killing of in-

nocent people. The Red Fort incident, according to Mr. Advani, was just a symbolic act of defiance.

He said the international community no longer believed that the militants were a home-grown phenomenon, and the world recognised that the violence in Jammu and Kashmir was being aided and abetted by Pakistan. He gave his Government a pat on the back for bringing this to the attention of the world community in a convincing manner, and warned Pakistan that the responsible Governments around the world were convinced of the correctness of the Government of India's argument that the talks would not lead to any resolution unless Islamabad stopped sponsoring terrorism as an instrument of state policy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Giving expression to "keeping our fingers crossed" attitude within the Vajpayee Government, Mr. Advani recalled the bitter history of the Lahore bus yatra initiative, and obliquely warned Pakistan that it would be committing a grave mistake if it thought that a similar advantage could be taken of the Prime Minister's "Ramzan ceasefire" initiative.

As far as Mr. Advani is concerned there is already a decisive change in the public mood in Jammu and Kashmir, and that the youth were no longer as enamored as they once were of militancy. That is why, according to Mr. Advani, Pakistan has come to depend more and more on foreign militants.

29 DEC 2000

Fort raiders' aide killed in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Dec. 27. — A top Lashker-e-Taiyaba militant, who was in close touch with those involved in the Red Fort attack, was killed in an encounter with police here today.

The militant, identified as Abu Sufian alias Abdul Rahman, was killed at Tengpora, near the Batmaloo bypass, in central Srinagar in wee hours, the IGP (Kashmir), Mr AK Bhan, said.

On a tip-off, police raided many places and laid ambushes. A police party was fired upon by militants at the Tengpora-Batmaloo bypass and in the exchange of fire, Abu Sufian was killed. The accomplices of Sufian, a self-styled district commander, escaped.

Based on documents recovered from the slain militant, Mr Bhan said Sufian was from Multan in Pakistan and an important organiser of militant activities. An AK rifle, three magazines, a wireless set, and some ammunition, besides a pager, were also recovered.

Mr Bhan said three people, reportedly providing logistic support to the Lashkar, were arrested in Srinagar. Lakhs of rupees have been transferred to the outfit through one of the bank accounts of the arrested.

Grenade blasts: Ten people, including a BSF jawan, were

said the grenade was targeted at the BSF picket in the area.

Militants also exploded a grenade targeting an ITBP vehicle in Anantnag district last evening, but none was hurt.

Four soldiers were killed when militants ambushed a party at Pothshah-Lolab in Kupwara district yesterday.

Militants attacked a post of India Reserve Police in Rajouri district last night.

Advani stand: In Mumbai, Mr LK Advani said today that India wanted friendship with Pakistan, SNS adds.

Opening an RSS's exhibition, he, however, said Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee could be sterner than a vajra and mellower than a flower, indicating that the ceasefire in J&K should not be misinterpreted as an instance of weakness.

Hurriyat plea: At least six Hurriyat leaders have urged the Centre to issue them passports for travelling to Pakistan, UNI adds from Delhi.

■ **Editorial:** Pathetic state, page 6



Sufian's body in Srinagar. — PTI

injured when militants exploded a grenade at a market place in Srinagar today. Sources

THE STATESMAN

28 DEC 2000

1971 hijacker gives up in peace gesture

'I am here to support PM's Kashmir initiative'

HT Correspondents
New Delhi/Jammu, December 29

HASHIM QURESHI, a founder member of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front who hijacked an Indian Airlines Srinagar-Jammu Fokker Friendship flight to Pakistan in 1971, dramatically surfaced here today after 30 years in exile. He arrived from Copenhagen by a Scandinavian Airlines flight and gave himself up to immigration officials. Four hours later, he was handed over to the Delhi Police.

When he was produced in a Patiala House court here later in the day, Qureshi used to occasion to announce to the media: "I have come here to support Vajpayee's peace initiative. We want the end of oppression and bloodshed in Kashmir, irrespective of whoever is the victim."

For good measure, the 47-year-old, Srinagar-born, hawk-turned-peacenik said he had returned because "we want an independent Kashmir". He has been remanded in judicial custody till January 11.

Qureshi and six of his accomplices had been sentenced by a



Hashim Qureshi being produced in a Patiala House court in New Delhi on Friday. Photo: Raj K Raj

Pakistani court to 19 years of rigorous imprisonment for the hijacking. The plane was blown up in Lahore after the hijackers forced all on board to deplane.

The case against Qureshi, who was one of two hijackers of the plane, was re-opened in Srinagar shortly after he landed in Delhi this morning. He is to be handed over to the J&K police tomorrow.

In the absence of any legal provision to tackle hijacking in 1971, the Jammu and Kashmir Police had charged Qureshi with illegal confinement and sedition in the FIR it had registered against him in

Srinagar on January 30, 1971. But the case was closed as "untraced" on May 27, 1972. He went into self-imposed exile, first in the UK and then The Netherlands, after he was released from jail in 1980.

