

## Kashmir Primer

According to reports from Washington, President Clinton favours India becoming a permanent member of the Security Council but cites the UN resolution on Kashmir as being the main obstacle. If this is true, it constitutes a damning indictment of our foreign policy for over 50 years: we have failed to put across to the international community the basic facts about the UN resolution, and why — and because of whom — it was not implemented. This ignorance of basic facts on the Kashmir resolution on the part of the US president reflects very poorly on the Indian foreign office since the architect of that resolution, Dr Josef Korbel, was the father of the present US secretary of state. The August 13, 1948 resolution was in three parts. There was to be a ceasefire, followed by a truce, which, inter alia, entailed withdrawal of all Pakistani forces and tribals who had been inducted into the area by Pakistan. Upon the satisfactory completion of the terms thereunder there would finally be a reference to the will of the people through a plebiscite. Pakistan never fulfilled Part II without which Part III remained in limbo. Subsequently, Pakistan was in glaring default of Part I as well. The UN Representative for J&K, Ambassador Gunnar Jarring, reported to the Security Council on April 29, 1957 as follows: 'I could not fail to take note of the concern expressed in connection with the changing political, economic and strategic factors surrounding the whole of the Kashmir question together with the changing pattern of power relations in West and South Asia. The council will, furthermore, be aware of the fact that implementation of international agreements of an ad hoc character which has not been achieved fairly speedily, may become progressively more difficult because the situation with which they were to cope has tended to change.'

On August 25, 1948, Dr Korbel wrote to pandit Jawaharlal Nehru that "the local people in the evacuated territory will have freedom of legitimate political activity. In this connection the term evacuated territory refers to those territories in the state of Jammu and Kashmir which are at present under the effective control of the Pakistan high command." This enormous failure to project India's case on Kashmir — and the fact that it was not India but Pakistan which failed to implement the UN resolution — goes back several decades. The Indian political class and bureaucracy haven't the faintest clue about how to handle information and use it to advantage. They have been following the policy of keeping Kashmir out of the international public gaze. In the process, most of them have failed to remember that India did not violate the UN resolution but Pakistan did. The foreign service establishment has not produced a compendium of UN resolutions on Kashmir and related developments for ready reference of our own diplomats. Consequently, our diplomats have not been able to keep the US president, his secretary of state, and US diplomats effectively briefed on the facts on Kashmir. It is time the present political leadership did its homework on Kashmir so that it is in a position to educate Bill Clinton during his forthcoming visit to India.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 MAR 2000

# Violence in J&K and democratic rights

By Asghar Ali Engineer

HD-12

*It is surprising that those supposedly fighting for the rights of the people of Kashmir have no respect for the rights of others.*

THE RECENT massacre of Sikhs has once again brought the Kashmir issue into focus. It is suspected that the Lashkar-e-Taiba carried out this massacre. The militants deny any role in the killing of 35 Sikhs and allege that the Army or paramilitary forces were behind it, which is hardly convincing. These allegations and counter-allegations do not matter to the victims.

All sections of society have condemned the massacre in no uncertain terms. Apart from others, all Muslim leaders who matter have denounced the ghastly act. The Naib-Imam, Abdullah Bukhari, called it an inhuman act and said it was aimed at disturbing communal harmony. He also said that no religion permitted killing of innocent people. The working chief of the Jamat-e-Islami, Maulana Jalaluddin Umri, also denounced the massacre and urged the Government to punish the guilty.

The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, in his interview to the ABC Network, said "I believe that there are elements within the Pakistani Government that have supported those who engage in violence in Kashmir." It is quite likely that the militants carried out this massacre to put the Kashmir issue in the forefront during the Clinton visit. Whatever the purpose, such acts cannot be condoned, even if the cause be just. Unless we learn to consider human life — any life for that matter — sacred no cause is worth supporting. After all why do we carry out any struggle? In order that human life can flourish.

Violence cannot solve any problem, it only aggravates it. Violence appears justified in certain circumstances to certain people. But those who take a long term view and are aware of the consequences will never advocate its use, much less such indiscriminate use. Violence has no place in any society, much less in a democratic one. Here Gandhiji remains most relevant. His philosophy of non-violence, whatever its source of inspiration, is not only relevant but also morally highly desirable. Violence is democracy's very anti-thesis. It is surprising that those supposedly fighting for the rights of the people of Kashmir have no respect for the rights of others. Otherwise, how could they have killed innocent Sikhs. It is not happening in Kashmir alone; it is a worldwide phenomenon.

integrity, on the one hand, and extreme caution and statesmanship, on the other. Unfortunately, populist politics has its own compulsions and no politician — with hardly any honourable exception — these days — displays these qualities. On the contrary, they aggravate social tensions by playing popular politics. And such opportunism leads to violence. Punjab and Kashmir are obvious examples of tensions leading to violence being provoked by the then ruling party. So much bloodshed could have been avoided if the social tensions had been managed in a statesmanlike manner.

The country's integrity depends on maintaining diversity and pluralism, which, however, is always resented by the religious right. It pushes for uniformity, which ultimately leads to ethnic cleansing and to an authoritarian culture. And authoritarianism, which is not permanently sustainable in this age of democracy, ultimately leads to the break up of a country. Uniformity, thus, is the enemy of a country's unity rather than its base, as the rightist forces often tend to believe. Pakistan broke up in 1971 because West Pakistan was intolerant of its own internal diversity. Strengthening of diversity not only leads to democratic governance but also strengthens unity and integrity.

Those who stand for the autonomy of Kashmir should do everything possible to promote its internal diversity. They should not try to polarise society between Muslims and non-Muslims and Kashmiris and non-Kashmiris within the State. It will harm their own cause. They should welcome inter-regional autonomy within the State, i.e. the autonomy of Jammu and Ladakh.

Within Muslims of Kashmir too there is religious as well as regional diversity, between Shias and Sunnis (Shias of Kargil and Sunnis of the valley) and cultural differences between the Muslims of Jammu and the Muslims of the Valley.

There is no pure Kashmiri Muslim identity either. In fact, there is no escape from diversity in any region of any State. The Hurriyat — an umbrella organisation — itself is so diverse. Thus, an amicable solution in Kashmir is possible only when violence is given up and dialogue begins.

ing quality. It is easy to begin violence but near-impossible to end it. Violence is a kind of power and those who take to arms and are hardly ever ready to give them up. They will find one or the other excuse to perpetrate violence unless some greater power intervenes. In Serbia and Kosovo, violence could be contained only after the intervention of the NATO.

Violence, even if it began as liberative, not only becomes repressive soon but also leads to another equally-despicable consequence: ethnic cleansing. The Bodo extremists in Assam want to create Bodoland and want to cleanse the area of all non-Muslims and others in their area. The extremist Sikhs tried to kill several innocent Hindus in Punjab to cleanse the area of all non-Sikhs. Similarly, the Kashmiri militants are seeking to eliminate all Hindus and Sikhs so that Kashmir will be monopolised by the Kashmiris.

As peaceful opposition is an essential part of democracy, diversity and plurality are its integral parts as well. Democracy raises certain tensions in a diverse and pluralist setup. Regional identity is threatened by migration. Many rightist forces raise the slogan of "sons of the soil" and want to stop migration or reduce the number of those already settled in an area. Thus, Article 370 in case of Kashmir has become a bone of contention. The article was inserted in the Constitution to respect the autonomy of Kashmir and to safeguard its identity. However, the contents of Article 370 were diluted (almost out of existence) on the one hand, and, the Kashmiri militants are out to destroy its internal plurality, on the other, by expelling Pandits or killing Sikhs.

This is indeed a dilemma of democracy, which cannot be easily resolved and is bound to create social tensions between the principles of diversity and regional identity. But such tensions have to be resolved through democratic means. However, it is easier said than done. It is a most delicate task which requires honesty and

The world over, violence is being used indiscriminately for securing "democratic rights". We can cite several examples, Bosnia for instance. Thousands were massacred in Bosnia, hundreds of women were raped. Why? The Serbs wanted to secure their own rights.

The religious right perpetrates violence of the worst kind, and that in the name of religion. It is an insult to religion to maintain — as the religious right always does — that violence is permissible to establish one's own religious rights. In the U.S., the religious right is known to use violence most indiscriminately to force on people what it calls its doctrine of being "pro-life". They extinguish life to promote their doctrine of promoting life! Many "pro-choice" people have been massacred in the U.S. by self-confessed "pro-life" people. So many nurses and doctors performing abortions have been killed, and so many institutions where abortions are performed have been set afire in the U.S. The Khalistanis in Punjab also resorted to violence most indiscriminately for several years. And all this to promote a state based on the Sikh faith.

And these rightist bigots kill more people of their own religious tradition than those from rival faiths. More Sikhs than Hindus were killed in Punjab by Khalistanis. In Kashmir too, more Muslims have been killed than Pandits. Violence promotes not only suspicion of the extreme kind, it also engenders extreme intolerance in the ranks of its advocates. On the one hand, they suspect every other person of being an enemy agent and, on the other, any differing opinion is considered heresy punishable only by death. Thus, liberal Sikhs were the most hated enemies of the Khalistani Sikhs and liberal Muslims in Kashmir of "jihad" militants.

In certain cases, violence may be inspired by years of persecution by a dominant section of society and its use may appear justified in a certain phase of the struggle. But soon violence generates its own dynamics and acquires a self-sustain-

## Break the deadlock

THE ARRIVAL in Delhi of two All-Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders this week, following the recent Srinagar visit of Defence Minister George Fernandes, is the first indication of the Kashmiri leaders' willingness to engage in a dialogue with the Centre. This is a welcome development and a sign of optimism in what is almost a deadlock situation. However, there is no reason to be impatient. The process of dialogue will have to run a long and arduous course and would demand huge reserves of patience and perseverance. There are several hurdles to cross and too many entrenched positions to negotiate with. What is crucial is that the Hurriyat has implicitly set aside its earlier insistence on tripartite talks with Pakistan as the third party. The growing isolation of Islamabad in international diplomacy must have helped the Hurriyat leaders to clarify its own political identity, instead of tagging on to the Pakistani bandwagon which was not taking them anywhere.

It is not surprising that several militant outfits based in Pakistan, including Islamic fundamentalist groups like the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Harkat-ul-Ansar, have vowed to intensify and escalate their campaign of terror in the State. They have indicated plans to send in more mercenaries with sophisticated weapons from across the LoC. This indicates their frustration at the turn of events in the Valley. Clearly, they would want to derail all initiatives of reconciliation and thereby try to prove that the talks have been ineffectual. Moreover, their brazen admission of plans to create "mini-Kargils" across the LoC through the summer has not gone unnoticed. In fact, this only makes the US State Department's report, *Patterns of Global Terrorism* — which nails Pakistan for promoting terrorist outfits — rather mild stuff. As the dialogue gathers speed, the Hurriyat leaders would need to take a stand on the continuing depredations committed by foreign mercenaries in J&K.

It might take long to search for a common ground through dialogue. But this process will help in marginalising the gun-culture that has achieved nothing apart from brutalising the civil society in Kashmir for more than a decade. Besides, Kashmiris want peace and stability, a new life which promises political hope and economic security. Surely, with the involvement of veterans like Syed Mir Qasim in the reconciliation process, and a flexible and open framework of democratic dialogue, there is no reason why a breakthrough cannot be achieved.

THE HINDUSTAN

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4 MAY 2000

# Freed Yasin drives hard talks bargain

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 4: The Centre today released Hurriyat Conference leader Yasin Malik and four others ahead of a possible opening of talks with political groups parallel to the National Conference in Kashmir.

The Hurriyat executive has decided to call a meeting in Srinagar to discuss the Kashmir scenario. "I don't think there is any ground for any negotiation within the framework of the Indian constitution," Malik said after his release.

Malik and four second-rung leaders — identified as Abdul Majid Dandoo, Abdul Ahad Waza, Ghulam Mohammad Sankara and Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai — were released from Tihar Jail this evening after being detained for over six months under the Public Safety Act.

The Centre has released 11 Hurriyat leaders so far. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference is an umbrella organisation of outfits which, till recently, were seeking secession from the Indian Union. Hurriyat chief Syed Ahmed Ali Shah Geelani, Abdul Ghani Lone and Maulvi Abbas were the first to be released. The three were set free soon after Bill Clinton left after his five-day visit in March.

The home ministry, which has a Jammu and Kashmir Affairs department, appears to have taken a back seat with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) calling the shots in the wake of the release of the Hurriyat leaders and reports

that the defence minister has held preliminary talks with Syed Mir Qasim, who was Jammu and Kashmir chief minister in the early eighties.

Before the Vajpayee government decides to open talks, it will have to reckon with the fact that the ruling National Conference, a partner in the ruling coalition at the Centre, is not on good terms with Hurriyat. Party chief Farooq Abdullah's son Omar is minister of state for commerce in the Vajpayee government.

Following the influx of foreign mercenaries, the Centre will also have to take into account whether these leaders have any influence over the Kashmiri youth. Mir Qasim is believed to be a "spent force" in Valley politics. Malik, however, is articulate and at one point had substantial influence on young Kashmiris.

The government will keep a watch on what steps the released Hurriyat leaders take in the Valley. There was little fuss in Kashmir when they were arrested last year, a sign of their increasing isolation. But the Hurriyat has more mass support than the ruling National Conference.

Officials said not too much should be read into the release of the leaders. Before any dialogue begins, the government will sound Abdullah, they said.

But the release is signal of the new approach adopted by the government. Defence sources today said home minister L.K. Advani and army chief V.P. Malik are scheduled to visit Kashmir on May 7.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 5 MAY 2000



# Hurriyat calls for 'peace offensive'

Insists on involvement of Pakistan in talks process to solve J&K problem

Jay Raina  
New Delhi, May 5

THE ALL Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is in favour of a "peace offensive" that would not only ensure a permanent resolution to the Kashmir dispute but lead to an era of peace and progress in the sub-continent.

As it awaits a formal offer of "unconditional dialogue" from the Centre, the APHC leadership perceives its role as a bridge between the two warring nations (India and Pakistan) that have fought three wars to find a military solution to the Kashmir dispute.

"The disputed legacy of Kashmir has to be confronted with peace parleys to the satisfaction of all three parties concerned -- India, Pakistan and the people of the composite State of Jammu and

Kashmir," two top-ranking leaders of the Hurriyat, Mir Waiz Umer Farooq and Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, told *The Hindustan Times* in an exclusive interview today.

Spelling out the broader parameters of a possible dialogue with the Centre, they called for a fresh approach based on flexibility, honesty and accommodation.

"All the parties concerned will have to work in a new mould of give and take to ensure a permanent resolution of the problem," they said while ruling out the exclusion of Pakistan from any kind of a peace dispensation in the region.

Prof Gani, who was released recently from the jail along with two other senior Hurriyat leaders, stressed the importance of breaking the barriers of distrust among the three warring parties. "We have

to forget the past, capture available opportunities and envision a future of peace and amity for the suffering masses of the sub-continent," he said.

The assertions of these two leaders assume significance in the backdrop of their three-hour-long dinner meeting with Pakistan's High Commissioner Qazi Ashraff Jahangir on Wednesday. While refusing to divulge the exact nature of their discussions with the Pak envoy, the two Hurriyat leaders hinted that Pakistan would not stand in the way of a Centre-APHC dialogue.

However, they rejected the possibility of holding discussions with the Centre over two possible options -- transfer of power or an interim arrangement within the existing constitutional status of J&K.

"All such gimmicks have been tried during the last 50 years, but to no avail," they asserted, saying that the time had come to address the core parameters of the problem that were primarily political in nature.

Both Mir Waiz Umer Farooq, who has chaired the APHC for two terms, and Prof Gani, who is the chief APHC spokesman, expressed ignorance of any kind of a formal "offer of dialogue" by the Vajpayee Government. "We have been reading about it in newspapers and also about the so-called activities of intermediaries," they said.

Mir Waiz in particular did not foresee any role for the so-called self-appointed mediators. "If talks were to be held, these will be between the Centre and the APHC at the level of their authorised representatives," he emphasised.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

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# Some hope on the Hurriyat front

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MAY 5. A section of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference leadership, camping here, has opted to interpret as a positive development what it sees as Pakistan's apparent endorsement of a dialogue between the APHC and the Union Government. A spokesman of Pakistan's Foreign Office was reported to have observed on Thursday in Islamabad that Pakistan would accept any decision taken by the Hurriyat about the presumed "invitation" from the Vajpayee Government to the APHC for talks.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, immediate past president of the APHC, sees this as a "major shift", almost as an endorsement of the APHC contention so far that only a three-way dialogue between India, Pakistan and the "people of Kashmir" could produce a way out of the Kashmir stalemate. This public formulation, according to the Mirwaiz, is consistent with what the Hurriyat leaders have heard recently from their Pakistani interlocutors. Though he insisted, as have the other APHC leaders, that there has been no formal or informal invitation for any kind of dialogue with the Indian Government, he was also unenthusiastic about a possibly mediatory role for Syed Mir Qasim, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir.

"Bilateralism has not worked," contends the Mirwaiz. He agrees that it may not be possible to start immediately a tripartite dialogue, but if the principle of "trilateralism" is accepted then that should work out fine. To begin with, there can be a three-way simulta-

neous, bilateral dialogue: this would involve India and Pakistan talking, Kashmiri leaders talking with Pakistan and India talking with the "Kashmiri" representatives. "Instead of going to Moscow or Washington, why not go to New Delhi and Islamabad", argues the young Mirwaiz. The unstated contention is that the APHC leaders should be allowed to visit Pakistan; "we can start a process."

Next week the Hurriyat leaders, including those released recently from jail as well as the district level functionaries, propose to meet in Srinagar. The inclination is to talk to "all political in Delhi, Islamabad, Muzaffarabad (capital of POK), Jammu and Ladakh".

Though he concedes that there are "foreign mercenaries" who probably subscribe to the ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, "it is also a fact that the foreign militant is being given support and sympathy by the Kashmiri people, who feel alienated enough".

As the Mirwaiz argues, "though Islam is an important part of our life, our movement is a political movement and not a religious one,"; but, he insists that he and other APHC leaders believe that the efficacy of their political methods would be totally eroded if New Delhi continues to rely on the gun to deal with the "Kashmir problem."

Hence, the need to start the peace process by a dialogue with the "representatives of people of Jammu and Kashmir." The Mirwaiz says that the Hurriyat would have no problem if "pro-people" leaders such as Mr. Shabir Shah

are associated with the dialogue; at the same time, he believes that Dr. Farooq Abdullah's National Conference has become "irrelevant" and that the people of Kashmir would not be taken by the Chief Minister's "belated discovery of autonomy" and "army high-handedness".

## Musharraf for trilateral talks

ISLAMABAD, MAY 5. The Chief Executive of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, today proposed trilateral talks between New Delhi, Islamabad and Kashmiri leaders to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"The Kashmir issue can only be solved through trilateral talks between Pakistan, India and Kashmiri leaders," Gen. Musharraf told reporters in Lahore to a question. He said there was some problem along the Line of Control and asserted that the Army was prepared to meet any eventuality.

Earlier, Pakistan's Army commanders discussed the operational readiness of their troops after recent artillery duels with India across the LoC in the Kashmir region. Gen. Musharraf chaired a conference of Army corps commanders and told them that Pakistan had to be ready for "all eventualities because India did not respond to peace overtures," an official statement said.

"The conference, which was attended by all corps commanders and principal staff officers, deliberated at length on the operational preparedness of the troops and other matters of professional nature," the statement said. — PTI

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THE HINDU

- 6 MAY 2000

# Regional Autonomy

## Move Towards Regimentation in J&K

By BALRAJ PURI

OF the two reports released by the Jammu and Kashmir government, the first on state autonomy and the second on regional autonomy, the latter requires more urgent attention and is in some respects of more serious consequence. The former requires an amendment of the Constitution which can be done by Parliament alone, with a two-thirds majority. Its decision will depend on public opinion in the country and may also be influenced by the assessment of the national parties regarding how much the alienation of Kashmiris is neutralised by giving more power to the present state government.

Even if the protagonists of more autonomy for the state are successful in convincing public opinion at home and at the national level than, say, the Akali Dal in Punjab and the Dravidian parties in Tamil Nadu have been, it has to pass through many stages and levels of discussions and may undergo many changes before it is accepted as a national consensus.

But the chief minister has issued a timely warning by saying, "I don't have to go to the Centre for approval of the regional autonomy report." With a two-thirds majority in the state assembly, he can get it passed anytime. In fact, anticipating this decision of the assembly, he has already appointed an implementation committee. The changes that the official report on regional autonomy envisages in the structure of the state can have far-reaching implications for the course of the state's history, with repercussions far beyond its borders.

### Discordant Mindset

The manner in which I was removed from the RAC after I submitted my report and a hurriedly drafted alternative report submitted on behalf of three out of its six original members suggests that there exists a mindset which does not hesitate to restructure the state, unmindful of the lack of legal, moral and political justification.

Its main feature is not the quantum and nature of autonomy that is to be conferred on the regions. Its mandate is to change the very concept of regions; which was nowhere within the scope of the terms of reference of the RAC. It proposes re-organisation of the regions. In the case of Kashmir, the proposal means reversion to the three old districts of Srinagar, Anantnag and Baramulla which were only recently divided into six districts. Jammu

is proposed to be split into three regions — Jammu, Rajouri-Poonch and Doda while Ladakh will be carved up into Leh and Kargil.

The small size of the regions will preclude any substantial devolution of power to them. If all the regions claim equality, can the state have eight instead of two capitals, where the state secretariat moves in winter and summer at present? Can high court benches and the university be established in all of them? Will all other regional institutions be established in all the regions or will they be abolished? Clearly, the official proposal withdraws whatever autonomy exists at present at the regional level.

### Sinister Design

Further, the district boards, under the state Panchayat Raj Act, have a nominated president, 33 per cent nominated women, nominated Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribe members and representatives of semi-government agencies with a deputy commissioner as its executive head. The same pattern is repeated at the block and panchayat levels; with the result that the presence of the state government will extend to the lowest tier of the administration. Thus, the entire exercise in autonomy is reduced to measures for the fullest possible regimentation and centralisation of power in the hands of the state government. Already, the present unitary form of the Constitution which was imposed on the state has built-in provision for regional tensions, which, often seeks secessionist outlets in Kashmir and communal outlets in Jammu and Ladakh. A further concentration of power can only lead to a more explosive situation.

A far more sinister implication of the official report is that the re-organisation proposal divides Jammu and Ladakh along communal lines. The erosion of regional identities, which had a healthy secularising impact, would thus be replaced by communal identities. Ostensibly the re-organisation is proposed on ethnic grounds. But whatever variations of dialect, language and culture may exist between the Hindu majority districts of Jammu and the Muslim majority districts of Rajouri, Poonch and Doda, there are far greater variations within each of the proposed regions. In any case, ethnic and cultural differences between the Jammu and Kashmir regions are far greater than between the proposed Jammu region and the Rajouri-Poonch and Doda regions.

If the latter cannot live together as one region, by what logic can Jammu live under one unit of the state? The same is the case of Leh.

Already the proposal has provoked demands for the separation of Jammu and Leh from the state. With communally-divided regions around itself, the vitality of the 5,000-year-old Kashmiri identity, too, is bound to be threatened. Nor is separation the best guarantee for faster and balanced development of the districts being separated from the Jammu regions. I had, in my report, proposed, besides, the powers of taxation and fund-raising to the regions, an equitable and objective formula for financial devolution from the state to regions and districts within each region based on eight indices which included female illiteracy, infant mortality, share in government services and in admissions to technical institutions in proportion to population, road mileage in proportion to total area, contribution to the state exchequer, population and area.

The official report has merely recommended "special consideration for the development of most backward areas." Instead of specific safeguards for share in political and economic power for each region and each district, the government by proposing a division of the regions has made each part of them completely dependent on the state government.

### Flawed Report

At the cultural level, the report recommends that the cultural academy should establish its offices at regional levels which "share functions under the supervision and administrative control of regional councils." I had instead proposed that the cultural academy should be autonomous and free from administrative control at all levels and that the chief minister not be its ex-officio president.

The report has also recommended that the government may consider setting up district councils as an alternative to regional councils. If the state government accepts this alternative and abolishes the administrative units of regions, its power to dominate over districts would be much more than on regions.

Whichever alternative the government accepts, the intentions seem to further centralise political, cultural and economic power in its hands.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

MAY 2000

MONDAY, MAY 8, 2000

## FOR A DIALOGUE IN KASHMIR

THE RELEASE OF five more Hurriyat leaders last week, including the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief, Mr. Yasin Malik, marks another step forward in the Centre's move towards opening a dialogue in Kashmir. Coming on top of the release of three leading lights of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) last month, and informal contacts established with other political leaders, it gives a clear indication of what lies ahead. Instead of relying on the Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, to do the spade work, the Centre in a well-thought-out move seeks to involve a former Chief Minister, Syed Mir Qasim, in back-room diplomacy. Given his stature and experience in the troubled State, Mr. Qasim may be in a much better position to bring a wider political participation into the planned dialogue. Especially because New Delhi is in no mood to resume a broad-based dialogue with Islamabad, it becomes imperative to engage all shades of political opinion in Kashmir in the search for a political settlement. Towards that end, the release of the Hurriyat leaders and the informal contacts being made with different groups in Kashmir are the best way forward.

No formal invitations have been extended. There is nothing official or formal about the exchanges that are taking place. By trying to involve leaders like Mr. Qasim and Mr. Shabir Shah, the Centre is clearly sending out a message that all shades of political opinion in Jammu and Kashmir and even the separatist groups will not be excluded from the intended dialogue. The catchword now seems to be that talks must be held within the "constitutional framework". Though the APHC insists that there are no differences or disputes among its constituents, there are certainly different voices and views coming out of that camp. It may be planned or even natural for such a diverse grouping. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a former president of the APHC, argues that "bilateralism has

not worked" and it may not be realistic to expect a tripartite dialogue any time soon, involving India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people. So the Hurriyat seems to be veering round to the view that if and when an invitation is extended, the APHC will not be averse to talks with the Government of India. It is obvious that its leaders will remain in touch with Islamabad and perhaps Muzaffarabad. Whether or not New Delhi grants the Hurriyat leaders official permission to visit Pakistan before or during the talks, it cannot sever the contacts that already exist. So, it is not going to be an easy task to open and sustain the dialogue with the representatives of the people in Kashmir.

The former Home Secretary and veteran bureaucrat, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, has also been brought into the picture through the special cell on Kashmir. There are indications that other seasoned and retired officials or diplomats will also be roped in to take the process forward. Simultaneously, the Defence Ministry must initiate a two-pronged strategy in the Valley — first to contain militancy and prevent further intrusion of foreign mercenaries and second, to stop all forms of intimidation or harassment of civilians. The security forces must make an all-out effort to check any violation of human rights and killing of innocent civilians even by mistake or in cross-firing. If the Centre wants to initiate a purposeful and substantive dialogue in Kashmir, it must consciously create the right climate for talks by infusing confidence into the people and the participants. The Government must adopt an inclusive approach and encourage all participating parties to commit themselves to a negotiated and peaceful resolution of the problem. What has not been resolved in 50 years cannot be settled in a matter of months. It will be a slow and laborious process. But it has to start some time soon because Kashmir has suffered for too long.

THE HINDU

- 8 MAY 2000

# Centre to examine J-K autonomy report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI, MAY 8

**A**FTER months of stony silence, the Centre has announced it would set up a high-level committee of secretaries to examine the autonomy report submitted by the Jammu and Kashmir government. The Centre's action comes in the wake of intense pressure being exerted by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah for the speedy examination and subsequent action by the BJP-led Government at the Centre on the report.

The autonomy report compiled by a high level state committee of eminent academicians led by Dr Riyaz Punjabi, a visiting professor of the Jawaharlal Nehru University recommends pre-1953 status for Kashmir, empowering districts and sub-regions and

restoring the nomenclature of Prime Minister and Sadar-I-Riyasat in the state. The committee's report endorsed by the state government and submitted to the Centre in January this year, could not have come at a more uncomfortable time for the BJP-led government, as it is in the process of initiating a fresh dialogue in Jammu and Kashmir with the separatist All Party Hurriyat Conference and other groups.

Highly placed sources in the Home Ministry said the proposed high-level committee may comprise Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary and Law Secretary who may involve experts on Kashmir and legal luminaries to comprehensively examine the report.

Getting the report examined comprehensively by a committee of secretaries appears to be an apparent bid by the Centre to gain time and space to carry out a dialogue

with other groups in Kashmir, in which autonomy is likely to figure very prominently.

Though Hurriyat and other separatist groups have so far publicly spurned any move for dialogue with the Centre within the Indian Constitution, sources close to these groups say a number of meetings have taken place through intermediaries.

A key point in any fresh dialogue in Kashmir — where Assembly elections are due in 2003 — would be the quantum of autonomy.

The Centre is likely to ascertain the views of other major political parties in the state in this regard before taking concrete steps on the report submitted by the state government.

Interestingly, a number of pro-separatist groups based in United States and United Kingdom have recently reflected on the autonomy package. These groups, like the Hur-

riyat Conference earlier, had outrightly rejected any dialogue with India on the issue.

But recently in the run up to US President Bill Clinton's historic visit to India, some of these groups, like the London-based Kashmir Watch led by Dr Siraj Shah, had called for putting a 15-year freeze on the Kashmir issue and demanded restoration of pre-1953 status for Kashmir.

Some other groups in the US have also called for an end to the violence and gun culture in Jammu and Kashmir and demanded that the state's future set up within India in a loose federation be discussed through a dialogue. The restoration of the state's pre-1953 status was the main electoral plank of the ruling National Conference in the state in the last Assembly elections, but groups like the Hurriyat have so far maintained silence on the subject.

# Militant groups warn Hurriyat over talks

By Law Kumar Mishra  
The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: Even as moves are afoot for initiating a dialogue between the Union government and the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), at least two militant groups have issued threats to the pro-talks organisations against entering into any bilateral negotiations with the government.

The warning from Al-Umar Mujahideen and Al Fateh Force came on Monday, within barely 24 hours of Union home minister L.K. Advani's visit to Srinagar. Without naming the APHC, the two groups said in separate press statements that those entering into direct talks with the government of India will be "punished".

The two militant organisations said Pakistan should be involved in any talks on the Kashmir issue. Al-Umar Mujahideen is headed by Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, who was released in December in exchange for

the hostages for the hijacked Indian Airlines plane in Kandahar.

Meanwhile, the state secretariat offices here opened on Monday after six months following the "darbar move" from Jammu. Chief minister Farooq Abdullah visited the secretariat and presided over a cabinet meeting, which decided to roll back the hike in PDS prices.

Although the day was incident-free, there was panic following the discovery of a scooter bomb opposite the police control room, 200 metres away from the state secretariat. The chief minister said necessary arrangements had been made to ward off any attacks.

Srinagar SSP B. Sreenivas told this newspaper that the militants had parked the scooter fitted with an improvised explosive device outside the control room. The scooter had earlier been stolen from the Chanpura area in the town. The explosive device was defused by the bomb disposal squad without any damage.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 MAY 2000

# Osama fans drive out J&K hostel boarders

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA 59-8

NEW DELHI, May 10. — Nearly 250 outstation students of Regional Engineering College, Srinagar, have fled the college hostel complaining of harassment by local students who they say have converted REC into an anti-India hub, and named the hostel mess after Osama bin Laden.

The students, three Muslims from Bihar among them, are on a dharna here demanding the government's immediate intervention.

Some senior students — Kashmiris — have apparently put up pictures of Maulana Masood Azhar, one of the three terrorists released to buy freedom for the passengers of IC 814, in the college.

"Our mess is named Osama bin Laden mess," said one of

the students on dharna. "Anti-India slogans appear on our classroom walls. We are forced to watch Pakistan Television. A cricket match between India and any other country decides our fate for the coming few days. If India wins the match, we are beaten up. Any disagreement between a local student and one from outside the Valley is dubbed as a confrontation between Indians and anti-Indians.

"Any cultural activity by students from outside the Valley is dubbed anti-Islamic. In one instance, the stage was set on fire and the participants beaten up."



Osama bin Laden

Some students alleged they had been continuously "ragged" over the past three years. Sometimes they were woken up in the middle of the night. During "ragging", they were asked to raise anti-India slogans, and were beaten up if they refused.

The students complained the situation had worsened in the post-Kargil period, and particularly after 35 Sikhs were massacred at Chattisinghpura during the visit of Mr Bill Clinton.

The students have been camping in Delhi for a month now. They met the human resource development minister, Mr Murli Mahonar Joshi yesterday, and have sent petitions to

the home minister, Mr LK Advani, and the home secretary, Mr Kamal Pande. But all they have got so far are "assurances".

The students have been asked by REC to get back to Srinagar, failing which they have been threatened with suspension. "But how can we go back under such circumstances? We have been requesting the authorities to absorb us in any engineering college in the country but nobody listens to us."

REC, Srinagar admits students from outside the Valley after a competitive examination. In 1997, outstation students were admitted for the first time in eight years. But in two-and-a-half years since then, their teachers have completed the syllabus for only one year. Only seven classes were held from 1 March to 17 April.

11 MAY 2000

## Centre, Hurriyat informal contacts on: Mufti

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MAY 10. Claiming that an informal channel did exist between the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and the Government of India for a resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the Peoples Democratic Party chief, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said here today that there was a real change in the perception of the BJP-led Government.

Mr. Sayeed, who has been a strong advocate of a dialogue with the militants, told a news conference that his stand had now been vindicated. "These developments are not a fluke, but a real change based on the inputs received by different agencies about the ground situation in the State", he said and denied that his revelation was based on media reports. He insisted that "this is an inside story", but clarified that he was not playing any role.

"The Government of India has realised that a bullet-for-a-bullet

policy would not yield any result. This is a vindication of our stand which we have been pressing for the last four years and which, in fact, was our election manifesto", he said.

The Mufti was optimistic about an invitation to the Hurriyat leaders for the dialogue. "For some more time, it will be more informal than formal," he said. Asked whether the militants would approve the Hurriyat stand, he said "I think it is obvious that the Hurriyat is the over-ground political front of the militants. The change in the perception of Pakistan, he said, was also positive.

Asked about the statement of the Union Home Minister, Mr.L.K. Advani on the BJP's stand that talks had to be held within the constitutional framework, he said, "it is public posturing but the reality is otherwise". The pressure for initiating a dialogue is within and not outside, said Mr.Sayeed.

BJP not for division: Page 13

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2000



# 'Hurriyat talks road to Kashmir heart'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 10. — The release of Hurriyat leaders could open opportunities for a dialogue with alienated sections in Jammu and Kashmir, the home minister told the Rajya Sabha today.

But dialogue will necessarily be within the framework of the Constitution, Mr LK Advani said, rejecting a suggestion from Mr Kuldip Nayar (Nom) that the conditions for talks could specify that a solution would have to be found within India,

but not necessarily within strict Constitutional parameters.

Mr Advani did not respond to Gen. Shankar Roychowdhury's (Ind) suggestion that it was time to consider converting the LoC into a formal border. He said India would not give up any of its territory, but did not say if he meant PoK as well.

The home minister conceded there could be no purely military solution to the J&K problem, and admitted militancy was feeding on frustration born out of a lack of development and employment avenues. But

Pakistan was playing a huge role, he said.

Kashmir was not a Hindu-Muslim issue — Pakistan had created that impression because it could not accept the realities of 1974, Mr Advani said. It had taken to a proxy war after losing in 1971, and the Kargil defeat had caused it inject more terror in the state.

Mr Advani said militancy had got a boost after forces were diverted to Kargil from the Valley, but said there was no alternative. Security forces had dealt well with the post-Kargil

terror spurt, accounting for over 900 militants since September.

Mr Advani said the government had consciously decided not to resume talking to Pakistan till it cut off support to militancy. India was playing a leading role in the international campaign against terrorism, and many countries understood why India's position. The home minister rejected generalised remarks from MPs on the violation of human rights and excesses by security forces.

11 MAY 2008

# J&K Minister, 4 others killed in explosion

10-1  
16/5  
By Shujaat Bukhari

**CHAMREN (Anantnag), MAY 15.** The Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Power, Mr. Ghulam Hassan Bhat, and four others were killed in a powerful IED explosion near Mandipore in Anantnag district this morning.

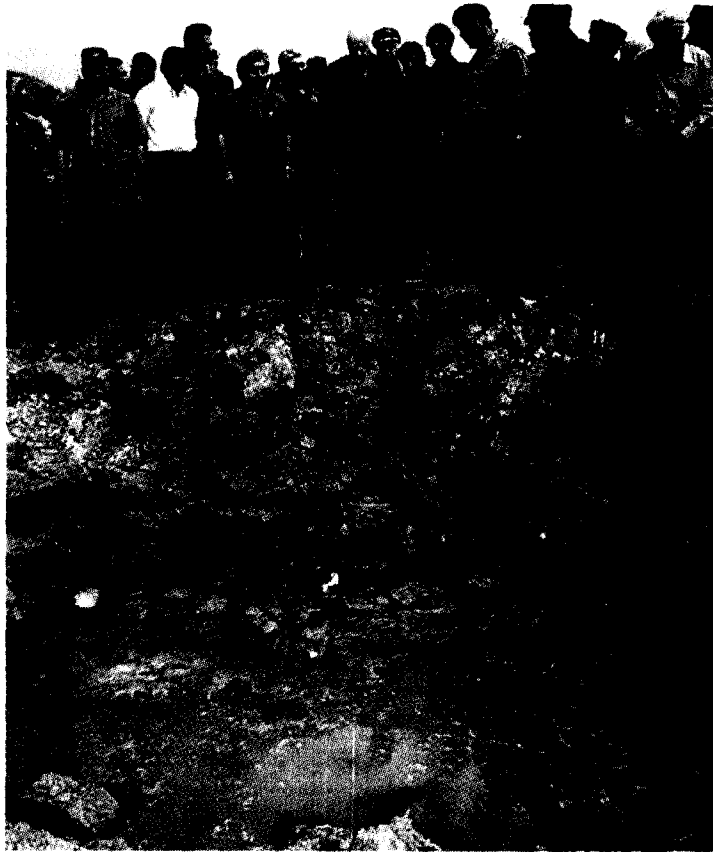
Two policemen were also injured in the blast. The pro-Pakistan militant outfit, Hizbul Mujahideen, has claimed responsibility for the blast.

According to witnesses, the 47-year-old Minister was proceeding to Srinagar in a convoy of five vehicles after spending the night at his house in Mandipore when the blast occurred around 9.55 a.m., 500 metres from his residence. As the first vehicle crossed the spot, a remote-controlled improvised explosive device (IED) was exploded, smashing the Minister's car, which was immediately behind, to pieces.

Mr. Bhat, his two personal security officers — Ghulam Qadir and Farooq Ahmed — driver, Raju Kumar, and a National Conference worker, Ghulam Mohammad Wani, were hurled into the air with such an impact that their bodies were found half a kilometre away. The explosion caused a 10-foot-deep crater. The remains of the Minister's car were scattered all over the place. A police officer at the site confirmed that RDX was used in the IED placed in a water pipe under the road.

Till late in the afternoon police personnel were seen collecting pieces of the bodies and stitching them together after identifying the dead by the clothes worn. Blood and pieces of flesh were seen strewn on the road which connects Anantnag's Dooru area with the Srinagar-Jammu national highway. This is the first time a Minister has been targeted by militants.

(According to PTI, the body of Mr. Bhat was laid to rest at his native village, Mundipora, some



**The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, along with top police officials, inspecting the spot where militants had planted an IED that killed the State Power Minister, Mr. Ghulam Hassan Bhat, at Duru village, 75 km south of Srinagar on Monday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad**

80 km from Srinagar in south Kashmir.)

Mr. Bhat, a law graduate from Aligarh Muslim University, was first elected to the State Assembly in 1996 and inducted into the Council of Ministers as Parliamentary Secretary in 1998 and later as Minister of State. Mr. Bhat's killing has been widely condemned by people from all walks of life.

Soon after news of the incident reached Srinagar, the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, his Cabinet colleagues and senior police and civil officers rushed to

Mandipore village. The Government declared a holiday and the national flag in all Government institutions was flown at half-mast.

Dr. Abdullah, expressing shock, said, "Those behind such barbaric and inhuman incidents do not want peace restored in the State. But our Army is ready to accept the challenge and will soon launch a major operation to flush out the militants."

To a question he said, "This is one example of trans-border terrorism aided by Pakistan."

THE HINDU

16 MAY 2000

The Centre's attempt to engage with the Hurriyat shows that it has no clue about Kashmir politics

# In the valley of discontent

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

HT-13  
19/5  
THE VAJPAYEE government's handling of Kashmir is becoming more and more a comedy of errors. When New Delhi released Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Professor Abdul Ghani Butt, two of the Hurriyat leaders who had been jailed in Jodhpur, L.K. Advani made a categorical offer of unconditional talks with any group in Kashmir, provided that these were held within the framework of the Indian Constitution.

Although no government spokesman had said so explicitly, Advani's remark reinforced a growing belief, both here and abroad, that the Vajpayee government was willing to resolve the dispute with Pakistan on the basis of the Line of Control, and was seeking to obtain the Hurriyat's endorsement for its position.

But the Hurriyat soon exposed the wishful thinking that lay behind this "strategy". Soon after his release, Geelani, who is the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Kashmir and president of the Hurriyat, did remark to the media that he was prepared for a partition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. But the partition he was talking about was not of the old princely state along the present LoC, but of the present Indian state of J and K in a manner that ceded the valley to Pakistan.

Significantly, not a single other leader has endorsed this suggestion. But that gave the government only a few crumbs of comfort, because Yaseen Malik, the head of the JKLF, and Shabbir Shah, head of the Peoples' Democratic Front (which is not a part of the Hurriyat), both ruled out any talks with the Indian Government within the framework of the Indian Constitution and asked for unconditional talks instead. Mirwaiz Omar Farouq, the third of the key leaders of Hurriyat, added that talks had to involve Pakistan. The other two important leaders of the Hurriyat promptly endorsed this proposal, as it was almost the only thing on which they could all agree. With that the prospect of meaningful talks with the Hurriyat disappeared in smoke and the government found itself back at square one.

Worse was to follow. No sooner did the Hurriyat leaders get back to Kashmir, than an army of diplomats descended upon them. As a result, Kashmir's internal politics have become internationalised as they never were before, and New Delhi is once again on the defensive.

All this has happened because for more than two years the Central Government has had not even the semblance of a policy towards Kashmir. The very last person to have had a clear perception of Kashmir politics and consequently a strategy for restoring peace to the state with or without Pakistan's acquiescence, was Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. Accepting the army's advice that the military part of the task of pacification had been completed and that the time for the politicians to take over, in 1994 he asked the Election Commission to start preparing for elections in the state. What followed is now history.

From the beginning Farooq Abdullah, whose National Conference won the 1996 state elections, faced an uphill task. Since Pakistan kept sending "guest militants" into the state, Abdullah could not reduce the presence of the Indian security forces. Sporadic human rights violations therefore continued. Despite that the political situation improved rapidly during the first two years of Abdullah's government as Kashmiris revelled in the return of peace. In March 1998, 55 per cent of the electorate voted in the parliamentary elections and no one complained of rigging.

By the autumn of 1998, however, the scales had begun to tilt against Abdullah once more. Allegations of corruption by his ministers and bureaucrats mounted; charges of favouritism multiplied, and the resulting seeds of discontent found fertile ground in the still alienated Kashmiri middle class. By far the worst development however was a resurgence of custodial killings and other human rights violations. These were mostly the work of the Special Operations Group of the J&K police, over which New Delhi had little control, but few Kashmiris were able to draw this distinction.

If Kashmir had ever needed another dose of political normalisation it was then. The state had 31,000 militants who had not formally surrendered but had quietly laid down their arms. Many were

keen to enter regular politics under the banner of the Hurriyat, the JKLF, the Peoples' Democratic Front, and other political formations. All that was needed was a general amnesty to turn the drift towards regular politics into a rush, and greater freedom to these organisations to agitate peacefully. Such an amnesty would also have sharply limited the capacity of criminal elements in the SOG to prey upon the former militants every time they felt the itch for money. This would have dissipated the remnants of the fear that still hangs over the valley.

To further normalise politics, the Central Government needed to lift the 15-year old ban on the JKLF which had abjured violence in 1993. This would have ended the JKLF's need to shelter under the banner of the Hurriyat in order to carry on its political activities. The Hurriyat would then have dissolved naturally into a pro-Pakistan element headed by Geelani, and pro-independence defenders of Kashmiriyat under Malik, Shabbir Shah and others.

But in 1998, Narasimha Rao's deft political touch had been replaced by the BJP's ham-fistedness. Without any understanding of the Kashmir problem, the BJP allowed Farooq Abdullah to dictate the political agenda in Kashmir. What is more, it made the mistake of allowing Abdullah to join the NDA. This made it doubly impossible for the Centre to bypass him and open a dialogue with the former militants.