PTI adds: Today, the court in Delhi allowed Qureshi to see his brothers and a sister in the court complex. In his book *Kashmir - the unveiling of truth*, Qureshi said he sensed threats to his life from ISI and had been warning the JKLF not to play into the Pakistani military's hands and the ISI's.

● Qureshi may take part in peace process: Page 11

Curfew in Ranchi as clashes continue

Ashish Sinha
Ranchi, December 29

CURFEW WAS clamped on five police station areas and the Army staged flag marches after protesters clashed with police in Doranda, the area where three youth of a particular community were shot yesterday.

Late in the evening, officials said the situation was "better than yesterday and under control". Curfew was a "precautionary measure", and the situation was likely to improve by tomorrow.

Protesters set afire two police pickets, Chief Secretary V S Dubey said. A policeman and a Government driver were injured. In some areas, police and paramilitary forces lathicharged and teargassed mobs. The condition of Hatia DSP U C Jha improved marginally. He was injured yesterday, and underwent brain surgery. Members of the minority community alleged Jha had ordered the firing, and insisted that reports of his injury were fake.

Chief Minister Babulal Marandi renewed his appeal for peace. Peace meetings were held at the Bihar Club and SSP's office in the morning. The bodies of the three youth killed in yesterday's firing were handed over to the families around 3 am today.

● Photograph on Page 9

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 DEC 2000

Court grounds Kashmir police trip with hijacker

OUR BUREAU ^{28/12}

New Delhi, Dec. 30: The case of the forgotten hijacker is getting curiouser and curiouser.

In a late-night ruling as dramatic as Hashim Quereshi's landing in the capital yesterday, Delhi High Court stayed a lower court order which allowed Jammu and Kashmir police to take the hijacker of 1971 to his home state tomorrow.

A PTI report said the high court issued the stay order at 10.30 pm on a habeas corpus, which termed the detention and granting of remand illegal, filed by Quereshi's lawyers.

Earlier in the day, a metropolitan magistrate permitted Kashmir police to take charge of Quereshi with a directive that he be produced before a court in Srinagar on New Year's Day.

Delhi police did not oppose the Kashmir team's plea for transit remand. Quereshi has been accused of hijacking a plane from the state to Lahore in 1971. The Jammu and Kashmir government

had rushed a police officer with an arrest warrant to take Quereshi to Srinagar tomorrow.

However, his lawyers moved the high court in the evening, saying that when he had already undergone jail term in the hijacking case, he could not be re-tried for the same offence. Quereshi was jailed in Pakistan for several years before he left for Holland.

The twists came at a time when the Centre appeared determined to forge ahead with its peace initiative ignoring the defiance of some militant groups.

Both the Prime Minister's Office and North Block emitted signals that Delhi would not be lacking in any effort — political, diplomatic or administrative — that could keep peace hopes alive.

The return of Quereshi is being seen as part of the manoeuvres being played out behind the scenes by the Centre in concert with "neutral do-gooder" Western countries.

Quereshi has been openly anti-Pakistan on the Kashmir ques-

tion, but it is a matter of debate whether that alone can be interpreted as a pro-India stance. Almost his first public statement after returning home was that he had come back to secure "freedom" for Kashmir.

The Farooq Abdullah government, which plans to go ahead with panchayat polls in the state despite opposition from the Hizbul Mujahideen, is also banking on Quereshi's propaganda potential.

"Quereshi would be able to tell the people about the conditions in which our brethren are living in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir," Abdullah told PTI in Jammu.

When Quereshi eventually reaches Kashmir, either as a free man or in custody, it is bound to create political ripples, though their impact is uncertain.

If he is a part of the larger peace-game Delhi is playing, Quereshi will be allowed more public access and prominence than what would have been usual for a hijack offender.

■ See Page 7

THE TELEGRAPH

31 DEC 2000

AMANULLAH FUMES; FAROOQ WARM TO RETURN

Qureshi's usefulness doubted

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 30. Mr. Hashim Qureshi, the 1971 hijacker, who returned to India yesterday and surrendered, must be surprised at the kind of media attention he has got. He must also be surprised at the speculations about a possible "role" for him in the unfolding Kashmir drama.

Old intelligence hands, however, have mixed memories of him. Mr. Qureshi began his career as an "informer" for the Border Security Force; but somewhere in the 1969-1970 period his loyalty was suborned by the Pakistani agencies. Till he took part in the hijacking in 1971, he worked as a perfect "double agent".

The hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane was promptly and shrewdly used by Mrs. Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister, to ban Pakistan's flights over India, a ban that complicated Pakistan efforts to curb insurgency in the eastern wing; this prompted many within the Pakistani security establishment to question Mr. Qureshi's credentials as an "asset". He was eventually arrested in Pakistan and tried as an Indian "plant".