As for Abdullah, he knew perfectly well that were the JKLF to enter the political fray, either on its own or as a part of the Hurriyat, it would rout the National Conference. This had happened in Assam, Mizoram and Punjab after Rajiv Gandhi's various accords in 1985. It was a near certainty in Kashmir. He, therefore, had little to gain from political normalisation.

For all of 1998-99, as Abdullah's popularity waned, the Home Ministry dithered about how to create a political alternative to the National Conference, but could come up with no answer.

Then the Kargil war closed the window for political normalisation that Narasimha Rao had opened two years earlier.

Pakistan's international isolation following its military coup, and President Bill Clinton's decisive disapproval of Pakistan's attempts to change the status by force, opened another political window in Kashmir. But the fact that the BJP is trying to hold a dialogue with Hurriyat as an organisation, and with the likes of Geelani and Butt within it, shows that it still does not understand Kashmir politics. It does not understand, or chooses to forget, that the Hurriyat is only an umbrella organisation that was set up by Pakistan in 1992 to unite the pro-Pakistan and pro-Kashmiriyat Tanzeems in a common battle against India.

While much has changed within it during the past eight years, this fundamental cleavage remains. As a result, today the Hurriyat cannot offer any assurances that would meet New Delhi's minimum needs for starting a dialogue.

New Delhi also seems to have forgotten that as of 1992, to my personal knowledge, Syed Ali Shah Geelani firmly believed that Kashmir had been stolen from Pakistan through a conspiracy by Mountbatten and Attlee with Pandit Nehru. His readiness to consider a partition of J&K that gives the valley to Pakistan shows that he has not changed his spots. New Delhi seems also to have forgotten that Mirwaiz Omar Farouq has been hosted all over the world, year after year, by the Pakistanis through a front organisation in the US. Thus whatever else he may or may not do, he is unlikely to become part of a political normalisation process that leaves Pakistan entirely out in the cold.

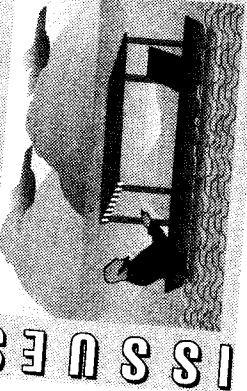
What Kashmir needs today is no different from what it needed two years ago — a general amnesty for former militants for past actions; a repeal of the ban on the JKLF, and freedom to hold political meetings, especially for those like Shabbir Shah, who have decided to take part in the democratic process, and the JKLF which has been true to its promise to abjure violence for the past seven years. And if Advani has to talk to anyone, he must talk to Shabbir Shah and Yaseen Malik. What is more, he must talk to them without pre-conditions. For it does not take a political wizard to see that were they to accept his preconditions, it would immediately destroy their political standing in the valley and open the way for more radical leaders.



THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

19 MAY 2000

DEBATE



- ▶ Is the atmosphere right for the conduct of meaningful talks on Kashmir?
- ▶ Will third party mediation be necessary?
- ▶ Can Pakistan play a role in hammering out a Kashmir solution?

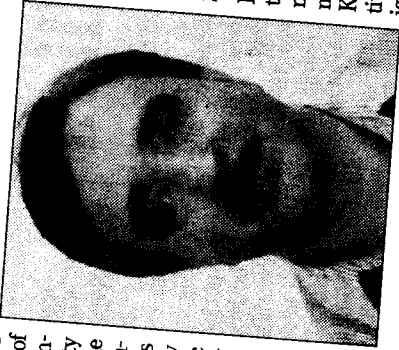
**A M Bandy**  
*Spokesman, All Parties Hurriyat Conference*

To have a solution of the vexed Kashmir problem, though very difficult, is not impossible. What will be addressed so far is the desire and accept the basic realities including historical perspective, political dynamics, and, above all, the aspirations of the people of the state.

The end of cold war has brought about a fundamental change in the concept of global security.

The resolution of various regional conflicts attained priority on the agenda of the international community with USA and its allies playing the key role. From diplomatic persuasion to military intervention, all methods were used to see various conflicts head towards some resolution. The mantra of economic globalisation boosted this process and, as a result, nations around the globe do now seem to be more interested in their economic development rather than in notions of false ego and prestige.

If seen in this context, the chances of resolution of Kashmir issue were never as bright as they are now: provided the inhibitions of cold war era and confronts the problem with an innovative and dynamic approach keeping in view the present day concepts and rules of conflict resolution. The stubborn and ostrich like attitude of successive governments in Delhi for the past fifty years have contributed only in making this problem more and more complicated. The complete absence of any genuine democratic atmosphere and the imposition of puppet regimes alienated the people and gave birth to an armed rebellion, which is going on for the last ten years. The excessive use of state coercive machinery gave rise to large scale human rights abuses resulting in the killing of thousands of people. The rape of women, custodial disappearance, extra-judicial executions,



In order to have a result oriented dialogue, the involvement of all the parties to the dispute is essential. India, Pakistan and the genuine representatives of the people of Kashmir - is essential mercenaries. The involvement of Pakistan is as essential as the involvement of India or the government of India or the Kashmiri representatives. It can be ignored that it was the government of India, as in many other states against it in United Nations way back in 1947; and since then it continues to be a party to the dispute and will remain so till a final settlement is reached. Besides, Pakistan controls one third of the territory of J&K which has also been accepted in the Simla Agreement. So hammering out a solution to the Kashmir problem can not be imagined without the participation of Pakistan. Whereas a dialogue is the only way to establish peace in the region, the process can be expedited by taking help from outside forces. Though the word 'mediation', help in starting dialogue process and then talking ahead should not be considered as an option. Whether United States of America or any other force interested in providing a helping hand to end this conflict needs to be allowed to play its part.

This is the demand of the hour and this will surely help in healing the bleeding wound of the subcontinent.

**Manyanam**  
*strategy analyst*

The real problem in Kashmir is to persuade the various dissident parties that there can be free and fair elections and Delhi is not committed to any individual or party being perpetuated in power. In Tamil Nadu once the DMK found that the elections were free and fair, and it could come to power through the ballot box, it gave up secessionism. It is quite likely that quite a few, if not all, Kashmiri dissidents would accept coming to power through free and fair elections as 'Azadi', provided they are persuaded it could happen in Kashmir.

The people of Kashmir have not had full experience of autonomous functioning as a state under the Indian Constitution and of the benefits of Panchayati Raj.

While further decentralisation of power to all states (and the state reducing its own role and increasing the role of private sector) will increase the content of autonomy all over India, most of the talk on autonomy in Kashmir is only an academic exercise so long as Kashmiris, like other states in India, are not willing to raise their own revenues and expand their tax base.

The present is a good time to initiate a dialogue. It comes in the wake of Pakistani defeat in Kargil, Pakistan's isolation and US refusal to get itself involved in Kashmir. There is enough time to persuade the Kashmiri dissidents that the next elections will be scrupulously fair. There is an opportunity to demonstrate it by holding the postponed Panchayat elections in a fair manner. There is no need for the government of India to insist that dissident leaders should commit themselves to hold talks within the framework of the Indian Constitution. They know very well that the government cannot negotiate beyond the constitutional framework and with India having entered the phase of coalition politics no government can offer anything outside the Constitution. The present international environment does not favour secessionism. Therefore the present is an opportune moment for talks without any third party mediation and without any role for Pakistan.



# Kashmir: Any solution in sight?

seems to be light at the end of the Kashmir tunnel, with possibilities of thoroughgoing between the government of India and dissident leaders. These should focus on the ing of free and fair elections and decentralisation. We present three eminent views:

**Brahma Chellaney**  
*Professor of Security Studies, CPR, New Delhi*

It is a dangerous illusion that there can be a Kashmir solution. India's objective should not be to seek a solution but to ensure peace in Kashmir. What solution can there be when militarily it is not possible to undo the division of Kashmir into three parts, with India holding 45 per cent of Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan 35 per cent and China the remaining 20?

More importantly, what solution can emerge when Pakistan continues to train, arm and infiltrate terrorists into Indian Kashmir? Also, given that the Kashmir issue is the glue that holds Pakistan together, Islamabad will never accept any solution other than a further partition of Indian Kashmir. In contrast, the future of secular, democratic, united India is closely tied to the way it handles Kashmir. India, lamentably, has allowed others to define the Kashmir problem. Internationally, the real dispute is seen as centred on the Kashmir Valley, just nine per cent of the original J&K, as if the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (POK) and China-occupied Kashmir (COK) do not matter. The illegal manner Pakistan carved out the Northern Areas from POK has gone unchallenged. So also the inspired change in the ethnic composition of POK over the past half-century. Plebiscite, according to the 1948 UN resolution, was to be a sequel, not a precursor, to Pakistan's vacation of occupied areas. Yet it is India that has been defensive on that resolution.

Pakistan's foundation has been built on hostility towards India. The flawed nature of its creation on religious grounds has ensured its implacable hostility towards India. Although Pakistan was established as a homeland for the Muslims of undivided India, more Muslims have preferred to live in India, effectively demolishing the two-nation theory. The Kashmir issue is only a tool, not the cause, of



Pakistan's hostility towards India. The offer of talks with the released Hurriyat leaders mirrors the Vajpayee government's lack of clarity. The Prime Minister has been blowing hot and cold on Pakistan, terrorism and Kashmir since he took office, making contradictory public statements and sending out confusing messages that can only harm Indian interests. For example, he pledged "zero tolerance" against terrorism in his last Independence Day speech. But within months his government capitulated to terrorists in Kandahar in a manner that will rank as one of the most shameful episodes in international diplomacy, with Jaswant Singh chaperoning the freed terrorists.

The PM talks tough on terrorism, but remains shackled to a willing-to-strike-but-afraid-to-wound policy. He has turned down simple, no-risk steps to break the back of ISI operations in India. One is to prune the bloated 120-member staff of the Pakistani mission in New Delhi to a more reasonable level. The present size provides the ISI the means to direct its operations against India from Indian soil.

Another rejected proposal is to ban PIA overflights to Kathmandu and Dhaka, both major launch pads for ISI operations in India. An Indian ban on PIA overflights would cripple ISI activities in those centres. Also spurned is the suggestion to suspend the Samjhauta Express, which instead of "samjhauta" has brought counterfeit 500-rupee Indian notes.

The release of Hurriyat leaders, the offer to hold talks on any issue with them, and the reluctance to undertake elementary steps to counter ISI-operations in India flow from the government's promises to Washington. The United States was assured that India would do nothing to escalate tensions with Pakistan and that it would create the conditions for dialogue in Kashmir. In effect, this means New Delhi will continue its reactive, defensive approach to Kashmir and allow Pakistan to go on with its "war of a thousand cuts" against India.

# MF-13 29/ Talking to thin air

New Delhi's plans to hold talks with the Hurriyat are flawed. For one, the latter is not representative of the Kashmiri people, argues NILOFAR SUHRAWARDY

**J**UGGLERS WITH political strings at their command know how to come forward with proposals that can set the people thinking. At times, however, such strings can become more than just discomfiting. The idea of the Government holding talks with All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders falls in this category.

Of late, enough hype has been created about these 'talks'. Yet, at the very outset, the idea of talks itself proved expensive for the Government as it exposed its shortcomings. This was evident in the mixed reaction — that is confusion — within the Government regarding the talks. The proposal has not been favoured by all.

If any talks are expected to prove advantageous, the Government has erred seriously. Who are these Hurriyat leaders? They have assumed prominence primarily because of the external support provided to them. This does not favour New Delhi's stance that has always been critical of external forces playing a role in solving the Kashmir problem. The situation would have been different if on some basis the Hurriyat leaders were recognised as genuine representatives of Kashmiris. But they have not been elected by any democratic means.

The political credibility of talks would have been acceptable if the Hurriyat had the potential of restraining cross-border terrorism. India's political grievances regarding Kashmir are largely in this department. Can the sponsors of terrorism be expected to be pacified by a few words the Government has with Hurriyat leaders? One would think not.

The self-appointed Hurriyat leaders have primarily given importance to steps that have helped them remain in the news. These include organising press conferences, demonstrations and strikes. These activities have not helped them to win the support of Kashmiris, particularly Kashmiri Muslims.

It is unfortunate that neither the Government nor the media has focused adequately on the attitude of Kashmiri Muslims towards the Hurriyat. Just a glance at the report of those killed in the insurgency-relat-

## PLATFORM

ed operations is sufficient to comprehend this. During the period between June 1986 and April 1997, 765 Kashmiri Pandits and 8,360 Kashmiri Muslims were killed. This data bears a close linkage with the kind of importance being assumed by cross-border terrorism. It also reflects the failure of Pakistan to win over Indian Kashmiris.

At the same time, till New Delhi wins over the confidence of Indian Kashmiris, it cannot



Taking Kashmir for a ride

be credited with any victory. The Kashmiri Muslims in India are still erroneously associated with external forces, such as terrorists, Pakistan and so on. Steps need to be taken to give Kashmiris due significance and serious attempts must be made to stop their alienation from the Indian mainstream.

Against this background, if the Government regards the talks as a major step towards winning over the confidence of Kashmiris, then it needs to revise its calculations. The situation would have been different if the Hurriyat leaders were recognised as genuine representatives of Kashmiris.

Perhaps, certain diplomatic compulsions have prompted the Government to hold talks with them. From one perspective, the holding of talks within the country without the participation of any third party bears diplomatic advantages for India. This is suggestive

of India having its own way and Hurriyat leaders being influenced significantly to the former's demands.

Perhaps the idea is to set the ball rolling for other Kashmiri parties to join negotiations with New Delhi. India's willingness to have talks with these parties is suggested by New Delhi taking a positive, confidence-building step towards these parties, including the Hurriyat. But from this angle, talks will hold diplomatic legitimacy only after they begin and continue with the involvement of other Kashmir-based parties.

In addition, without ample coverage by the international media, the Government's talks with the Hurriyat will bear little advantage at the diplomatic level. Minimal coverage will only suggest the little significance attached to this diplomatic move of India in international circles. On the other hand, such media coverage can also unnecessarily exaggerate the importance of the Hurriyat leaders and their approach towards Kashmir.

Undoubtedly, holding talks with the Hurriyat does not suggest that India is adopting a wise approach towards solving its Kashmir problem. The Hurriyat leaders cannot help India win over the confidence of the Kashmiris nor can they be expected to contribute to a cessation in cross-border terrorism. Yet, the very hype being created about the New Delhi-Hurriyat talks has pushed India into a tight corner.

Abandoning the talks would be equivalent to India throwing away the one diplomatic card that it has some chances of winning. Even if the talks are abandoned within a short period, at the diplomatic level, it would be suggestive of India's failure. It would invite criticism about India having floated a faulty proposal in the first place. This in itself would be equated with India's weak understanding of problems related to Kashmir.

Without doubt, the very idea of talks has placed India in a virtually no-win situation. Having encouraged the proposal, India cannot afford to abandon it. India has already pushed itself towards a corner which it could have avoided.

THE HINDUSTAN

24 MAY 2000



# Talking peace

**EXPRESS FOCUS KASHMIR**

The Centre and Hurriyat leaders may finally come close to a dialogue, but will that translate into a solution to the Kashmir issue? **ARUN SHARMA** reports

**T**HE Centre and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) may be laying the ground for dialogue, but restoration of peace in Kashmir still seems elusive.

This has been despite the sudden shift in the stand of the two parties for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir imbroglio. Reason: Apart from their own political compulsions, none of them has any control over militants holding the gun in the Valley. The Hurriyat has emphasised

National Conference government headed by Farooq Abdullah, though he has been frequently saying that his government was not opposed to the Centre holding a dialogue with anybody on Kashmir.

However, behind-the-scene efforts have already kickstarted in view of the recent visits of Union Home Minister L K Advani and Defence Minister George Fernandes to the Valley, as also the emergence of former State Chief Minister Syed Mir Qasim as a key player. Fernandes along with Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah called on Qasim at his residence in Kashmir recently.

Qasim, who paved the way for the installation of Sheikh Abdullah as Chief Minister by bringing about a rapprochement between him and the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1975, however, described Fer-



Yasin Malik leaving court.

nandes' visit as a courtesy call. "Though I told them what I felt about where the Centre failed on Kashmir, they said nothing, except that it was a courtesy meeting had lasted for an hour. However, when asked to comment on reports about the possibility of a dialogue between the Centre and the Hurriyat, Qasim

said, "These are not absolutely baseless. I don't want to dash all hopes to the ground." Even Advani, during his recent visit to Kashmir, had reiterated his offer of talks for restoration of peace and normalcy in the Valley. Referring to the recent release of various Hurriyat leaders, he said that the "ball is now in their court".

However, Hurriyat leaders describe Advani's statements as attempts to create divisions in the APHC. "Most of our leaders are still in jails. They (Centre) are not permitting us to meet them," said Sheikh Abdul Rashid, a Hurriyat leader.

Of the seven-member Hurriyat executive, only Sheikh Abdul Aziz is in jail at present. The others include Hurriyat chairperson Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Omar Farooq, Yaseen Malik, Professor Abdul Gani Bhat, Abdul Gani Lone and Moulvi Abbas.

Geelani said that they were ready for any workable solution, including the division of Jammu and Kashmir, provided that the solution emerged as a consensus after tripartite talks between In-

dia, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir. He, however, denied that Hurriyat was in favour of division of the state.

Rashid added that the talks necessarily had to be tripartite. "Bilateral talks between any of the parties are not going to prove fruitful like the past," he stated. "Did the 1952 Delhi agreement, 1971 Indo-Pak Shimla agreement or the 1975 Indira-Sheikh accord solve the Kashmir problem? Since parts of Kashmir are under the occupation of both India and Pakistan, the APHC wants tripartite talks for a peaceful resolution," he said.

Political observers have attributed the shift in the stand of Centre and the Hurriyat to growing international pressure for a peaceful resolution to the Kashmir problem.

However, they appeared apprehensive of their success, saying that both the parties were facing their own political compulsions and had no control over the gun-wielding militants in the Valley.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party at the Centre was not ready

to hold talks with Pakistan unless it stopped cross-border terrorism, they pointed out, while the Hurriyat could not afford to sit at the negotiation table without Pakistan's involvement. Moreover, politically, the BJP cannot afford to accept division of the state on religious lines or accept conversion of the Line of Control (LoC) into a permanent border with Pakistan.

Similarly, the Hurriyat executive has also been facing internal dissensions, with leaders like Yaseen Malik opposing the idea of division of the state. His Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has all along been advocating independence after the unification of the Jammu Kashmir State with Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Both the Centre and the Hurriyat know that restoration of peace in Kashmir is not possible until Pakistan stops aiding and abetting militancy from across the border.

However, with more and more foreign militants filtering into the state, Pakistan appears to be in no mood to let up.

## HURRIYAT:

(Continued from page 1)

that the government was not averse to talking to the Hurriyat leaders who had earlier rebuffed attempts to contact them inside Jodhpur jail.

They were told of their release yesterday soon after lunch and asked to get ready. They were driven to the airport where they boarded a Jammu and Kashmir government aircraft which would take them "home".

However, they were flown around for three hours. Initially the plane headed for Srinagar, but did not land there. It then flew to Jammu, where too they did not land, finally touching down in Delhi.

Police escorted the Hurriyat leaders to the J&K guest house in Delhi where they were kept till this morning.

They were taken to the Batra hospital for medical check-up today, where the Hurriyat's Delhi bureau and senior Hurriyat leader, Mr Abdul Ghani Lone, met them.

**Achhabal stir:** Defying curfew restrictions, residents of Achhabal town in Anantnag district today held noisy demonstrations against the killing of several villagers in police firing yesterday.

CPI-M state secretary Mr MY Tarigami today accused the district administration for the killings. "It is utter mishandling of the situation by the administration which has resulted in loss of precious human lives," he said.

ESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DELHI, April 4. — The top Hurriyat leaders who came to Delhi last night were released this morning, but were asked to stay on in

the All Party Hurriyat Centre was surprised at the government decision, saying there had been no negotiation prior to the release.

According to *The Statesman*, soon after the release of the leaders, the Hurriyat man said the group had no knowledge of the decision and had, in fact, dismissed press reports predicting the release of some leaders.

Hurriyat men had not

been released yesterday, as reported in a section of the press.

The Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, said the release was "not a casual decision". Though cross-border terrorism continues to be the main threat, if something helped the people of Kashmir, the government would not shy away from it, Mr Advani said.

The released men kept a low profile today, not willing to speculate on the implications saying they were exhausted and still had to discuss the issue.

Officials remained tight-lipped about the release, saying the decision had been taken at the highest level, an appar-

ent reference to the recent meeting between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and the J&K chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah. There is speculation that more leaders would be released from the Jodhpur jail soon.

Only three leaders, Hurriyat chairman Mr Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Maulvi Abbas Ansari and Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, have been released so far. Twelve senior leaders, including Yasin Malik, are still in jail.

The Hurriyat leadership in Delhi is likely to meet today and tomorrow to chalk out its strategy. Officials suggested

■ See HURRIYAT: page 8

THE STATESMAN

5 APR 2000

## Agony of Kashmir

THE FALLOUT from the Chittisinghpura massacre in Kashmir has been no less distressing than the tragedy itself. As the death of seven people in police firing in Anantnag on Monday has shown, the diabolic purpose of the militants in provoking fresh disturbances and violence has been served to a considerable extent. There was really more to the earlier massacre than the mere gunning down of defenceless people to coincide with the Clinton visit and proving that Kashmir remains a dangerous place. As always, a related objective was to provoke retaliation from the security forces of a kind which will create panic and resentment among the local people. It is no secret that the aftermath of such killings by the terrorist groups can be quite traumatic for the residents who have subsequently to undergo intensive interrogation.

The terrorists, of course, flee after committing their evil deed, leaving the innocent survivors and their neighbours to bear the brunt so that they become increasingly disillusioned about their safety and resentful about the behaviour of the security forces. Even in the best of circumstances, the presence of the police and paramilitary forces at a place of disturbance can be quite unnerving for the local people. In all these years, the Indian police has never quite been able to shed its colonial legacy of high-handed behaviour. In Kashmir, the situation on the ground is much worse because the security forces live and work in an atmosphere surcharged with tension and mistrust. They cannot be blamed if their nerves are almost always on edge because they have to deal with brain-washed *jehadis* whose sole purpose is to kill indiscriminately and harass the defenders of the innocent people beyond the point of endurance.

Given the extreme conditions, therefore, in which the security forces have to function, there is need to ensure that the crowd control measures are closely monitored by senior officials. What happened in Anantnag will only become clear when the report of the inquiry by a judicial magistrate becomes available. It is quite possible that the militants in the crowd opened fire so that the police had to respond. But Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah is already on record saying that excessive force was used. The authorities will also have to ascertain how justified is the complaint of the locals about the disappearance of 10 villagers in the past few days, which led to the demonstration in Anantnag. Since the militants tend to get mileage from such "disappearances", the security forces will have to be extra vigilant in ensuring that they do not play into the hands of the terrorists by alienating the locals in any way.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 APR 2000



# Tripartite talks Hurriyat's terms for peace

AUNOHITA MOJUMDAR  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 5. — The All Party Hurriyat Conference today said it is ready to request guerrilla groups to lay down arms, provided the Centre announces willingness for result-oriented talks, Pakistan being the third party.

The Centre too is prepared to talk to Kashmir's terrorists "on every demand, legitimate or perverse," if they give up violence, PTI quoted the home minister as saying. The Centre, Mr Advani said, had made

its gambit by releasing three top Hurriyat leaders yesterday.

One of them, Mr. Abdul Ghani, said that once India, Pakistan and Hurriyat sit down for talks and make a joint appeal to "the boys (terrorists) ... they will have to lay down arms". But the end to violence, he said, can't be one-sided. Indian forces too must go.

He said Pakistan must be involved in the talks. "If Hurriyat leaders are allowed to go

to Pakistan and talk to the leadership, bridges of understanding will come up; doors of accommodation will open up." If the three parties can meet across the table, there will be no need for a mediator.

The Hurriyat, however, was officially non-committal on Mr Advani's statements. Its chairman, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, said if the Centre makes a formal

talks offer, the Hurriyat executive will discuss it. But some Hurriyat leaders said Mr Advani's remarks prove the Centre is "finally taking cognisance of ground realities",

including the danger of an atomic conflict in the region.

**Curfew:** The curfew clamped after the Barakpora police firing, which killed seven people, continued in south Kashmir for the third day today without any relaxation, reports UNI.

**Pak firing:** Barakote along LoC in Poonch last night came under Pakistani firing and shelling, which injured a villager. Fire was exchanged elsewhere across the LoC.

## KASHMIR PROBES

BARAMULLA, April 5. — The Anantnag firing and Chatti Singhpora massacre will be probed by the same Supreme Court judge, Mr Farooq Abdullah said today. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

6 APR 2011

# Wanted: Fresh start in Kashmir

HT-11  
674  
AFTER PRESIDENT Bill Clinton's visit to Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf has lost no time in making an unconditional offer to hold talks with India on the Kashmir issue. At about the same time, Pakistani newspapers flashed the story that the former Pakistan High Commissioner to India, Niaz Naik, was going to Delhi to try and restart the back door diplomacy that had been interrupted by Kargil. New Delhi turned down Gen Musharraf's offer and reiterated its stand that Pakistan must stop cross-border terrorism if it wants to restart the dialogue. It also refused to allow Mr Naik to see any senior official in New Delhi, let alone the Prime Minister, while he is here.

On the surface this looks like the repeat of an old story: Pakistan, whose position on Kashmir is basically unreasonable, makes a bid for international sympathy by appearing reasonable and flexible. India, whose basic position on Kashmir is reasonable, risks losing sympathy by appearing imperious and rigid. Small wonder then that New Delhi has dismissed Pakistan's initiative as another public relations exercise.

This may well be all it is, but there is a possibility that it is not. Relations between the two countries are so tense that New Delhi cannot afford not to explore this possibility further. Logically, India's stance, that it will not resume the dialogue till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorist attacks, cannot be faulted. One has only to reflect on Musharraf's contention that Pakistan is not sending the *jihadis*, does not control them, and so cannot stop their attacks in Kashmir, to see that it destroys the very basis for any talks between India and Pakistan. If the Pakistani state cannot control the *jihadis* now, it cannot give any assurance that it will be able to control them after the two sides have reached an agreement. Thus, India would really find itself negotiating not with Pakistan but with the *jihadis* through Pakistan. That is not an acceptable proposition. But if we can see the flaw in Musharraf's position, it is most unlikely that he and his advisers in the foreign office are not conscious of it.

Indeed, as President Clinton's remarks in Delhi and Islamabad showed, the Americans are conscious of it too. So what is Musharraf's game in sticking to a manifestly self-contradictory position? One answer is that it could be a cry of despair:

## Can Musharraf stop the *jihadis*, asks PREM SHANKAR JHA

Musharraf may be saying that he is not in control of developments in Pakistan, and that the real power resides with a number of superhawks in the military establishment. Thus, all he can do to defuse the situation is to offer talks and hope that India's acceptance will strengthen his hands sufficiently to start the process of military detente. This is a plausible hypothesis, and there are many in New Delhi who entertain it and support the resumption of talks with Pakistan even without a cessation of cross-border terrorism.

But this hypothesis is too convenient. It fails to reflect the complex situation that prevails in Pakistan and the way in which power is actually distributed, between not only elements of the military, but also between the military and civilian establishments, and the intelligentsia. A more realistic assessment would be that Musharraf's initiative reflects

the conflict between the different imperatives that Pakistan is labouring under today. If that is so, then Musharraf is not speaking on his own behalf as one of the few moderate holdovers in an increasingly Islamised military officer core, but for the Pakistani "national security" establishment as a whole.

The predicament in which this establishment finds itself is unenviable. Even more than President Clinton's blunt words, the circumstances surrounding his visit to Pakistan — the elaborate security arrangements, the care the US took to rub home the difference between it and his visit to India, and his uncharacteristically sombre "body language" in Pakistan — have forced Pakistan's rulers to come

to terms with their country's isolation in the world today. For Indians, having the world's major powers ranged against it is not a new experience. But for Pakistan isolation is psychologically devastating, for it has relied on outside support to bolster its self-confidence and political viability from its birth.

In contrast to the Congress, which had to fight the British for India's Independence, the Muslim League had Pakistan handed to it by the British upon a platter. After Independence, Pakistan



Pakistan is witnessing a competition between Islamic factions to outdo each other in Kashmir that the ISI is barely able to control

joined a succession of anti-Soviet alliances mainly to acquire political and military leverage in its dealings with India. During the Afghan war it supported the US' strategic goal of turning it into a Vietnam for the Soviet Union at immense cost to itself, because this helped it to acquire a mighty arsenal of modern arms, most of which could be deployed only against India, and gave it the leverage to make the US look the other way while it acquired the technology and equipment for turning itself into a nuclear power.

For almost a decade after the Cold War ended, it got the US to turn a blind eye to its instigation of insurgency in Kashmir, by dangling the carrot of access to Central Asia before the State Department's eyes. This tacit support began to be withdrawn in 1997 but Pakistan continued to deceive itself till the Kargil war. True international isolation is thus an entirely new and terrifying experience for most Pakistanis.

The vulnerability that Pakistanis feel is compounded many-fold by its economic fragility. For

Pakistan is groaning under foreign debt it cannot repay without IMF help and the state is nearly bankrupt. Its military establishment therefore knows that it can neither sustain a war against India, nor seriously contemplate the risk of using nuclear weapons to offset India's conventional advantage.

It heard President Clinton remind it that "this era does not reward people who struggle in vain to redraw borders with blood", and that Pakistan "may grow even more isolated" if it tried. It would be surprising indeed if it were not, therefore, yearning for some honourable way of drawing back from its engagement in Kashmir. But its options, which were already narrow enough before the Kargil war, have been narrowed further by the ISI's partial loss of control over the *jihadis*.

For their own reasons, both the Nawaz Sharif government and the Pakistan army falsely ascribed the Kargil operation to Islamic militants. They and the political parties that backed them, therefore, became the beneficiaries of the wave of patriotism that Kargil released in Pakistan. The belief Musharraf has fostered, that Pakistan could have won a great campaign in Kargil but was betrayed by Nawaz Sharif, has added to their lustre. For the (civilian) leaders of the various *jehadi* factions, exploits by their cohorts in Kashmir have become a ready passport to political power in Pakistan. Pakistan is therefore witnessing a competition between Islamic factions to outdo each other in Kashmir that the ISI is barely able to control. And this is dragging both countries towards a war that neither wants.

New Delhi is therefore right to insist that Musharraf should bring these factions to heel. Its assessment that Musharraf can stop them in their tracks is also undoubtedly correct, for he demonstrated it during the Clinton visit. But to stop the *jihadis* from coming into Kashmir he will have to crush their organisations in a military crackdown. But a military crackdown would be irreversible. Not only would it make the *jihadis* turn against the Pakistan Government, but it would deprive Pakistan of the only leverage that it still has for bringing India to the negotiating table. Musharraf would therefore be most reluctant to take such a drastic step against the *jihadis* until after he has arrived at an acceptable settlement with India.

(To be concluded)

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

26 APR 2001

# Talks within Indian Constitution limits unacceptable: Hurriyat

## J&K leaders dismissive of Govt's dialogue offer

Arun Joshi  
Jammu, April 6

THE ALL-Party Hurriyat Conference has rejected Union Home Minister Lal Krishan Advani's offer of talks saying the proposal for talks within the Constitution of India was "unacceptable".

Maulvi Abbas Ansari, one of the three leaders of the secessionist conglomerate who arrived in Srinagar today, told *The Hindustan Times* that there was no question of bilateral talks with the Indian government. Mr Ansari said: "The question does not arise", when asked if the Hurriyat will respond to offer of talks by the Home Minister.

"Do you think we sacrificed 70,000 lives for the bilateral talks", he said. "This is not the problem concerning only the Indian occupied Kashmir but also the area under Pakistan's control. We can serve as a bridge to resolve the issue". Listing his objections to make any response to the offer made by Mr. Advani, the Hurriyat leader said: "We have rejected the (bilateral) talks in the past and there was absolutely no question of changing the stand now. There can be no talks if the conditions of the talks within the Constitution of India are attached".

Mr Advani while making the

offer of talks yesterday had also that talks should precede cessation of violence.

Mr Ansari recalled that the bilateral Indo-Pak talks had not resolved the Kashmir issue. He touched upon the Nehru-Liyaqat Ali and Simla Agreement, which he noted, did not resolve the crisis. Nor did the Delhi Agreement, Sheikh-Indira accord or Farooq-Rajiv accord bring peace in Kashmir, he pointed out.

He said that it was pointless to talk bilaterally. "There should be either tripartite talks or right to self-determination for the people of Kashmir".

Ansari discounted all reports that they were released after some understanding with the Union Home Ministry. "This is media disinformation. Sisters were not allowed to meet brothers in (Jodhpur) jail", he said.

Meanwhile, there is no enthusiasm among the political leaders here over the reported move of the Union Government to open a dialogue with the secessionist leadership for restoration of peace in the troubled Kashmir Valley. Their view is that the offer has nothing extraordinary in it to convince the people about any positive development in the near future.

Leaders of various political parties are convinced that it is a marriage of convenience forced upon

the BJP-led Government at the Centre and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference by the international community rather any outcome of the voluntary effort.

They view this development as a result of the pressure mounted by the US President Bill Clinton during his visit to India and Pakistan last month. State BJP president Daya Krishan Kotwal feels "this is a routine offer." According to him what Union Home Minister L.K. Advani has offered makes not much of a shift. He pointed out that the Home Minister's offer contains significant conditions: abjure violence and talk within the parameters of the Indian Constitution. "So what is the change," he asked and declared: "If the Centre acts in a manner that goes against the interests of the people of the State, we will oppose that." Sheikh Abdul Rehman, who heads the State unit of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) said that Mr Clinton's influence is quite visible in the matter.

Congress leaders refused to comment on the issue, but said that if the dialogue within the Indian Constitution is possible, it should be undertaken but national interests should not be compromised.

The ruling National Conference leaders see it as yet another attempt by Delhi to undermine the party and party leadership.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 APR 2002

# Hurriyat leaders want Pak role in talks with govt



**HOMEWARD BOUND:** A Kashmiri woman and her child walk home in Anantnag after authorities relaxed a curfew in southern Kashmir on Thursday

AFP

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 6 APRIL

**E**VEN AS the Hurriyat Conference remains firm on its condition of involving Pakistan as a third party in its talks with the Union government on Kashmir — its leaders on Thursday asked for a ceasefire between the Indian security forces and the militant outfits in the Valley to create a conducive atmosphere for the dialogue — the Centre is viewing their stance with a strong feeling of *deja vu*.

Officials here are reassured that the tough stand of the three released Hurriyat leaders — chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani and executive members Abdul Gani Bhat and Maulana Abbas Ansari — is mere public posturing given the hype they have created among the Kashmiri people, who they claim to represent, regarding their demand for the right of self-determination. According to a Union home ministry official, it is but a con-

vention with militant groups to adopt an unyielding position before opening a channel of communication with the government.

Drawing a parallel with the case of the Naga outfit, NSCN(IM), which started with demanding secession but later entered into a ceasefire with the security forces in the state while continuing peace talks abroad, the official hoped that the Hurriyat too owed it to the Kashmiri people not to climb down from its stated position so easily. But with time, the official added, the leadership would be able to convince the people about the need to soften their stance and come forward for talks within the basic parameters of the Constitution.

It goes without doubt that this "climbdown" would be a gradual process. And to ensure that its channels of communication remain open, the government will release the remaining Hurriyat detainees at regular intervals starting with Yasin Malik who is expected to be freed in a few days.

*The Economic Times*

7 APR 2000

## 11-14 The Kashmir Answer

Even though it seems as if a political solution is a considerable distance away — India and Pakistan are refusing to talk to each other and the secessionist All-Parties Hurriyat Conference insists that it will not enter into any bilateral dialogue with New Delhi — imaginative thinking and bold moves by the Centre can help to break the logjam. The first step that must be taken immediately is for the government to bring an end to the often insensitive and sometimes illegal behaviour of the security forces in the Kashmir valley. Although the Army tends to behave in an exemplary fashion — jawans who cross the line are invariably punished — the same cannot be said for the Border Security Force and the various state-level police and paramilitary outfits. A case in point was the wholly unwarranted firing at protesters in Anantnag earlier this week in which seven people were shot to death and many others injured. The protest itself was the result of another shooting case which is thought to have involved innocent civilians: the March 25 'encounter' killing of five persons the security forces claimed were terrorists responsible for the Chittisinghpura carnage. Prima facie, the security forces' case against the five seems weak, especially given the 'coincidental' disappearance of five villagers in the vicinity of the 'encounter' a day earlier. Chief minister Farooq Abdullah has done well by ordering the bodies of the five to be exhumed for DNA testing. The government must now ensure that the testing is done promptly and accurately. In the event that foul play is established, adequate compensation must immediately be paid to the families of the murdered men and those guilty of the shooting should be prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Conditions may not exist today for the government to explore various political options with outfits like the Hurriyat but a greater sensitivity to human rights would certainly help to restore the confidence of ordinary Kashmiris.

In an interview with this newspaper on Thursday, leaders of the Hurriyat stated that only tripartite talks between India, Pakistan and "genuine representatives" of the Kashmiri people would produce a solution. They pronounced themselves against the opening of a bilateral dialogue with New Delhi that excludes Pakistan but did say that the Kashmir issue should be resolved without the involvement of Washington. Given the ever-present danger of terrorist assassination, it is unreasonable to expect the Hurriyat leadership publicly to sound conciliatory. That is why the Vajpayee government's insistence on unrealistic preconditions — such as the militants accepting the Indian Constitution — before dialogue can begin seems unduly restrictive. India has an excellent record of opening negotiations with militants of all sorts and there is no reason for Kashmir to be an exception. Kashmir may have an international dimension given Pakistan's involvement and interest but New Delhi should remember that there are diplomatic processes by which even seemingly insurmountable hurdles have been crossed. The once intractable Irish question is heading towards a solution and Turkey and Greece have also begun to mend fences. What is needed in Kashmir is a vocabulary which will allow both India and Pakistan to talk and for all sections of the Kashmiri people to have their concerns addressed. For years, the country has grappled with what has come to be called the 'Kashmir Question'. It is time the government moved towards finding the answer.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

67 APR 2000

# Kashmir: Is this the beginning of the end?



SEEMA MUSTAFA

Everyone has an agenda on Kashmir. For India it is an integral part of the country. For Pakistan it should have been governed by Islamabad. For Washington it is a disputed territory. For the Hurriyat it is theirs. For the world it is a nuclear flash-point.

Three wars have been fought by Pakistan and India over it. Both have exercised the nuclear option for it. Both have torn apart the fabric of bilateral relations over it. Both are keeping a finger on the button for it. And both have now turned towards Washington to help resolve it.

Over the last two years in particular, the government of India, wittingly or otherwise, has allowed Kashmir to cross over from the domestic domain into the international arena. The decision to go nuclear was the first step towards this, and it is difficult to believe that the government had no idea about the political ramifications of such a step. And that it really believed that its ability to explode the nuclear bomb would silence an awestruck world, terrify neighbouring Pakistan, and establish India as a regional power in control of its own destiny.

If the Vajpayee government really believed this then its naivete alone is very dangerous as such a government cannot really be responsible for its actions. And, if on the other hand, it knew what it was doing then the plot becomes even more sinister for the government then was deliberately setting into place a scenario that, to put it mildly, was completely contrary to the national consensus and national interest. Either way the government cannot justify its decision which has harmed the interests of India in more ways than one.

One, it has put India and Pakistan at par. Earlier India had the decided advantage of conventional war superiority. Today, the nuclear option has placed the small neighbour on equal status with the great democracy. India is struggling to get world recognition for its nuclear achievements, but this has not been forthcoming. Not even from new friend and natural ally US President Bill Clinton who has refused to even entertain the suggestion of parity between India and the Nuclear

Five.

Two, it has brought Kashmir into direct focus. And given the right to the world to intervene in what India had always maintained was her own business. Now the picture being drawn very effectively by the US for the world is of two Third World, poor, primitive countries who have the bomb. And like the poor, underprivileged part of the world neither has the sense of responsibility to be able to exercise restraint. And hence, it is for the civilized, developed world to take control and ensure that the two warring neighbours are kept in check. In the interest of global peace. So Kashmir is now described as the most dangerous spot in the world, and the US has given

The Hurriyat has gone one step further this time by projecting itself as a sort of arbiter between India and Pakistan. And has sought to replace an international mediator by offering its 'good offices' to facilitate the tripartite dialogue. An interesting development, considering the fact that the Hurriyat has been propped up, nurtured and cared for over the years not just by Pakistan, but more by the US. And that the Hurriyat representatives were received very deliberately by President Clinton at the White House just before his departure for the subcontinent

itself the mandate to push both the Islamic and Hindu right nations towards peace. Not through mediation, just through therapeutic counselling.

Three, it has created tensions that has put the entire focus of India's foreign policy on Pakistan. To the extent that the nation has given up its regional aspirations completely to focus just on the neighbour. And in the process has equated itself almost irrevocably with the tiny country across the Line of Control, a major departure from the role that India had carved out for itself in the region, in Asia and in the world. Today, even the Saarc initiative has been aborted at Delhi's insistence just because Pakistan is a recog-

nised member. Foreign policy now has become Islamabad centric with the government defining its friends and foes on the basis of their policy towards Pakistan.

And then there are the offshoots. The Vajpayee government has used the recent months of tension and conflict in at least two interesting ways. One, it has used terrorism, Kashmir et al to steer the country towards a direct alliance with the US. To discard what many here now feel are the outdated principles of non-alignment for a direct alliance with the US. As a junior and faithful partner. The proud democracy is now, in the name of the BJP brand of nationalism, standing with folded hands, pleading for acceptance by the superpower as one of its own. Globalisation, democracy are the common mantras used effectively by both governments to establish new ties and keep differences on non-proliferation in suspended animation for the moment.

The second offshoot is domestic, and hence very dangerous for the people of India. Terrorism, Pakistan, Osama bin Laden are the manifestations of the bearded face of Islamic fundamentalism. Created and projected by the US (after all, the Taliban was its creation) and now being effectively used by the Vajpayee government to give vent to its anti-minority bias within India. The crackdown on supposed ISI agents, for instance, is immediately linked to the Muslim community within India as the RSS magazines *Panchjanya* and *Organiser* draw the picture in all its details for their avid readership. The Kashmir Valley has become "Muslim" not just for the Hurriyat and the militants, but also for the government of India. And in this, as recent history has shown us, are made to lie the seeds of communal strife and discord. To be exploited at will by those who believe in a theocratic state, and for whom the plurality and diversity of India is a major irritant to be tolerated until such time that the end is realised.

After all, the Hindu right wing forces had opposed the accession of Kashmir to India. Just as had the Islamic fanatics on both sides of the border. The communal forces operating at the time of Independence and Partition knew that this one act would strengthen the secular sentiment in India, and help those who wanted to establish the new Republic as a secular state. And that it would take away from the Hindu fanatics fighting for a Hindu *rashtra*, and erode the argument of the Muslim communalists seeking to justify the creation of Islamic Pakistan.

The tragedy today is that if the agenda has remained unfulfilled

for all of Muslim Pakistan, it remains incomplete also for the successors of the Hindu Mahasabha and the right wing Hindu groups who had vehemently opposed the accession of Kashmir at that time. It can only be hoped that the RSS and the BJP, the rightful inheritors of this school of thought, have given up on unrealised ambitions and are being guided by the national consensus and not a hidden agenda on this very vital and sensitive issue.

The "private" part of Clinton's visit to the region is now unfolding. The Hurriyat leaders have been released. Even hardline Advani has announced his decision to talk to those whom he had dubbed as anti-national

Over the last two years in particular, the government of India, wittingly or otherwise, has allowed Kashmir to cross over from the domestic domain into the international arena. The decision to go nuclear was the first step towards this, and it is difficult to believe that the government had no idea about the political ramifications of such a step. And that it really believed that its ability to explode the nuclear bomb would silence an awestruck world, terrify neighbouring Pakistan, and establish India as a regional power in control of its own destiny

just a while ago. Now they are just dissidents, not militants or terrorists. The Foreign Office is silent, except for rejecting a half hearted offer by Pakistan's Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, for talks. And hence creating some confusion as to whether the proposed talks with the Hurriyat will be bilateral or tripartite.

Advani, who is the only minister speaking on the issue at the moment, has sought to convey the impression that the dialogue with the Hurriyat will be with Delhi. Not by actually saying so, but through the fact that he has no jurisdiction in matters across the national boundaries. The Hurriyat leaders, on the other hand, are equally clear

that they will participate only in a meaningful dialogue through which a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue can emerge. And this, they have said, can only be through a tripartite dialogue involving Islamabad as well.