For the last 15 years Mr. Qureshi has been living, rather comfortably, in Amsterdam. Seasoned intelligence hands believe that during this time he must have been contacted by a number of "agencies".

Contrary to speculations that Mr. Qureshi has been "brought in" by the Indian intelligence agencies, it is learnt that it was Mr. Qureshi who had been telling his "Indian contacts" for the last seven or eight months that he was going to return to India, irrespective of the official Indian response. He became

particularly insistent after a decision was taken to release the APHC leaders.

Mr. Qureshi has not been granted legal immunity for his 1971 crime, but he already has legal advice available, according to which he cannot be punished for the same crime twice (having already served a sentence in a Pakistani jail for the hijacking). It is possible that the Indian authorities may allow him to get away with that defence, and he may soon find himself a free man.

As far as his presumed usefulness in the Kashmir drama is concerned, he has no *locus standi* in the "resistance" ranks. The Hurriyat leadership will try its best to brand him an "Indian agent". However, being the first dem-

Handed over to Jammu and Kashmir police: Page 8

onstrative challenger to the Indian state, he has a "name recognition" in the Kashmir Valley, and there is an aura around his name. He can, therefore, be marketed at least as a relevant player among the many players, who may come out of nowhere to claim leadership of the "resistance movement".

'He gave up the struggle'

UNI, PTI report:

The Pakistan-based leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Mr. Amanullah Khan, has accused Mr. Qureshi, founder-leader of the JKLF, of having given up the struggle for Kashmir. In an interview to the BBC last night, Mr. Khan claimed that Mr. Qureshi did not appear in Delhi all of a sudden; he was trying to return for the past four years.

"During this time he was opposing the Kashmir movement and had become a supporter of India. About eight months ago he had said he would return to India in December." Mr. Qureshi had left Pakistan in 1986, having refused to work for the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Kashmir.

According to Mr. Qureshi, the ISI then approached Mr. Amanullah Khan who readily agreed. Mr. Khan has himself confessed that his faction of the JKLF started terrorist activities in Kashmir by exploding two bombs in Srinagar in 1989. However, he bemoaned, that having used the JKLF, the Pakistani establishment (read the ISI) dropped it in favour of fundamentalist groups.

'An eye-opener'

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, termed Mr. Qureshi's surrender a "significant development", and said his tale of actual living conditions of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) could serve as "eye-opener" for people playing the Pakistan card.

"Having seen the conditions in POK, Mr. Qureshi would be able to tell the people about the conditions in which our brethren are living in the area," Dr. Abdullah told PTI in Jammu.

He also termed as "significant" the statement by the Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, after visiting POK, that there was no freedom except the religious one in POK.

Asked about the proposed visit of Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan, Dr. Abdullah said, "Allowing them to go to Pakistan speaks of the strength of India... let the Hurriyat leaders become wiser about the ground situation in Pakistan and POK."

THE HINDU

31 DEC 2000

Hurriyat wants passports for all

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR DEC. 30. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today refused to accept the Government's decision to grant travel documents to only four members of its executive for visiting Pakistan.

Sources in the Hurriyat said its leadership took strong exception to the Government's move to clear the travel documents of only four executive members, including the chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat. Only when all the seven members, including the former chairman, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and the People's League leader, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, are granted passports would the delegation be constituted, was the Hurriyat view.

One of the leaders, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, said, "They will have to issue documents to all the seven and then we will announce the delegation." The issue, he said, would be discussed at the APHC executive's meeting on January 2.

However, the Mirwaiz said nothing was officially conveyed to the Hurriyat yet. These are all speculations and a creation of the media, he said. "The Hurriyat is united and will remain so." Another senior leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, too, objected to the issuance of passports to only four

members. After the Centre indicated on Thursday that it may issue passports to Prof. Bhat and Mr. Yasin Malik (with Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Moulvi Abbas Ansari already having passports; and Mr. Lone still holding the country-specific passport for Pakistan), the issue could lead to another controversy in the APHC.

Those who may be left behind are Mr. Geelani and Mr. Aziz, both hardliners and staunch pro-Pakistanis. Mr. Geelani had earlier said that all the executive members would visit Pakistan and no one individual had the mandate to talk on behalf of the Hurriyat.

Interestingly, the Jamat-e-Islami chief in Pakistan, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, has also insisted on including Mr. Geelani in the delegation. "The APHC must include him in the delegation as his absence may create several misunderstandings," Mr. Hussain said recently in Lahore.

The APHC has already announced that it would send a delegation to Pakistan on January 15 to talk to militant leaders and the Pakistani Government to take ahead the peace process in Kashmir. However, it had said it would not act as a mediator but would play its role as the basic party to the dispute.

Advani rules out tripartite talks: Page 8

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