The Hurriyat has gone one step further this time by projecting itself as a sort of arbiter between India and Pakistan. And has sought to replace an international mediator by offering its "good offices" to facilitate the tripartite dialogue. An interesting development, considering the fact that the Hurriyat has been propped up, nurtured and cared for over the years not just by Pakistan, but more by the US. And that the Hurriyat representatives were received very deliberately by President Clinton at the White House just before his departure for the subcontinent.

There are three broad options on Kashmir that have emerged through governments, think tanks, official and unofficial channels over the last few years. One option on Kashmir of course favours the status quo. A position that India is officially advocating. The second favours the division of Jammu and Kashmir along religious-ethnic lines. In that the Valley goes to Pakistan and Leh, Ladakh and Jammu remain with India (along with Muslim pockets within). This finds favour with Islamabad and an influential section of the Hurriyat whose leaders privately claim that this seems to be the "most feasible" option. However, leaders like Yasin Malik are opposed to this and stand for an independent Kashmir.

So does Washington. If think tank reports are any indication then the present thinking in the US favours an independent state of Kashmir. A variation is independent Kashmir jointly administered by both India and Pakistan, at least in matters of defence.

The option for India is only one, the first. Advani has said that the discussions will be within the framework of the Indian Constitution. And hence, talks on Kashmir cannot lead to any other solution except the complete and total integration of the Valley with the rest of India. The government should use the dialogue with the Hurriyat to strengthen this position, to set into motion a process whereby the grievances of the people of Kashmir are addressed and rectified and maximum autonomy for the state is granted.

The Hurriyat and the RSS share serious differences over this, but then there can be no other solution to the problem. At least no other solution if the determining factor is India's interests as defined by consensus and the Constitution.

## HURRIYAT TALK

5/8/98  
Between Abdullah and Jihad 9/8/98

**F**AROOQ Abdullah government in Srinagar just about sums up the Union government's political approach to Kashmiris. Democracy triumphs, the army takes care of the rest. This was considered inadequate by the local population as was demonstrated during the last general elections when the percentage of voters in the three districts of Srinagar, Anantnag and Baramulla fell to 12, 14 and 28 respectively, from 35, 50 and 41 in 1996. The precipitous decline in participation in all Muslim majority assembly segments was despite the robust methods employed by the army to get voters to the polling booths. The Hurriyat was held responsible for sabotaging the elections, an accusation that may do them some credit in the eyes of the people of the valley, and the entire leadership was taken to Jodhpur jail where, Farooq hoped, they would stay and rot. It is easy to blame the Hurriyat: the people did not vote because, after having given three more years to Abdullah, they didn't see the point. Hurriyat has clout in the valley, it does represent a substantial section of Kashmiri opinion and the fact that it stays out of normal political processes makes the idea of Indian democracy in Jammu and Kashmir less than perfect. But it is also certain that it benefits enormously every time the National Conference fails to deliver, which is often enough.

Abdullah, meanwhile, has fished out his party's autonomy agenda in the form of a report lying around for a year. He wants a return to the pre-1953 status. He understands that his collaboration with the Centre — without central assistance, Jammu and Kashmir would collapse — makes him look like a quisling and that may bother him. But he also knows that he is indispensable to India's scheme of things. It also gives him a certain degree of leverage with the Centre. However, this exclusive reliance on the National Conference to push India's case with the Kashmiris is not healthy for either side. It may short-circuit genuine democracy, leave too much power in Abdullah's hands, perpetuate the military's role and take no account of anything that militates against India's presence in the valley. Releasing the Hurriyat leaders at this juncture restores the balance within Kashmiri politics. It is the only opposition that Abdullah knows and may be used to keep his aspirations — whatever they may be — in check. The other good reason for releasing them is that the non-mainstream voice which, in the vacuum that followed the arrests, may have been in danger of being adopted by fundamentalist *mujahideen*, will be brought back to relatively moderate forms of political expression. It is also a good thing to do on merits. //

THE STATESMAN

5 8 APR 2000

8 APR 2000

35-10  
9/4

# Heat in J&K House over autonomy report

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, April 8. — The Jammu and Kashmir Assembly again witnessed a heated exchange of words and a boycott by members of the Opposition today on the issue of autonomy for the state.

Trouble began when the state Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr PL Handoo, stood up to move a motion for discussion on the State Autonomy Report tabled in the House on 13 April last year.

In its meeting on 15 March, the state Cabinet had discussed the report and decided that it could be discussed in the House along with a proposed resolution endorsing the earlier decision to continue a ministerial committee which would initiate a dialogue with the Government of India on recommendations of the report.

The Cabinet also decided that this committee would visit Delhi and other state capitals for discussions at the minister-

ial level. It decided that an all-party meeting would be convened in Srinagar to discuss the recommendations of the report in June 2000.

As the law minister stood up to move the motion, members of the ruling party stood up as well, and accused the law minister of trying to rush through the report in a non-serious manner.

## FAROOQ PLEA

JAMMU, April 8 — J&K chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah has asked the international community, especially the Organisation of Islamic Countries, to put pressure on Pakistan to desist from aiding terrorism in the state. Addressing officers of the National Defence Academy last evening, the chief minister said Pakistan would realise the futility of being hostile to India and urged it to foster a spirit of friendship. — SNS

The State Autonomy Committee report could not be taken up for discussion as the NC MLAs, Mr Mohammad Shafi Bhat, Mr Suharward and Mr Dilawar Nir accused Mr Handoo of causing a "deliberate delay" in presenting a motion in the House to discuss

the report.

Mr Shafi Bhat and the law minister exchanged heated words with the former alleging that Mr Handoo had always tried to mislead Dr Farooq Abdullah. He said the law minister had deliberately kept the discussion on the report on the second-last day of the Assembly.

THE STATESMAN

• 9 APR 2000



# Massacre continues to haunt Anantnag

Arun Joshi  
Anantnag, April 9

WHY DID it happen to us? The people here direct this question to the visiting journalists as this southern Kashmir district grapples with the shock of mourning for the past three weeks.

Nazir Ahmad's eyes are swollen. His brother Zahoor went missing on March 23 and on April 6 he discovered his clothes in a grave. Next day he brought home a charred body that was beyond recognition. The whole town joined him on Tuesday midnight to bury the dead.

That was a clear defiance of the curfew. The people were mourning the dead in Momminabad on the outskirts here on Friday night and were the villagers in Hallan and Brari Angan. The question was

the same: "why did it happen to us". Though officially the real identity of the bodies depends on the outcome of the DNA tests, the townsfolk here are convinced that these were the missing villagers who were exhumed from the graves where they were buried on March 25 following what security forces claimed was a fierce encounter with militants.

Abu Mahas, one of the prominent militants who was claimed killed in encounter and buried, himself went to the people a day later and asked them: "why did you bury me, when I am alive". That was the spark that triggered demonstrations with people suspecting that civilians were killed and buried by the security forces.

The police do not agree with this version. But they concede that there is a prima facie case that a

crime has been committed. The police officers are unable to report anything officially, but the report that they are preparing to submit to the court of the Chief Judicial Magistrate here tomorrow endorses the public perception. "Law will take its course", G. Peer, new Deputy Commissioner of this district, said while refusing to comment on the likely content of the report. He also refused to speculate as to what would be the likely directions of the court. "I will abide by the directions of the court and do the needful".

The inquiry officer, Mr Rehman Sheikh, Deputy Superintendent of Police headquarters, refused to say anything. "Sorry, I cannot tell anything", he says attempting to be as polite as is possible for an officer who has been working for the past week trekking mountains

supervising exhumation of bodies and now preparing the report which should stand the legal scrutiny.

What is confronting the police here is the crisis of credibility. "Our word is not trusted by the people here", said a middle rung police officer here. So many things have happened so swiftly in the district that the police find that overlapping of events has shaken its credibility. First, it was the massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chitti Singhpora followed by an encounter in Pathribal where five persons were killed, who now in the public perception were the ordinary villagers and not even remotely connected to militancy. The protests followed by the relatives and fellow villagers of the missing people and the firing on one such procession that left eight persons dead.

The investigating police officers are not getting co-operation from the people.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 APR 2000

## VALLEY TALK 10

The announcement that New Delhi had opened up lines of communication with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference reflects changing views on the Kashmir question by almost all the parties concerned. The relationship between the inhabitants of the valley and the Centre is so entangled that no one should expect radical developments, let alone positive ones, from this tentative resumption of talks about talks. Kashmir can be expected to continue to reel under the most intense wave of militancy it has experienced since the mid-Nineties. And the alienation of Kashmiris, only fuelled by incidents like the recent killing of five villagers by security forces in Anantnag, is unlikely to be stemmed in the immediate future, let alone reversed. Nonetheless, New Delhi is doing the right thing in approaching the APHC.

The shifting snows in Kashmir are being blown by several winds. New Delhi recognizes that while Pakistani infiltrated militants have played a major role in the rise of militancy this is not the sole reason. The number of Kashmiri locals joining insurgency groups has started to increase. The Bharatiya Janata Party also believes the rekindling of local support for militancy cannot be contained so long as the National Conference government of Mr Farooq Abdullah remains in power in Srinagar. Unfortunately, until now, there has been no serious alternative ruler for Kashmir. The APHC, for its part, was dealt a major blow during Mr Bill Clinton's visit to India. Its members have long clung to the hope the international community would one day deliver on its rhetorical commitment on the right of Kashmiri self-rule. The United States president took great pains to avoid terms like "self-determination" or speaking of the need for a Kashmiri solution to take into account the desires of Kashmiris. Mr Clinton's message: in a nuclearized environment, self-determination must play second fiddle to stability and lowering tensions. Washington is now committed to the *status quo* in Kashmir. The result has been to push the APHC's more moderate members to seek some accommodation with India. There is another angle. India is tilting towards talks because it accepts that in a nuclearized environment the present situation in Kashmir is untenable. In the long term this means India must find a solution in Srinagar. If the APHC's moderates prove amenable, they may yet prove to be the nucleus of a National Conference alternative.

There is much mileage to cover. BJP leaders have already ruled out any return to the pre-1953 status in the state. As an autonomy package is essential to any negotiated settlement, this has already put a huge spoke in the wheel. Two official committees have recently filed reports on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir. New Delhi should exhume these buried proposals to get the debate started. The negotiations will be difficult. For one thing, Pakistan will always cast a pall over the talks. It is not impossible that it will do its best to disturb them — most probably by escalating tensions with India in the valley and along the line of control. The stars, diplomatic and political, are aligning themselves in such a way that a slight window of opportunity is opening up over Kashmir. Such is the debilitating effect of this open sore on the nation that it would be well worth it for New Delhi to pursue its dialogue with the APHC with an open mind.

THE TELEGRAPH

11 APR 2000

## Hurriyat team barred from leaving for Geneva

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. Revealing continued confusion in the Vajpayee Government over an approach to the Hurriyat leaders, a delegation of the organisation was today prevented from leaving the country while the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, expressed a view that he would like the Hurriyat leaders to be sitting "across the table".

Mr. Fernandes was reported to have told a news agency that it was 'necessary' to talk to those leaders "who are the cause of the problem in the first place". "After all we are talking to our own people and we would like Hurriyat leaders to be across the table".

It appears that Mr. Fernandes has sought to resurrect his reputation as a 'sensitive' Minister which he had earned as Minister for Kashmir Affairs in the V.P. Singh Government. At that time Mr. Jagmohan, as the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, was seen as advocating a 'hard' line against militants.

The tone of Mr. Fernandes' observation also appears to be slightly at variance with the Union Home

Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani's disclaimer that the Vajpayee Government had sent out any invitation to the Hurriyat leaders for dialogue.

Early this morning a four-member Hurriyat delegation was prevented from boarding a Geneva-bound flight from the IGI Airport. The team was scheduled to take part in the U.N. Human Rights Commission's annual meeting.

The four had managed to secure 'accreditation' from various NGOs. Mr. Abul Majid Bandey (who generally officiates as the spokesperson for the Hurriyat in Delhi) was accredited to a group called 'The World Society of Victimology', Mr. Raja Tufail Ahemd and Mohammed Amin were accredited to the 'International Islamic Federation of Students Organisations', and the fourth member, Mr. Abdul Rashid Lone, was attached to the 'International Human Rights Association of American Minorities.'

The Union Home Ministry sources indicated that the Government was convinced that these four would have used their stay in Geneva to mount an anti-India campaign.

THE HINDU

11 APR 2000

# Osama aiding recruitment for *jihad* in Kashmir

HT-14  
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THE INTELLIGENCE agencies in London have found evidence of funding by the exiled Saudi millionaire Osama Bin Laden to his agents in Britain to entice young British Muslims away to training camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Afghanistan for *jihad* in Kashmir and Chechnya. Some are sent to desert camps on the borders of Pakistan and Sudan.

A *Times* report says that the belief that the foiled plot to bomb British targets in the port city of Aden in 1998 had been masterminded and funded by militant clerics here has now been belied. It was actually funded by Osama

and channelled to camps run by an Yemeni militant.

It is in these camps that the British Muslim youth recruited here for operation in Aden were given arms training. Osama provided enough money to pay for their hotel stay, safe houses and cars used in the blotched operation by the five youth.

Over 200 young Britons have been sent to Kashmir and Chechnya. The number might be much more than what has come into the knowledge of the intelligence and counter-terrorism agencies.

HTC, London

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 APR 2000

## TALK TO HURRIYAT

5-6 The way to offset repression 15/4

THE home minister doesn't sound credible when he says that the Hurriyat should be included in the dialogue process on Kashmir because they are Indians and that talks should be held within the framework of the Constitution. The Hurriyat are known well enough by now. If they really considered themselves Indian, there wouldn't be any need to refer to the Constitution? He acknowledges the problem by denying it. The three leaders released from Jodhpur jail have spoken and it can be assumed that they speak for the organisation. They will have nothing to do with the Indian Constitution and want, instead tripartite talks between India, Pakistan and themselves as the sole representatives of the Kashmiri people. Both sides, therefore, set out from a position unacceptable to the other, which would be considered normal in many other negotiating scenarios, but not this one. From a pragmatic viewpoint what the Hurriyat proposes is, indeed, the only way to end violence in the valley. It is unlikely that military action can end militancy, and no political strategy can work in an atmosphere of continuous violence. It is not possible to see the Line of Control or to wage war against Pakistan. But, from the Indian vantage, this violence is not seen as a fight for self-determination, but as a war waged against India by a foreign power which is not a party to the dispute. There is some sense in this position too.

It may still make sense to talk to the Hurriyat, if only as a counterweight to Farooq Abdulla's backmailing and also because it indicates a willingness to take adverse opinion into account and to work out a political approach. It offsets the repressive aspect of the situation, even though it may not actually bring about any kind of breakthrough. In the present context, the government has no one left to talk to. The dialogue with Pakistan is interrupted, probably indefinitely, and the militant groups now operating in the valley do not believe in politics. Talking to the Hurriyat, even without a proper basis, is one way to keep the political process in Kashmir alive, of dealing with the insurgency without reference to Pakistan and, ultimately, to the *mujahideen* axis that operates out of that country. Talking to the Hurriyat is about preserving the ethos of Kashmiri politics.

THE STRAITS

15 APR 2000

# Bill: My visit prompted massacre in Kashmir

Washington, April 15

PRESIDENT BILL Clinton said the massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chattisinghpura in Jammu and Kashmir on March 20 was carried out because he was visiting India and was perpetrated by those who did not want the turmoil in the State to be eased.

"I'm sure they were murdered because I was there. Those people lost their lives because I went to India and Pakistan," he said during a fund-raising luncheon for Georgia Democratic representative Cynthia McKinney at Atlanta.

"The people, who don't want their turmoil to be eased, used my trip there as a pretext to highlight the difficulties. And somebody, we do not know who, killed perfectly innocent people — who had never before been targeted in all the conflicts in Kashmir," Clinton told the gathering, which was attended



by members of the Sikh community.

Clinton said that if the difficulties over Kashmir could be resolved,

people in South Asia would explode as there is literally no limit to the potential of the life that could be had there.

"But they are short of kept back from the modern world by this ancient tension — or at least the tension that grew out of the founding of India and Pakistan," he said.

Praising the Indian effort to penetrate computers, he said: "I was in the remotest of Indian villages and I saw how computers worked there and the use of Hindi, the mother of languages in the computers."

The way Internet is transforming life, Clinton said that no country can be isolated from it. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 APR 2000

## Violence must stop before Kashmir talks begin: Cook

By Seema Guha

NEW DELHI: At the end of his four-day visit to India on Tuesday, British foreign secretary Robin Cook took off for Bangkok, a full hour behind schedule, sending his managers into a flap as he tried to cram in as much as possible on his last day here.

The second Ms Cook, his former secretary, waited patiently while her husband rounded up the last two interviews at the high commission before leaving for the Air Force base where his special aircraft was parked.

Dressed in a cool beige skirt and jacket, she took a chair quietly in the corner, with a glass of mineral water, and watched her husband.

A relaxed Mr Cook in shirt-sleeves was happy to talk of his most successful visit to India.

Memories of the disastrous trip when he accompanied the Queen are now a thing of the past. He spoke enthusiastically of a "change" in ties, although he did not go so far as to dub this a "special relationship". His idea was not to base Indo-British ties on the past

but to look to the future—to economic co-operation in new fields like IT and telecommunications. Mr Cook said he hoped ties with India would intensify further in future.

More important for the Vajpayee government, Britain has shown a rare understanding of India's position on Kashmir and its current suspicion of Pakistan.

Asked to comment on New Delhi's insistence that talks with Pakistan could only take place after cross-border terrorism stops, Mr Cook said, "I fully understand India's position. It took courage and vision for Prime Minister Vajpayee to travel to Lahore. We appreciate that. Kargil coming soon afterwards clearly derailed the peace initiative. We understand India's stand on getting a clear signal from the other side. It is important for violence to stop. Peace talks can begin only then. We have seen this in Ireland. It was ceasefire and then dialogue."

He said that during the Kargil conflict, he had been calling for restraint on both sides.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 APR 2000

19 APR 2000

# Panel wants strategy against J&K militants reviewed

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19.** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs today called for a comprehensive review of the strategy being used to fight militants in Jammu and Kashmir and favoured a multi-pronged strategy to tackle militancy.

Describing the situation as "grave", the Committee said the strategy should not only focus on identifying potential "soft targets" but also ensure that security forces and establishments did not fall prey to militants.

Expressing shock and anguish at the recent massacre of 36 Sikhs in Chatti Singhpura village of Anantnag district, the Committee expressed concern over the rising number of attacks by militants on security forces and their establishments.

It urged the Government to take efforts to ensure that the back of militancy "is permanently broken, the nefarious designs of the hostile neighbouring country are defeated and normalcy in the beleaguered State is restored".

"There has been a calculated spurt in the attacks on security forces. This needs to be curbed. There is a need for upgrading security in and around the camps and company headquarters of security forces in the State," the Committee said in its 59th report on the Demands for Grants (2000-2001) relating to the Ministry of Home Affairs, presented to Parliament today.

The Committee was of the opinion that the Government should take the people of Jammu and Kashmir along in its endeavour to fight militancy. It recommended a "critical review" of the functioning of Village

Defence Committees (VDCs), their utility and effectiveness.

The 45-member Standing Committee on Home Affairs, headed by senior Congress(I) leader, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, held five sittings to complete the examination of the Demands of Grants of the Ministry and heard the Union Home Secretary, Directors-General of BSF, CISF, CRPF, Assam Rifles and ITBP before adopting the report on April 11. Expressing concern over increas-

ing use of the porous Indo-Nepal border by the ISI for anti-India activities, the Committee suggested that the Government take a final view on deploying Central paramilitary forces on the border. The Committee was informed that inter-ministerial consultations were on and directions of the Cabinet Committee on Security Affairs had been sought on patrolling there by the Central forces and special police squads.

"Circulation of fake currency notes in the

areas adjoining the Indo-Nepal border and the alleged use of the border as a transit route to Nepal by the hijackers of the Indian Airlines flight IC-814 last December can be cited to illustrate the seriousness of the situation," the Committee noted.

On the deployment of Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel at nine airports, the Committee expressed the hope that the step would "definitely bring about a qualitative change in the entire gamut of airport security". It also mooted the idea of creation of a special 'Airport Security Unit' in the CISF to help it improve the quality of security as it was a specialised job.

On deployment of National Security Guards (NSG) commandos as sky marshals in certain flights of Air India and Indian Airlines, the Committee felt the plan had been "overpublicised in the media". It asked the authorities to exercise due discretion and circumspection in such sensitive matters.

Taking note of the unilateral relaxations extended to Pakistani nationals to facilitate greater people-to-people contact, the panel said it was unfortunate that Islamabad had not made any reciprocal gesture. It pointed out that such relaxations had often been misused. "This is precisely the reason why a large number of Pakistani nationals after having entered India disappear mysteriously," it observed.

Cautioning the Government, the Committee called for a "stringent and restrictive" visa regime regulating the visit of Pakistani nationals. It said that grant of visa should be based on hundred per cent pre-verification and on the principle of reciprocity.

## Home Ministry officials criticised

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 19.** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs has rapped Home Ministry officials for taking the Committee "very lightly and paying scant regard to its observations and recommendations". The Committee was enraged over the "sketchy and evasive" response of the Ministry to some key issues.

The panel in its 59th report noted that related Ministries, Departments and their Secretaries and senior officers were not "frank and forthcoming" in sharing information and facts with them. "Rather the tendency has been to be evasive and not to reply to specific points and queries. This makes the work of the Committee difficult."

It made a special reference to the quality of the Action Taken Report (ATR) furnished by the Home Ministry on the Committee's recommendations and

observations in its 54th report on the Demands for Grants of the Ministry. It said the Ministry had repeatedly given "factually incorrect and misleading information" in respect of grievances of the Group 'A' officers of CISF. Despite a clear and specific assurance to the Committee by the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, on March 31, the Ministry had sent the same reply. A revised reply was sent only after two days, it noted.

"The Committee thus places on record its strong sense of indignation over the indifferent attitude of the Ministry towards it," it observed, and called upon the Ministries and Departments to change their mindset while dealing with Parliamentary Committees. It said senior officials should feel free to share all relevant information and offer constructive cooperation in facilitating the Committee to hold detailed discussions in a frank and objective manner.



# 'Jehad only solution to Kashmir'

By Armit Baruah

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 27. A 5000-strong ulema convention at the Lashkar-e-Taiba headquarters in Muridke, near Lahore, today rejected back channel diplomacy and any secret dialogue between India and Pakistan while reiterating that "jehad" was the only solution to Kashmir and a religious obligation for all Muslims.

In a joint declaration signed by the spokesperson for the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Mr. Abdullah Muntazar, the gathering warned the Pakistan Government that it should not take any action against the "jehadi and Mujahideen" groups because of pressure from India and "Western propaganda". The 17-point joint declaration said the Pakistan Government should not

show any signs of weakness "fearing the threat of war".

In a war situation, the entire nation would be prepared for "jehad" and the ulema would be prepared to lead the country. The ulema, the statement said, were deeply worried about back channel diplomacy which could damage the cause of jehad in Kashmir to an "unlimited extent".

The convention, the statement added, ratified all the fatwas about jehad in Kashmir given by the chief jurists of Saudi Arabia and the ulema of Pakistan.

Besides, the "preparation" of atomic warheads is a "religious obligation" of all Muslims and the Pakistan Government is consequently "not allowed" to sign the CTBT, the convention declared. Moreover, the Government

should take the responsibility of the entire Muslim nation and not restrict atomic and missile capabilities only to Pakistan.

The convention made a distinction between jehad and terrorism and stated that the ongoing jehad in Kashmir and in the rest of the world was not terrorism but a movement for the establishment of peace and aimed at "subduing" the kafirs.

It defined India as a "terrorist" country involved in "terrorist" activities in Kashmir as well as against Muslims in Pakistan, adding that RAW and Mossad were involved in bloodshed in the name of sectarianism.

Reacting to criticism that religious madrassas were the headquarters of terrorism, the statement said such "dirty propa-

ganda" should end. The ulema were prepared to work with the Government if any such madrassas existed.

The Government should monitor the working of NGO organisations in the country which were "anti-Islam and anti-Pakistan". The country was facing a security threat because of these groups and should immediately ban those which were involved in "negative activities", the statement said.

It also stated that it would struggle collectively against the propagation of western and Indian cultures through "dish antennas, TV and video".

The convention criticised the Pakistan Government for not being sincere in eliminating usury.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2000

# No third party role for US in Kashmir, says Jaswant

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
NEW DELHI, MARCH 3

INDIA on Thursday firmly ruled out acceptance of any third-party mediation in the Kashmir issue and asserted that no outside party, including the United States, would be allowed to play the role of a "mediator or facilitator" in the matter. Replying to questions in Rajya Sabha, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said any intervention, facilitation or mediation "is not acceptable now or in the future". He hoped Washington would recognise the "new reality" of geo-strategic and political compulsions in South Asia. Singh also made it clear that India would not be seeking cooperation of the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) or any other agency to combat Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism.

"Government is fully equipped to deal with cross-border terrorism being sponsored by Pakistan and do

not need the cooperation of any agency to tackle it," he said.

However, he added that if the US wanted to share any information or launch an attack on terrorism at an international level, India would cooperate. Singh was replying to supplementaries during Question Hour on whether Kashmir would figure in talks between India and the US during President Bill Clinton's visit later this month.

Stating that internationally there was a "greater understanding" of India's position that Pakistan was sponsoring terrorism, he said even the US had stated that there were ties between Pakistani agencies and terrorists in Kashmir.

On Clinton's statement that there was yet no proof of Pakistan's direct involvement in the hijacking of the IA plane in December from Nepal, Singh said the US had clarified that it had difficulties in making direct references until it went through its own legal processes. The White House spokesman has

also said that Harkat-ul-Ansar was involved in the hijacking, Singh said, adding the group's links with ISI was well established.

The External Affairs Minister said Pakistan's military ruler Gen Parvez Musharraf was trying to make "jihad" the new form of their foreign policy and trying to unite various terrorist groups under a single "Kashmir Liberation Army".

He said various pro-Pakistan NGOs and the Hurriyat Conference were trying to set up a central coordinating body in London to lobby for Kashmir's "liberation".

However, he said there were some differences between the Hurriyat and ISI whether the coordinating body should be called "World Kashmir Assembly" or "Kashmir Mission". On support to India's position on Kashmir, Singh said India's draft resolution at the UN Convention on Terrorism had got the widest support and there was a greater recognition of Pakistan's role than ever before.

INDIAN EXPRESS  
- 4 MAR 2000

## Militants attack Army post in Kashmir

**SRINAGAR, MARCH 5.** In a pre-dawn attack, heavily-armed militants fired at an Army post in the Gandarbal area on the outskirts of Srinagar today critically injuring four army men, a Defence Ministry spokesman said.

Elsewhere in Jammu and Kashmir, eight people, including three militants and a woman, were killed and three wounded in separate incidents since Saturday night.

The militants fired indiscriminately at the troops manning the post at Badampora near Baba Sila-Reshi around 4 a.m. injuring four of them, the spokesman said.

The troops returned the fire and the battle lasted nearly two hours. The spokesman said radio intercepts of militants indicated they had suffered some casualties.

The Pakistan-based militant outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility for the attack.

A Border Security Force jawan was injured in shelling from across the border in the Rajouri sector while Indian and Pakistani troops exchanged fire in several sub-sectors of Poonch, Rajouri, Jammu and Kathua sectors, official sources said.

Pakistani troops shelled Indian positions in Noushera, Laam, Bhawani, Kerni, Bhimbergali, Krishnaghati, Mendhar, Balakote, Pallanwala, Hiranagar, R S Pura and Samba sub-sectors of Jammu-Kathua-Poonch-Rajouri sector last night. — PTI

**THE HINDU**

**- 6 MAR 2000**

# 'Militancy poised to enter a dangerous phase in J&K'

NEW DELHI: Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir is entering a "dangerous phase" and Kashmir could "slip out of India's hands" if the Centre does not act immediately, militant-turned-politician Jamshed Shirazi, popularly known as Kuka Parrey, feels.

"People in the state want the immediate dismissal of the ministry led by Farooq Abdullah and imposition of governor's rule as the government had failed to deliver goods," Parrey, who led a crusade against militants by forming a counter-insurgent group called Jammu and Kashmir Ikhwan (JKI), told PTI here.

"People are even denied the basic fundamental right to live by the state government as it has failed to provide safety to a common man," he alleged.

Parrey, who succeeded considerably in pushing back militants in the Valley, warned that "Kashmir might slip out of the hands of India if immediate attention was not paid

towards ruthlessly tackling militancy".

He appealed to all political parties in the country to give a serious thought to the situation in Kashmir where people were being butchered by militants sent by Pakistan.

Parrey, now an MLA, appealed to the Centre not to release funds to the state government in the name of "development" as militants would continue to target the infrastructure. "Our first and foremost attention should be to completely weed out militants and only then can development follow," he said.

The former militant, claimed that the present situation in the state was worse than that in 1989-90 and said even Muslims of the Valley were now following the footsteps of their pundit brethren and had started migrating.

"Unemployment is at its peak and several jobless youth are ready to hurl a grenade for Rs 50 from an

ISI agent — After all he also needs a source of survival," he said.

Parrey alleged that the state government had misused funds allocated by the Centre to fight militancy and said "where is peace? every day nearly a dozen innocent people are falling prey to militants' bullets."

"Blaming Pakistan does not solve the problem. After all what can you expect from an envious neighbour. But at least we can put our house in order," he said.

Parrey, whose group played a major role in maintaining peace since the 1996 parliamentary elections in J&K, feels that JKI could again prove instrumental in weeding out militancy from the state.

"If we could do it in 1994, why can't we do it again... If militants are coming here to commit terrorist acts and die, my boys are ready to push them into coffins," he said, adding "my boys are also ready to die for the country provided the government assures benefits to their families." (PTI)

# Hurriyat wants Clinton to know the Kashmiri view point: Mirwaiz

Arun Joshi

Jammu, March 7

THE ALL-PARTY Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is not in race with the Central Government to score a point by proposing to meet US President Clinton during his visit to India later this month, but only wants to air its "view point".

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindustan Times*, APHC acting chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said: "We are not trying to score a point over the Government. Our effort is only to air our view point". He argued that Clinton can help create an atmosphere wherein, India shuns its military approach and looks toward a political solution to the Kashmir crisis".

The Mirwaiz, who along with his senior colleague Abdul Ghani Lone, had lobbied hard in New Delhi to fix an audience with Clinton, said the effort was directed at "letting the American presi-

dent know the Kashmiri view point". This was imperative because "our view has not been expressed before him like the Indian or Pakistani standpoints".

According to the Hurriyat, any solution to Kashmir must apply to the undivided J and K, including its northern areas, which Pakistan claims are its territory. "Though this clashes with Pakistan's policy, this is the Hurriyat's stand", the Mirwaiz observed.

Sounding a realistic note, he said that the APHC was not expecting wonders to be worked overnight with Clinton visiting south Asia. But, "what we are expecting is that since Clinton has expressed his desire to resolve the Kashmir issue, he would take our point of view into account."

"The visit could pave way for a peaceful and negotiated settlement of the Kashmir issue", the Mirwaiz said. "It is not necessary to call it mediation, it can very well be

regarded as international assistance. What's the harm in that", the APHC chief said.

He argued that the Hurriyat has "never shied away from talks. The Central Government's attitude has been negative. A common agenda can be worked out for initiating talks." The beginning, he said, could be made through bilateral talks between India and Pakistan and by lifting of travel restrictions on Kashmir leaders across both sides of the LoC.

The Mirwaiz, playing on Indian diplomatic ambitions, said: "India wants to become a member of the UN Security Council. It is in its interest to see that some concrete steps are taken to resolve the issue. India and Pakistan should start shunning their rigid attitudes and talk to each other. This (Clinton's visit) is the best opportunity after their mistrust has assumed gigantic proportions following the Kargil conflict".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 MAR 2000

# J&K Govt censured for delay in filing PSC report

ARUN SHARMA  
JAMMU, MARCH 8

96-3  
96-3

THE Jammu and Kashmir Government, in violation of the mandatory provisions of the State Constitution, has not tabled any report of the Public Service Commission along with responses of the departments concerned, on floor of the State Legislature during the last three years.

Significantly, such a serious constitutional lapse on part of the Government was brought to the notice of the Assembly Speaker Abdul Ahad Vakil, by none else than a ruling National Conference (NC) member Syed Abdul Rashid, after the end of the question hour in the House. As the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister P L Handoo stood up to say

that they are doing it, the Speaker said that "it is a serious matter" and asked the member to give it in writing.

The NC member brought the constitutional violation to the notice of the Speaker soon after the latter announced an end to the question hour.

"There has been a serious constitutional violation and contempt of the House as the reports of the Public Service Commission along with responses of the departments concerned have not been tabled on the floor of the Legislature during the last three years," said Rashid before the Speaker announced the beginning of the zero hour. In support of his statement, he read out Section 137 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution that "it shall be the duty of the Public Service

Commission to present annually to the Governor a report as to the work done by the Commission. And the Governor, on receipt of such report, shall cause a reply thereof together with a memorandum explaining as respects the cases, if any, where the advice of the Commission was not accepted."

"The reasons for such non-compliance are to be laid before the Legislature," Rashid said, adding that non-presentation of the Commission reports along with responses of the departments concerned amounts to contempt of the House. He also sought a reply from the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister on the matter.

As the Speaker asked the NC member as to how did he know that the reports have not been laid before the Legislature, the latter

said that the Government has itself accepted it in written reply to a question of Harsh Dev Singh (Panthers Party) in the House yesterday. Now, it cannot deny it, he added. Thereafter, the Speaker turned to Handoo, who said that these reports were being tabled before the House. It was an important matter, he said and sought time to go into the details.

At this, Vakil said that "it is a serious matter" and asked the member to give him in writing.

Yesterday, the Chief Minister in written reply to a question of Harsh Dev Singh in the House had said that the Public Service Commission had been presenting its annual work done reports to the Governor as required under Section 137 of the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution.

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 9 MAR 2000

## *Clinton's visit brings J&K issue back into focus*

By Bisheshwar Mishra  
The Times of India News Service

**NEW DELHI** It is not only secessionist forces who have intensified their activities in Jammu and Kashmir in view of U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit later this month but some political parties too have planned political actions in the coming days.

Chief minister Farooq Abdullah's estranged brother-in-law G.M. Shah came out of a decade-long political hibernation to address a press conference in Srinagar and his son Muzaffar Shah did so in Delhi on Monday.

"A number of public meetings and rallies in the Kashmir valley will follow," said Muzaffar who is helping his father revive the Awami National Conference (ANC). Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, former Union home minister and president of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), has planned a rally here later this month "to attract the world's attention to the plight of Kashmiri people."

The situation in the Valley has deteriorated considerably over the past few months. The alienation of the National Conference government of Farooq Abdullah is increasing and so are the activities of the subversive organisations.

Kashmir watchers opine that organisations like the ANC and the PDP will take advantage of the situation.

**THE TIMES OF INDIA**

**- 9 MAR 2000**

## Cold War & Kashmir

Is Kashmir a continuing casualty of the now defunct Cold War between the western powers and the erstwhile USSR? Conventional wisdom has it that the partition of India became a fait accompli after the breakdown of the Cabinet Mission Plan and the violence unleashed by the Muslim League in August 1946. These columns yesterday carried an account derived from the declassified top secret material from the pre-1947 British archives which showed that the partition was finalised by Field Marshal Lord Wavell and his chiefs of staff in early 1946 as part of the 'great game' mindset. The idea was to create a northwest Islamic salient on the Indian subcontinent as a rampart to protect the "wells of power" — the Middle East oilfields — against a much feared Soviet advance. If this hypothesis is valid, the Indian partition will rank with the divisions of Germany and Korea as one of the earliest confrontations of the Cold War, preceding Winston Churchill's famous 'iron curtain' speech. This scenario would explain why the Attlee government decided to ignore the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, passed by Westminster, in respect of the accession of the Maharajah of Kashmir to India; by bypassing the relevant statute, the British government created the Kashmir problem. The blatant bias of Britain and the US towards Pakistan on the Kashmir issue could logically be traced to Cold War objectives. Though Stalinist Soviet Union was indifferent to Kashmir initially, Khrushchev and his successors responded to the Anglo-American pro-Pakistan tilt from 1956 by using their UN veto in favour of India.

Though there have long been suspicions that the Cold War and Kashmir were related, there has not so far been any proof of the linkage between partition, the Kashmir issue and the origins of the East-West stand-off. The cited article makes specific references to the communications between Viceroy Wavell and Whitehall. New Delhi should immediately depute a team of reputable historians to survey the newly released material from Britain's archives. An authoritative compilation of the documentation of the period 1942-1947 could throw light on the origin of partition, and of the unexplained U-turn by the Attlee government which repudiated a British governor-general's legal acceptance of Kashmir's accession. There are reasons to believe that in 1947-48, the US state department, and the newly created Central Intelligence Agency, were misled by the British on whom the Americans largely relied on for matters related to South Asia. Such new insights on Kashmir would substantively help the US administration to gain a more realistic view on the subcontinent; indeed a modification of perspective is already evident in the recent speech of US secretary of state Madeleine Albright. Regrettably, our political establishment and bureaucracy have seldom exhibited any understanding of the need to write objective history and derive informed policy projections from the exercise. Wilfully neglecting history, we are condemned to be held hostage to it, in Kashmir and elsewhere.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 MAR 2000



# Shabir Shah, 15 others arrested on eve of departure to New Delhi

SRINAGAR: J&K Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) president Shabir Ahmed Shah and 15 of his supporters were taken into custody Sunday morning when they were to leave for Delhi to participate in a meeting to draw U.S. President Bill Clinton's attention to the "plight of Kashmiris", official sources said.

Police and paramilitary personnel arrested them at Lal Chowk when they tried to board vehicles for Delhi to participate in the proposed meeting, the sources said.

A JKDFP spokesman, condemning the arrest of Mr Shah and his supporters, said, "we had planned a peaceful demonstration in New Delhi to invite attention of the U.S. President to the plight of Kashmiris and their demand for "right of self-determination." He said his party had also organised an exhibition of photographs showing incidents of human rights violations in the state. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Democratic forum spokesman Bhushan Bazaz in New Delhi condemned the arrest and termed it "undemocratic".

Twenty-one activists of JKDFP were arrested on Saturday from a Srinagar hotel. The sources said all the 37 detainees have been lodged in local Khotibag police station.

JKDFP had also made preparations to distribute among the foreign press, copies of a book on Kashmir, and a memorandum to Mr Clinton through the U.S. embassy appealing to initiate steps for resolving the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of its people, the spokesman said. Mr Shah had also decided to observe on March 22, a token hunger strike in front of parliament to draw the attention of the U.S. President and the world community towards the Kashmir issue, he said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
28 MAR 2000

# Clinton has no magic solution for Kashmir

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 20.** The U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, begins his official programme in India tomorrow. With the ceremonies and the formalities out of the way, the U.S. and India will get down to the substantive part of what is supposed to herald a new page, chapter or era in bilateral relations. Much of what transpires between Mr. Clinton and the Indian leaders will not be discussed in public, and this may very well lead to a lot of "heavy spin" coming from both sides.

When the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, gave her speech at the Asia Society in Washington last week, some worked overtime to look for the missing words and phrases and, in the process, hoped that the media would not start asking for clarifications. This was particularly the case with the Kashmir issue on which Ms. Albright was highly critical of Pakistan for upping the ante.

Ms. Albright, the argument

went, not only put Pakistan on notice but had not reiterated the known State Department view customarily put out by its spokesman — that India and Pakistan would have to sort out the problem "taking into account the wishes of the people of Kashmir". This, together with a conviction that Washington had not "pressed" India to start the dialogue with Pakistan, was taken to mean a "major" shift.

Of course, Ms. Albright did some tough talking about Pakistan, especially on terrorism and the Line of Control. "Tangible steps must be taken to respect the Line of Control. For so long as this simple principle is violated, the people of Kashmir have no real hope for peace," she said.

But in a preceding sentence, Ms. Albright said, "India and Pakistan today must find some way to move forward. The process is not one that the international community can prescribe for them. We only know that it will take courage — but not the courage of soldiers". Mr. Clinton and

many senior officials have been stressing that India and Pakistan must find ways to start a dialogue, for if the situation started spinning out of control — as it is now seen to be — the consequences would be catastrophic. Whether the hawks in the Indian establishment would reach the same conclusion is a different story.

Mr. Clinton, if given a chance, would like to get involved in the Kashmir process. Not too long ago during a fund-raiser for Senator Tim Johnson, Mr. Clinton had said he would like to take a "real stab" at the Kashmir issue when he visited the Sub-Continent. At a time when U.S. lawmakers are making a case for India's membership of the United Nations Security Council, Mr. Clinton told a group of Indian Americans that the U.N. Security Council Resolution on Kashmir was a problem that could stand in the way.

Mr. Clinton understands the position of India but has repeatedly emphasised that India and Pakistan would have to find a way

out of the dangerous stalemate. The bottom line is that while the Clinton administration has been critical of Pakistan, it has not let India off the hook completely. At a non-official level, it has been said that if India was keen on being seen as a major global player, it would have to set its regional house in order. Mr. Clinton is not coming with any magic solution to the Kashmir problem; but the talks would not be one way. He will share his thinking on the sources of conflict and instability in South Asia and in its management. But he is not expected to carry any message from India.

The U.S. President and his senior Cabinet members have also talked at length on non-proliferation agenda and have made it clear that Washington is not about to abandon its objectives, including the linkages with sanctions as far as India is concerned. Mr. Clinton will pursue this on Tuesday with the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and may address the issue at every opportunity he gets.

# Lashkar, Hizbul behind massacre, says Govt

HT Correspondent

New Delhi, March 21

HTF 12  
22/3

**T**HE GOVERNMENT today identified two pro-Pakistan pan-Islamic terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen as being involved in last night's massacre of 36 Sikhs at Chatti-Singhpura in Anantnag district of Kashmir.

Among the deceased is understood to be a serving Intelligence Bureau functionary besides a large number of relatives of other personnel working for India's premier intelligence outfit in the Valley. This has set alarm bells ringing.

National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra said at a Press conference here that the Government had evidence that the two terrorist outfits, supported by the Pakistan Government, were behind the massacre. He, however, did not disclose the evidence.

Home Minister L.K. Advani is reported to have had telephonic discussions with State Governor Girish

Chandra Saxena and Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah early this morning over the incident.

Later during the day, the Centre deputed a high-level team comprising Minister of Urban Affairs and Employment S. S. Dhindsa and Minister of State for Civil Aviation Chaman Lal Gupta to visit the spot. Accompanied by two senior Home Ministry officials, the team is slated to return tomorrow and apprise the Centre over the latest developments.

Home Ministry sources said that Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal had also reached

Srinagar. He is slated to visit Chatti-Singhpur village to meet the bereaved families along with the J & K Governor and Chief Minister.

President K. R. Narayanan, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L. K. Advani expressed outrage and profound grief at the brutal killings.

The President described the killings as "yet another example of cross-border terrorism", saying, "It should open the world's eyes to the sordidness of terrorism which does not mind spilling innocent blood to coerce civil society and make an impact on the world".

Expressing his outrage at the massacre, Mr Vajpayee said India was committed to eliminating this menace from its soil with the combined will of its people. Making a veiled reference to Pakistan's backing of the two terrorist outfits alleged to be behind the killings, the Prime Minister wondered as to how "jihad" could

## List of massacre victims

THE following is the list of those killed by militants:

Rajinder Singh (42), Karnail Singh (35), Rajan Singh (40), Naranjan Singh (50), Gurdeep Singh (25), Ajeetpal Singh (22), Joginder Singh (26), Gurbax Singh (35), Uttam Singh (30), Surjit Singh (22), Majit Singh (30), Devinder Singh (18), Rajinder Singh (35), Reshpal Singh (40), Gurmeek Singh (35), Sukha Singh (53), Ravi Singh (38), Jangbhadur Singh (36), Rajdeep Singh (18), Naseeb Singh (50), Kulbeer Singh (20), Darban Singh (28), Deader Singh (50), Gurmeet Singh (22), Ujal Singh (28), Charan Singh (50), Sartaj Singh (30), Rajnath Singh (45), Faqir Singh (65), Karnail Singh (45), Sheetal Singh (66), Ravinder Singh (22), Jagdesh Singh (25), Sagir Singh (60) and Sartaj Singh (26).

One Devinder Kaur died of heart attack after the massacre.

be part of a country's Foreign policy.

Describing the massacre as "unprecedented" in the history of militancy in J&K, the Home Minister said the incident was a chilling reminder of selective Hindu killings in Punjab when the Khalistan movement was its peak. Denouncing the "misinformation regarding the involvement of India's security forces" in this sordid drama of death, Mr Advani charged that the incident was yet another desperate attempt by anti-India forces, operating from across the border, to fuel communal passions in the country.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAR 2000

# Militants kill 36 Sikhs in J&K



Grieving children of the massacre victims. Photo: AP

Chatti Singhpura (J&K), Mar 21

IN THE first-ever attack on minority Sikhs in the Kashmir Valley, heavily-armed militants in military fatigues lined up and shot dead 36 members of the community in this remote village, 70 km south of Srinagar.

A woman, identified as Virender Kaur, died due to shock after seeing the bodies, police said.

Last night's incident in Anantnag district triggered violent protests today in Jammu, which has a large population of Sikhs. The Army staged flag marches and authorities clamped curfew in the city as a precautionary measure.

Nearly 50 militants, mostly foreign-mercenaries, armed with AK-47 rifles and grenades, swooped down on the village around 9 pm, ordered all members of the Sikh families out of their houses and segregated the men before shooting them at point-blank range. The village has about 250 Sikh families.

Thirty-four of them died on the spot while one of the two seriously injured succumbed to injuries at Anantnag hospital, an official spokesman said. The victims were in the age group of 18 to 65.

National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra told reporters in New Delhi that the attack was carried out jointly by Lashker-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen militant outfits.

"The Government has evidence

that Lashker-e-Toiba, led by Abu Mahas, and Hizbul Mujahideen were behind the attack, he said.

However, the two Pakistan-based outfits have denied their involvement in the massacre.

Hours after the incident, mourning survivors of the community staged angry protests against the massacre and vent their ire on the visiting journalists.

Armed with *kangris* (fire pots used by Kashmiris to keep warm during winter), the agitated minority community members dragged out the journalists from their vehicles and beat them up, the scribes said after returning to Srinagar.

Journalists found women beating their chests and wailing uncontrollably.

The community members gathered at a local gurdwara where all the 35 bodies were kept and expressed their anger and despair. "Give us guns. We will kill every militant in this place," shouted the villagers when top Army, police and civil officers, led by J&K Minister of State for Home Mushtaq Ahmed Lone visited the spot.

Giani Rajinder Singh, head priest of the gurdwara, told the Minister that they would be forced to leave the Valley if proper security was not provided to them.

A strike was observed in Srinagar and other parts of Kashmir in protest against the massacre. (PTI)

# 36 Sikhs gunned down in Kashmir

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, March 21. — Thirty-six Sikhs were killed by Pakistan-backed mercenaries at Chatti Singhpora village in south Kashmir last night. A woman died later of heart failure after seeing the bodies.

Unofficial sources, however, put the toll at 40. This is the first time the Sikh community in the valley has been targeted by terrorists.

Top state police officers told **The Statesman** that 25 heavily-armed militants in military fatigue swooped down on the village, 70 km from Srinagar, at 9 p.m. They asked the Sikh families to send out their male members for celebrating Holi. The men were lined up and shot at point blank range after being told that that was the way to play the festival of colours.

While 34 men died on the spot, two died of injuries later at hospital.  
No militant group has yet claimed

## ADVANI DENIAL

NEW DELHI, March 21. — Mr LK Advani has dismissed as "misinformation" suggestions that the massacre of Sikhs was the handiwork of Indian security forces. "Nothing could be farther from the truth than such blatant allegations," he said, describing the "abominable massacre" as yet another attempt by anti-India forces to fuel communal passions. The incident is "a chilling reminder of selective Hindu killings in Punjab when the Khalistan movement was at its peak in the state". — SNS

responsibility for the massacre.

The Army and state police have cordoned the area and started search operations to arrest the killers.

The Jammu and Kashmir Governor Mr GC Saxena, chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, Punjab chief minister Mr

Parkash Singh Badal, a Central team led by the urban employment minister Mr SS Dhindsa and top police and Army officers visited the spot.

An indefinite curfew has been imposed in Jammu and Army called out following some incidents of violence this afternoon. A total bandh was observed in the city. All the important chowks were blocked by Sikh demonstrators. Several government and private vehicles were damaged and their tyres burnt despite the curfew.

**Badal's reaction:** Mr Parkash Singh Badal has condemned the incident, calling it a heinous crime against humanity. He urged Dr Abdullah to protect the minorities and rehabilitate bereaved families.

The last rites of the dead were performed here in the presence of the J&K Governor, Mr GC Saxena, chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah and the Punjab chief minister Mr Parkash Singh Badal, reports PTI.

# A new dimension to Kashmir militancy

SF-  
22/3

KEITH FLORY and VINAY JHA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 21. — While the massacre of 36 Sikhs in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir hours before Mr Bill Clinton commenced his official engagement here may have been a key element in Pakistan's game plan to keep international attention focussed on the "dangerous situation" in the sub-continent, there are serious apprehensions here of an even greater and sustained fall-out.

A new dimension had been added to Kashmiri militancy, for hitherto the Sikh community had not been specifically targeted. Was it, as the home minister has said, a bid to get the Sikhs to follow the Pandits in fleeing the Valley? It was also significant that today the Prime Minister, perhaps for the first time, used the term "ethnic cleansing." And initial reports from Anantnag said that some Sikhs had declared they would be moving out of Kashmir.

The Chief of the Army Staff described the attack as "escalatory and unfortunate" and said though Intelligence reports had pointed to something sensational being attempted during the Clinton visit, an attack on Sikhs had never been anticipated. He saw the massacre against a backdrop of heightened action along the LoC, a Pakistani build up across it.

Other senior Army officers suspected that the massacre was an attempt to provoke a violent reaction from Sikhs and that aroused fears.

The home ministry officials hoped that the massacre would prove counter-productive so far as its coinciding with the US President's visit went. That Mr Clinton had condemned the outrage in no uncertain terms had generated hopes of greater US pressure on Pakistan to curb cross-border terrorism.

As a team rushed to Jammu to take stock of the situation, the Union home minister said the massacre appeared to be a deliberate design to cleanse the Valley of minorities.

Mr Advani felt this was no random killing. Till now, the militants had targeted the Hindus and tried to see that the Valley was cleansed of them. "Now the objective seems to be to see that the Sikhs also begin the process of migration," he said.

The home ministry admits it was no coincidence that the attack came hours before Mr Clinton commenced his official visit to India. "The idea was obviously to draw his attention to the Kashmir issue," an official said.

But there is a feeling that the militants might have gone a bit too far this time and officials are pointing to the sharp reaction from the US President this morning.

THE STATESMAN

22 MAR 2000

## BSF camp stormed in Srinagar

TWO MILITANTS armed with sophisticated weapons stormed a Border Security Force camp at Chhanpora in uptown Srinagar this evening.

The militants, suspected to be members of a suicide squad, opened heavy fire and exploded grenades around 6 pm while forcing their entry into a small-scale industrial corporation building housing BSF troops, official sources said.

Additional troops from nearby camps have been alerted and further details are awaited. The troops cordoned off the building from outside but the casualties, if any, were not known yet, the sources added.

**10 policemen hurt:** At least 10 police personnel, including two officers, were injured as militants attacked a police station with rockets and grenades and blew up a police vehicle with a landmine in the Kashmir Valley today.

The militants, equipped with rockets and other sophisticated weapons, attacked Pattan police station, 27 km from Jammu, on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway at 2 am. The shootout resulted in fire in a nearby house which spread to adjoining houses and shops.

PTI, Srinagar

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAR 2000

968 29/3 The truth about Kashmir 988 53K

# The lie across the border

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the massacres in Kashmir were designed to bring the Kashmir issue centre stage during President Clinton's visit. I dare say he will hear a great deal of it during his brief halt in Islamabad. This, therefore, is a good occasion to cut through the fluff and state the two respective cases on Kashmir as plainly as possible.

Pakistan's case is straightforward: we are an Islamic state; the majority in the Kashmir valley are Muslims. Therefore, that piece of real estate should be with us and not with India.

Well, this pan-Islamic link sounds wonderful but let us not forget that Bangladesh was once East Pakistan. The Pakistan army cracked down so hard on their fellow Muslims in the East that the hapless Bengali Muslims sought Indian intervention to create the independent state of Bangladesh. The atrocities committed by the Muslim Pakistan army on the Muslims of what is now Bangladesh would compare more with Bosnia than what has been happening in Kashmir this past decade. As an Indian Muslim journalist, I have covered the Bangladesh war, terrorism (and insurgency) in Kashmir and the conflict in former Yugoslavia. So I have a fair idea of what I am talking about.

No, no, no, the Pakistanis start stamping their feet. Pakistan came into being on the basis of the two-nation theory — that is, Hindus and Muslims constitute two separate nations. Bangladesh was geographically distant from Pakistan, so we swallowed that bitter pill. But Kashmir is contiguous with us and until we have Kashmir, the conditions of the two-nation theory, on the basis of which we exist, will not have been complied with. There will remain a question mark on the very basis on which we exist. It is important that President Clinton grasp this Pakistani logic. Otherwise his prescriptions will not target the disease.

Surely, there is a flaw in this Muslim-plus-contiguous logic. Afghanistan is

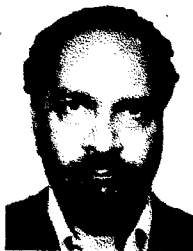
contiguous with Pakistan and in Afghanistan one Muslim tribe has been killing another. Contiguous with Afghanistan is Tajikistan, another theatre for bloodshed until the other day. Tajikistan is contiguous with the Farghana Valley where the three Central Asian Republics meet. In fact, beyond the Indo-Pak border right upto Morocco in the Maghreb is an unbroken chain of Muslim states and an equally consistent chain of disputes. Against this backdrop, this business about Kashmir's contiguity with Pakistan is not clinching logic.

But you are being absurd, the Pakistanis will say. We talk of Kashmir's contiguity with Pakistan in a certain context, in the context of the two-nation theory, that by the

would have to disappear into thin air.

In other words, Pakistan's insecurities would not end even if Kashmir were handed to it on a platter. Indeed, these insecurities would grow because, with Kashmir out of the way, Pakistan would have to invent another issue to keep up the confrontation with India, to keep alive in perpetuity the idea that Hindus and Muslims form two nations. Probe a little bit and you will find that authors of the Pakistani state realise this fact.

This is why I have always maintained that Pakistan is not interested in Kashmir, it is interested in the Kashmir issue. The issue comes in handy for many purposes. It keeps the army focussed. It enables politicians to make the rhetoric on the issue



SAEED NAQVI

**If Kashmir were placed in the balance of the two-nation theory, by what logic are we going to incorporate India's 140 million Muslims in our agenda for the future?**

logic of this theory Kashmir should have been a part of Pakistan and since it is not, we consider the Kashmir issue the unfinished business of Partition.

But, supposing, by some miracle, Kashmir was to become a part of Pakistan, how would that complete the "unfinished business of Partition"? By Pakistani logic, the two-nation theory (Pakistan's basis) implies that Hindus and Muslims form two nations. Even if Kashmir were part of Pakistan, there would still be 140 million Muslims in India, 20 million more than the total population of Pakistan. For the two-nation theory to stand, the way Pakistan would have it stand, these 140 million Indian Muslims, the world's second largest Muslim population after Indonesia,

in direct proportion to the difficulties they have with their political opposition. It gives Pakistan the opportunity to raise it (the issue) in the Organisation of Islamic Conference to reaffirm its credentials as an Islamic country. The specific circumstances of its birth are an essential component of its national memory. They are essential for Pakistan's self-definition.

The whole project runs into serious difficulties because there are on the other side, in India, those 140 million Muslims. These 140 million Muslims are struggling, failing, succeeding, rioting, coping with prejudice, generating prejudice, just like everybody else in this gigantic social experiment, history's largest effort at welding a multilingual,

multiethnic, multireligious nation.

Of course, there are all manners of difficulties. There was the horrible Babri Masjid episode. There remains the total political mismanagement of Kashmir leading to police excesses. But are we to discard the secular, democratic experiment to stabilise a theocracy?

Where else in the world do we have a billion people work out their salvation through a ballot box from day one of their independence and succeed? Just pull out from your pocket any Indian currency note. You will find the denomination written in 17 different languages, many of these languages having literatures predating Christ by centuries. I have always found our currency note the most tangible symbol of our complexity. President Clinton during his statements in India and Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in her memorable address to Asia Society in Washington have demonstrated a refreshingly total comprehension of the Indian complexity.

This exquisite complexity would be derailed if Kashmir's status were to be altered on the basis of the Pakistani thesis. If Kashmir were placed in the balance of the two-nation theory, by what logic are we going to incorporate India's 140 million Muslims in our agenda for the future? One shudders at the thought of what might happen.

But must Kashmiri Muslims suffer indefinitely for the success of India's secular experiment? The answer is a resounding no. They must not suffer any longer. The material and moral support that Pakistan gives to militancy in Kashmir must stop. On our side the Prime Minister should have the magnanimity to be able to communicate to our people in Kashmir the government's sense of shame at the excesses that have been committed by the security force in the course of quelling militancy. The management of Kashmir must be placed in more humane and competent hands.

INDIAN EXPRESS

24 MAR 2000



## Breakthrough claimed in Kashmir massacre

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. With the arrest of a local youth, the Government today claimed a "major breakthrough" in Monday's massacre of 35 Sikhs in Kashmir and said that the trail led to the Pakistan-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen.

At a hurriedly-called press conference here this evening, the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, announced the arrest of Mohd Yaqoob Wagey, a 24-year-old resident of Chitti Singhpora, and said he had confessed that he had "participated in the carnage." The massacre, according to Yaqoob, was carried out by a 17-member terrorist group predominantly comprising foreign mercenaries and armed with one Light Machine Gun (LMG) and 16 AK 47 rifles.

Mr. Pande said that Wagey, who ran a medical store before he signed up with the militants a year ago, told the police during his interrogation that the group responsible for the March 20 massacre was jointly led by Abu Mahaj of the Lashkar and Saifullah of the Mujahideen. According to Wagey, they claimed to have "orders" to kill the Sikhs of the Chitti Singhpora. The terrorists, who

wore army uniforms, pretended that they were conducting a raid.

Earlier, the terrorists divided themselves into two groups and while one went to Akalipora Mohalla, the other which included Wagey descended on Shokeenpora Mohalla. Subsequently the male Sikhs were called out from their houses and while 18 were killed on the spot in Akalipora, 16 were shot dead in Shokeenpora. One died later of bullet wounds.

Mr. Pande said that Lashkar had been responsible for most of the "heinous terrorist outrages" in Kashmir in the recent past. The Mujahideen had five local militants in the group. Wagey who has been remanded to police custody is reported to have given some significant leads, but the Home Secretary said he would not like to give details until investigations were completed.

Mr. Pande denied intelligence failure but when presspersons persisted he acknowledged that intelligence agencies had their own "constraints." Asked why the militants targetted the Sikhs, considering that so far they had been left alone, he said may be because they were "soft" targets.

In reply to another question he agreed that it could be a part of "ethnic cleansing."

THE HINDU  
25 MAR 2000

# 'Lashkar & Hizbul behind massacre'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 24. — The massacre of 36 Sikhs at Chatti Singhpora was carried out by 17 Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Hizbul Mujahideen militants, a man who had accompanied the killers has told police.

"A good number of them were foreigners. They included Afghans and mercenaries who had come from across the border," the Union Home Secretary, Mr Kamal Pande, said here today.

Mohammed Yaqoob Wagay (24) was arrested by the Jammu and Kashmir police yesterday. He had "participated in the carnage" on the night of 20 March, Mr Pande told reporters. The militants were jointly led by Abu Mahaj of Lashker-e-Taiyaba and Saifullah of Hizbul Mujahideen, Yaqoob told police.

Yaqoob, a well-known figure in the village who owned a shop before becoming a militant, accompanied the ultras when they entered the village, segregated the men and shot them, the home secretary said, quoting information received from the Jammu and Kashmir police.

Declining to say whether any other local had been part of the group, Mr Pande maintained "investigations are underway". Preliminary investigations have, however, revealed that some of the militants had visited the village earlier, with Yaqoob providing them food and organising logistic support.

Asked whether the massacre could be termed as ethnic cleansing, he said: "It could be the beginning of that... we have to prevent it."



A Sikh activist at a demonstration against the Chatti Sighpura carnage in New Delhi on Friday. — AP/PTI

The band of 17 militants — 12 from Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and five from Hizbul Mujahideen — split into two groups and called the males out of their houses. They were told that it was an Army crackdown. Some of the militants were dressed in Army fatigues, Mr Pande said.

One group shot dead 16 at Shokeenpora Mohalla while the other killed 18 at Akalipora. One person died while being taken to hospital. Yaqoob, now in judicial custody, told police the militants were armed with one LMG and 16 AK-47 rifles.

While maintaining that this

was not a case of Intelligence failure, Mr Pande confirmed a wireless intercept suggesting that the militants were about to strike. "But we did not have specific information that the militants were going to strike at Chatti Singhpora," he said.

On steps taken after the massacre, the home secretary said the residents of Sikh villages had been advised to organise village defence committees and they would be given arms and other assistance.

He admitted to the absence of an elaborate security ring around Sikh villages but added that "here, the people were confident. They did not think they needed security".

The Prime Minister today assured a Congress delegation that a high-power body will be set up immediately to probe into the massacre.

The delegation, comprising Dr Manmohan Singh, Dr Balram Jakhar, Mrs Ambika Soni, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mr Ahmed Patel, which visited Chatti Singhpur yesterday, today met the Prime Minister.

**BJP stand:** The BJP general secretary, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, today said the demand for imposition of President's rule in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of Anantnag massacre was not "appropriate".

**Mann alleges conspiracy:** The Akali Dal (Mann) president, Mr Simaranjit Singh Mann, today described the massacre of Sikhs as a deep-rooted conspiracy against the community, aimed at creating communal clashes, adds SNS from Jammu.

# Harkat's dream is to take Kashmir, impose Afghanistan-like system

RAWALPINDI: Tucked within a maze of narrow streets, guarded by a lone sentry huddled over a gas burner, is a whitewashed, two-room concrete building, whose tenants the U.S. sorely wants evicted. This is the headquarters of Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen, a band of Muslim militants the U.S. considers an international terrorist organization and repeatedly pressures Pakistan to expel from its territory.

"We are not terrorists. We are mujahedeen," or holy warriors, insists the group's leader, Fazal-ur-Rehman Khalil. Wrapped in a brown shawl, sitting cross-legged on a carpeted floor and stroking his unkempt black beard, Khalil says his Pakistani warriors "fight only in Kashmir. It is a great injustice to us that America has declared us a terrorist organization."

"Terrorist acts against civilians is against Islam," he says. "We don't believe in killing innocent civilians, in hijacking and explosions."

The goal of Harkat-ul-Muja-

hedeen, he says, is simple: To wrest from Hindu-majority India its part of Kashmir, which is dominated by Muslims, and merge it with Islamic Pakistan. If that takes a holy war with India, he says, so be it. Last week, as U.S. President Bill Clinton prepared for his weeklong visit to South Asia, senior Pakistani officials again rebuffed U.S. appeals to crack down on militant Islamic groups.

Two months ago, U.S. assistant secretary of state Karl Inderfurth pressed Pakistan's military leader, General Pervez Musharraf, to close Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen's headquarters. Mr Musharraf refused to make promises. The U.S. accuses the group and Al Qaida, the Afghanistan-based group of Saudi exile Osama bin Laden, of staging terrorist attacks against U.S. interests. Washington believes Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen had links to last December's hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane. Pakistan, in resisting U.S. demands, maintains that Islamic militants are freedom fighters,

not terrorists, and that as long as the Kashmir conflict festers, the groups will feel compelled to carry out a jihad, or religious war.

If Kashmir is ever united under Pakistani control, Khalil envisions the former princely state governed under a pure Islamic system similar to neighbouring Afghanistan's. "We have a desire that our religion should be implemented and enforced," Khalil says. "And why shouldn't we?" asks Khalil. His group and others like it, including Al Qaida, believe that the U.S. was afraid of pure Islamic systems and had decided that the groups and nations that espoused them were its enemies.

Harkat-ul-Mujahedeen, once acknowledged that its holy warriors, all Pakistanis or Kashmiris, trained in Afghanistan, but now says that the only training given in Afghanistan was religious schooling. But at Rishkore, outside the Afghan capital of Kabul, reporters have seen scores of Pakistanis training with light weapons. (AP)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 MAR 2000

*5 mercenaries  
behind Sikh  
massacre killed*

SRINAGAR: Five top foreign mercenaries, suspected to be involved in the massacre of 35 Sikhs in Kashmir Valley early this week, were on Saturday killed in a gun battle with security forces at Panchaltran, 82 km from here, a defence ministry spokesman said.

All the militants were in combat uniform and involved in the March 20 night massacre at Chattisinghpura village, 70 km from here, in Anantnag district, he said.

He said five rifles, two wireless sets and five grenades were recovered from the militants' hideout which was blasted by the security forces.

Police did not rule out the possibility of more militants being involved in the encounter as the operation was still continuing. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 MAR 2000



# HOBSON'S CHOICE

## Fight Pakistan, abolish Art. 370

### OPTION I

**K**ASHMIR IS bleeding. Ditto India. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) says that one security personnel dies for every seven militants killed in military operations. This might be an exaggeration, but there's no denying the massive loss of lives — civilian and military — and mounting expenditure for securing the Valley.

But this hasn't dwindled the tribe of those who want to maintain the status quo. Nor has the subtle attempts of US President Bill Clinton to nudge India into talks with Pakistan and militants ebbed their passion for action. The group's answer is typical: "More men die in road accidents in Delhi than of militancy in the Valley." (Former bureaucrats, ministers, policy-makers and academics constitute its core.)

Their reason for continuing the proxy war with Pakistan ("as long as it wants") stems from the perception that Kashmir is essentially an Indo-Pak problem. Kargil, they say, reversed the Lahore process and consequently the low tide of militancy in the Valley, culminating in the shooting of 35 Sikhs in Chatsinghpura village, Anantnag district, last week.

A former bureaucrat, involved in track II (non-official) talks, favours the military option because, to begin with, there's no one to talk to. "You can't talk to militants," he says. "We can only talk to the elected representatives of Kashmiris. Let the Hurriyat participate in elections. Then we'll

Pakistan — and the problem will resolve itself.

Another track II participant reminds that the separatist strand in Kashmir politics has existed since 1947, but it was Pakistan's intervention in 1989 which turned the Valley bloody. He says Pak-sponsored terrorism can only be countered through equal or greater force — and not parleys.

This group says that the recent expose on the unwritten part of the Simla Agreement, hammered between then Pakistan President ZA Bhutto and India's Indira Gandhi, only buttresses its status quo argument. Former bureaucrat PN Dhar, who was actively involved in the Simla conference in 1972, argues in his recently published book, *Indira Gandhi, The Emergency, And Indian Democracy* that the Kashmir problem would have been resolved had the letter and spirit of the Simla Agreement been implemented.

Dhar writes, "Bhutto agreed not only to change the cease-fire line into a line of control, for which he had earlier proposed the term 'line of peace', he also agreed that the line would be gradually endowed with the

'characteristics of an international border' (his words)."

Dhar says the transition was to take place thus: "After the resumption of traffic between India and Pakistan across the international border had gained momentum, the movement of traffic would be allowed at specified points across the line of control. At these points of entry, immigration control and customs clearance offices would be established. Furthermore, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir would be incorporated into Pakistan.... India would make proforma protests in a low key." (In 1974, when Bhutto made POK a province of Pakistan, India's protest was low key.)

Underlying it, obviously, was the assumption that the gradual use of the line of control as the de facto border would reconcile people to its permanence. Dhar writes, "When Mrs Gandhi, after recounting their points of agreement, finally asked Bhutto: 'Is this the understanding on which we will proceed?' He replied, 'Absolutely...'"

Dhar's memoir is now cited against doing a deal with Pakistan. The argument is that Pakistan can only betray India because its elite survives on the rhetoric of annexing Kashmir. Says a policy-maker, "The ethnic strife in Pakistan can be papered over only through an external enemy. The cause of the enmity, Kashmir, has to be kept alive for the ruling elite's self-per-

Kashmir problem would undermine the very idea of Pakistan (the two nation theory)."

The status quoists also say that since the people of Kashmir had accepted their inalienable unification with India in 1977, any option other than the military one is meaningless. Dhar is again cited for this purpose. The former bureaucrat writes, "The accord with Sheikh Abdullah was reached towards the end of 1974 and he took office as chief minister in January 1975... The essence of the accord was acceptance of the finality of the state's accession to India and a fortification of the special status of the state as enshrined in Article 370. The Sheikh's colleague, Afzal Beg, protagonist of the Plebiscite Front (later converted into the National Conference), declared, as expected, that the Indira-Abdullah accord had rendered the demand for plebiscite irrelevant — a stand which was endorsed by an overwhelming majority in the elections of 1977, universally recognised as the most free and fair elections ever held in that state."

Sheikh Abdullah's letter to Indira Gandhi dated 24 May 1976 is conclusive that the political context in which

open. They say this is necessary as half-hearted attempts in the past to change the demographic profile of the Valley failed.

Bhuvanesh Chaturvedi, who handled J&K as a minister in the Prime Minister's Office in the Nineties, says the Narasimha Rao government had planned to encourage students from the Valley to travel to other states for higher education. Also, the government had sought to establish big industries in the Valley to facilitate migration from outside. This labour force, it was thought, could have settled there without buying land. The plan, however, failed to take off.

ning the freedom option. Since Muslims constitute only 65 per cent of the J&K population, a partition on religious lines will give rise to four new entities — a Muslim Valley, Hindu Jammu, Buddhist Ladakh, and Shia Kargil. In fact, most other new proposals, like the one mooted by the Kashmir Study Group, seek to divide the state on communal lines — and not *Kashmiriyat* (or Kashmir-ness).

Veteran Kashmir expert Balraj Puri, therefore, says that such proposals undermine the secular Kashmir and other ethnic (Gujjar, for instance) identities. This is because these proposals seek to merge districts and tehsils in the name of Islam instead of *Kashmiriyat*. Puri feels this will render India susceptible to a more fundamentalist brand of Islam.

There are other reasons to tread the middle path. For one, India has to secure its periphery from Pakistan. This is important because India, unlike what Israel did in its Arab-dominated territory, has not changed the demography of areas bordering Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan has transformed the demographic profile of POK — it's now dominated by Punjabis. Peace, therefore, is now India's strategic compulsion.

There's also this paranoia in the West that the Kashmir dispute could lead to a

he sought plebiscite had changed. He wrote, "...a realistic settlement with Pakistan in regard to J&K will ultimately have to be found on the basis of a permanent border running roughly along the present LoC."

Strategic analysts — and not just Bharatiya Janata Party hardliners — also advocate the abrogation of Article 370, arguing that Kashmir's special status only keeps the historic dispute

## Independence for the Valley

### OPTION II

**Y**EARS OF bloodshed, destruction, and Kargil haven't dissuaded the various separatist Kashmiri groups from relinquishing their avowed goal of freedom, or *azadi*. True, the bulk of terrorists operating in the Valley are foreign mercenaries, but even they can't operate without the guidance and support of the local population.

Indeed, alienation of the Valley people is at the crux of the Kashmir problem. It's this what has rendered Pakistani support to terrorists so men-

anti-Delhi political space in the Valley. So nervous were Congress and NC leaders that they blatantly rigged the assembly poll through strongarm tactics, much to the horror of young MUF activists. They were to eventually become recruits of the terrorist movement in Kashmir.

It was this that, once again, gave a fillip to the demand of plebiscite. And obviously, as it is true of all such conflicts, the contesting groups took recourse to history. Abdul Gani Lone, executive council member of the Hurriyat, an umbrella organisation of 23 pro-independence parties, says his assertion of self-determination (and independence) is only a reiteration of the undertaking Jawaharlal Nehru had given to Kashmiris when the state acceded to India.

There were several other strands to this promise. Says Lone, "The central government was to only control defense, external affairs and communications. The Delhi Agreement of 1952 between J&K Prime Minister Sheikh Abdullah and Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru reiterated the special status of J&K through Article 370.

Lone argues, "Why should Kashmiris suffer for Pakistan's wrong doing?"

Others also think that Delhi shouldn't treat the Kashmir problem the way it tackled militancy in Punjab. Says Dr Stephen P Cohen of The Brookings Institution, Washington, "Kashmir is not like Punjab where an essentially patriotic population had been alienated, and which did not have strong ties across the border." In other words, as long as Kashmir remains a bilateral dispute between India and Pakistan, the Hurriyat will find legitimacy for its separatist movement.

Lone, however, says the Kashmir imbroglio can be resolved through tripartite negotiations involving India, Pakistan and Kashmiris. "Currently," says Lone, "India and Pakistan only agree on one thing — that Kashmiris should be denied a role in the negotiating process."

With US President Bill Clinton expressing his willingness to mediate in Kashmir if India so desires, the separatists' demand for such a process has gathered momentum. Says Michael Krepon of Stimson Centre, Washington, "I hope India gains the wisdom to make good use of the help of others in dealing with this problem. A go-it-alone approach does not seem to be working."

The mediation proposal received a further boost with reports that Washington-based Hurriyat lobbyists had met Clinton before he embarked on his subcontinent tour and requested him to propose the name of Nelson Mandela for coordinating and overseeing the talks between India, Pakistan and Kashmiris.

The Hurriyat is dismissive about the autonomy package that the committee instituted by Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah had proposed. Says Lone, "Autonomy is no issue. It was retained by Hari Singh during the accession and elaborated upon in Art 370. The institutions of Sadr-i-Riyasat (governor) and Prime Minister were scrapped by the state legislature through the 1964 amendment of the J&K constitution. But if Abdullah was serious about autonomy, he could have reclaimed all the powers by annulling the '64 amendments to the state constitution in the first sitting of the assembly, and then waited for the Centre to respond."

The Hurriyat's refusal to accept anything other than independence has seen different groups propose different formulae — including a division of Kashmir on communal lines and the Kashmir Study Group's proposal of granting sovereignty to Kashmir without it acquiring an international personality.

Western commentators feel the sovereignty issue needs to be examined further. Explains Cohen, "Can there be a divided or shared sovereignty that would satisfy Indian concerns, and yet meet legitimate Pakistani and Kashmiri concerns about the treatment and protection of Kashmiris? I believe that by focussing on specifics, such as reducing the level of violence and pain inflicted on Kashmiris, whether from the Jihadists, or from the Indian military/paramilitary, and then resuming discussions, with outside powers as facilitators, this problem can be addressed slowly but successfully. In the absence of such a multi-track approach, Pakistan cannot win, India cannot lose, the Kashmiris — whether Muslims, Pundits, or Sikhs — cannot survive."

The Hurriyat is not willing to reveal its card, claiming that decisions can be taken only when the position of each party is gauged through negotiations.



acing in the last 10 years. Earlier, Pakistan's insidious designs in the Valley — the infiltration of Pakistan raiders in 1947 and during the '65 war — couldn't succeed because the agenda of independence, or joining Pakistan, was supported by only a minuscule section in the Valley.

The demand for self-determination gathered substantial momentum following the arrest of National Conference leader Sheikh Abdullah in 1953. But the 'lion of Kashmir' was ultimately won over by Indira Gandhi through the 1974 accord. It had then seemed that peace had a chance in the Valley.

But what ultimately tilted the scale against the Centre was the 1987 assembly election. The electoral alliance between the Congress and the National Conference (NC) allowed a clutch of incipient outfits under the umbrella of the Muslim United Front (MUF) to occupy the

It also allowed the state two flags — the Union's and a separate one for the state — the institutions of Sadr-i-Riyasat (governor) and prime minister, and a separate constitution."

Claiming that Nehru committed the mistake of not evicting the Pakistani raiders from the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, PR Chari of the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies says, "Nehru's historic mistake was compounded by successive Congress governments treating the state like a colony."

But Delhi had its own perception of the plebiscite issue, refusing to conduct it as long as Pakistan did not withdraw from those areas of Kashmir which it had forcibly occupied. But

## The middle path: Grant autonomy, and live in peace

### OPTION III

**T**HE CONVERSION of the Line of Control (LoC) into an international border and grant of real or greater autonomy still seem to be the only realistic and lasting solution for the strife-torn state. For the Union government, this option is attractive because it allows for an arrangement within the framework of the Constitution.

In many ways, this option represents the middle path that neither the status quoists nor the proponents of *azadi* want to tread. The former wants the Centre to intensify its counter-insurgency operations, and wear down its opponents. But this military option will allow the political problem to fester. Also, prolonged bloodshed can only alienate the Kashmiris further.

Stephen Cohen of The Brookings Institution, Washington, cautions, "This (BJP's military option of recapturing PoK) is feasible only if India wants to run the risk of a nuclear war with Pakistan and is willing to sit on Kashmir (and Kashmiris) like a brutal occupying force."

Similarly, freedom is a no-no because the country can't afford yet another partition on religious lines. Says Amitabh Mattoo of Jawaharlal Nehru University, "A free Kashmir will have a domino effect all over South Asia. Moreover, Kashmir is the very symbol of the idea of India — a secular, pluralistic society where people of various ethnicities live together and govern themselves through a democratic process." The freedom option, it is also feared, will render the Muslim population in other parts of India particularly vulnerable.

There are other complexities underpin-

ing the freedom option. Since Muslims constitute only 65 per cent of the J&K population, a partition on religious lines will give rise to four new entities — a Muslim Valley, Hindu Jammu, Buddhist Ladakh, and Shia Kargil. In fact, most other new proposals, like the one mooted by the Kashmir Study Group, seek to divide the state on communal lines — and not *Kashmiriyat* (or Kashmir-ness).

Veteran Kashmir expert Balraj Puri, therefore, says that such proposals undermine the secular Kashmir and other ethnic (Gujjar, for instance) identities. This is because these proposals seek to merge districts and tehsils in the name of Islam instead of *Kashmiriyat*. Puri feels this will render India susceptible to a more fundamentalist brand of Islam.

There are other reasons to tread the middle path. For one, India has to secure its periphery from Pakistan. This is important because India, unlike what Israel did in its Arab-dominated territory, has not changed the demography of areas bordering Pakistan. On the other hand, Pakistan has transformed the demographic profile of POK — it's now dominated by Punjabis. Peace, therefore, is now India's strategic compulsion.



The grieving families of Chatsinghpura: Kashmir continues to bleed

nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan. A solution could address this fear immensely.

Those who support the middle path feel that it is futile and foolish to ignore the Valley's aspirations — the promise of plebiscite, for instance — and its history of

special status. "Autonomy," explains Amitabh Mattoo, "is the only and final card India holds. But we don't know how and when to use it. Or whom to grant autonomy — chief minister Farooq Abdullah or the Hurriyat."

Farooq Abdullah himself had appointed

into eight regions, instead of the existing three — Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. This, observers say, is not acceptable because the division is on communal lines, and is aimed at retaining the highly centralised pattern that already exists in the state. Critics say this militates against the avowed need of

devolving power to other regions.

Indeed, the autonomy committees indicate a change in India's thinking, also perceptible from the fact that non-official interlocutors have been talking to the Hurriyat about a possible return to the democratic process. Sources say there's a possibility of the Hurriyat participating in the panchayat elections in June, especially as such local body elections do not require anyone to swear by the Constitution — anathema to the Hurriyat.

Cohen, however, thinks that the autonomy issue is inherently flawed. "It cannot be achieved without Pakistan's cooperation, for an autonomous Kashmir can then be infiltrated by Pakistan-based Jihadists," he says.

Critics say Indira Gandhi tried to implement all these proposals — converting the LoC into an international border, movement of people, goods and service across a 'soft border,' and reaching a settlement with people's representatives — but peace still eluded the country. What's the guarantee that it will succeed this year?

Puri thinks the proposal for autonomy can succeed only if it is doublefold: "There should be autonomy to the state. Simultaneously, the state should devolve powers to the district, block and panchayat levels. When the pluralistic ethos of diverse ethnicities is retained and strengthened by empowering the people directly (instead of parties), the situation would surely improve and bolster India's stand that Kashmir is an internal issue."

Indeed, the only war worth winning for India is in the hearts and minds of those who inhabit the Valley. This is also the best way of countering Pakistan's design, bereft as it will then be of local support.



# He came, he saw, he concurred

Even as Bill Clinton spoke words of reason in New Delhi, Chattisinghpora was cremating its dead. Thirty-five Sikh villagers in Kashmir's Anantnag district were gunned down to send a message to the U.S. President and to the world that they had better do something about Kashmir. Clinton's reply was equally unequivocal: Acts of terrorism will not force the U.S. to mediate, he warned the killers and their mentors across the border.

The Sunday Times examines the implications of Clinton's remarks on Kashmir for India and Pakistan

By Ramindar Singh

THOSE who shot 35 unarmed Kashmiri Sikhs down in cold blood near Anantnag on the night of March 20 had probably hoped that the killing would pitchfork Kashmir to the top of visiting U.S. President Bill Clinton's agenda and strengthen the case for international mediation. They were sadly mistaken. Clinton doused this hope with his first official comment. After advocating the need for a dialogue between India and Pakistan, Clinton turned towards his host and said he agreed with Atal Behari Vajpayee that it was difficult to talk as long as such violence continued.

That was only the first sign that the Clinton visit to South Asia would not go well for Pakistan. If one views the Clinton visit purely through the prism of Kashmir, the American President used every opportunity to point out, in an extremely cultured, reasoned manner, that Pakistan had been behaving badly. In impromptu remarks, prepared speeches and an interview, Clinton rapped Pakistan on the knuckles for violating the Line of Control, for supporting those perpetrating violence in Kashmir and for turning its back on democracy. All this added up to a grudging but clear acceptance of India's charge that Pakistan was fomenting insurgency and violence in the Valley.

Prime Minister Vajpayee should be smiling broadly. Clinton came. He saw. He concurred. And as the United States President heads home after spending a week in the sub-continent, the government should be happy that the dreaded intervention on the matter of Kashmir ended positively for India.

Sure, Clinton lectured us, too, for instance about the need for dialogue which he said was the essence of democracy. Isn't it? Sure, he chided us for strutting our nuclear machismo. There are many in this country, too, who believe we are doing just that. But as the leader of a nation which has been down the nuclear road, Clinton was saying, "Believe me, this nuclear grandstanding

is not worth it. It's too risky." Sure, he reminded us that a military solution is not the answer to the Kashmir problem, but this is no more than what has been said by a succession of Delhi-appointed governors of Jammu and Kashmir.

But his unhappiness over Pakistan's actions was probably spurred by the realisation that the Anantnag massacre had been deliberately staged to influence, even deflect his agenda. So he told members of Parliament in New Delhi the next day, "I share many of your government's concerns about the course that Pakistan is taking; your disappointment that past overtures have not always met with success; your outrage over the recent violence. I know it is difficult to be a democracy bordered by nations whose governments reject democracy."

He went even further in an interview to ABC's Peter Jennings when he said he believed "there are elements within the Pakistani government that have supported those engaged in violence in Kashmir." He told Jennings, "I don't think that this is the way to deal with Kashmir and I don't think it's a good enough reason to drive, in effect, the whole existence, the whole policy of the Pakistani government."

In other words, Clinton is telling Pakistan: You are too hung up on Kashmir. You are letting it dominate your politics and your life. You are risking everything. This is more than what any American official had said in the past, let alone a serving President. The hawkish secretary of state Madeleine Albright was quick to warn the media against interpreting these statements as a shift in the U.S. policy on Kashmir. But a shift it most definitely is. No wonder Pakistan's head of state Rafiq Tarar responded predictably the next day by repeating that Kashmir was "crucial for Pakistan's survival". This is exactly the kind of obsessive approach that Clinton had cautioned Pakistan against.

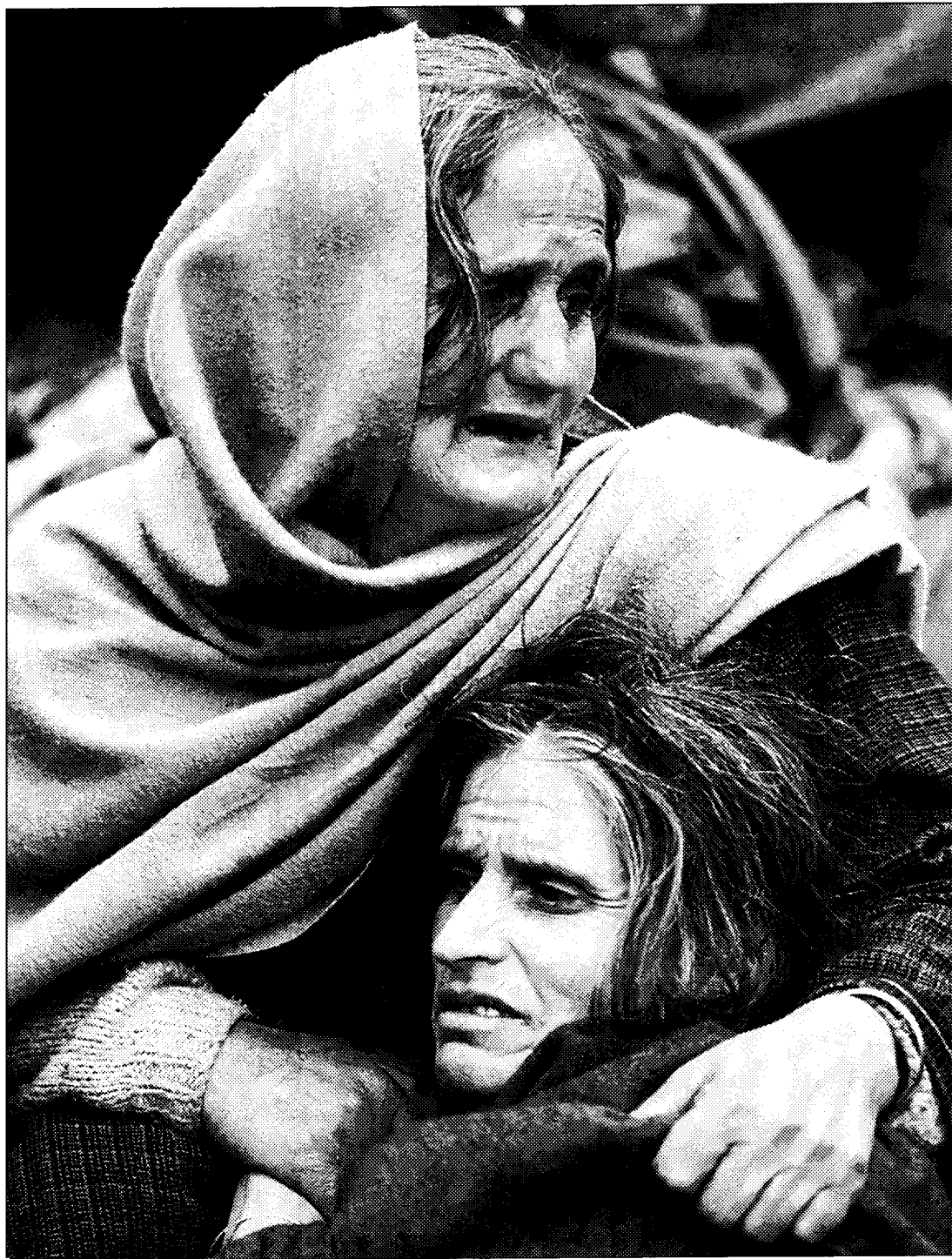
Tarar, interestingly, is viewed as being close to the fundamentalist lobby of jihadis, of which the Taliban is just one visible manifesta-

tion. These jihadis, along with the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), often operate independently of the power structure, in much the same way as the army under Pervez Musharraf operated as a rival power centre during Nawaz Sharif's premiership. The Anantnag killings could be a pre-emptive strike by the jihadis to prevent General Musharraf, who is privately known to be a little allergic to the mullahs, from giving in to Clinton's blandishments.

When Clinton spoke of elements within the Pakistani government helping the Kashmiri insurgents, he may have been alluding to just this kind of a cabal, an ISI-Taliban combine operating independently of the government. Wouldn't it be poetic justice if General Musharraf found himself ensnared in the same kind of web he had spun for Sharif in Kargil last summer?

Meanwhile, in the Valley, the attempt to scare the Sikh community into fleeing appears initially to be succeeding. The Sikhs were targeted for two reasons — one, because they control a fair chunk of the transport business on which the economy of the Valley is dependent. If the Sikh transporters leave or suspend their business, the supply of essential commodities to the Valley from Jammu would be badly hit. In the first flush of protests, this is just what has happened.

The second possible reason for the attack was to incite Sikh soldiers in the army and security forces to vent their anger against local Muslims. It was hoped that the resultant tension between the two communities would create conditions for a Sikh exodus similar to the Kashmiri Pandit exodus some years ago. This has fortunately not happened so far, but many Sikh families fear they may have to leave the Valley. If and when they do, the ethnic cleansing of the Valley would sadly be complete, and the separatists would have won another significant victory. Unless the government at the Centre and the state can do something to infuse the minorities in Kashmir with a sense of security.



## 'Militants' misdeeds have misfired'

The Sikhs are safe in the Valley, chief minister Farooq Abdullah tells Dwarika Prasad Sharma

Do you see the massacre of Sikhs in Anantnag district as an isolated incident or is it a trend? Some Shias have expressed the fear that they might be the next target.

Some mischief-mongers are floating false stories (about what might follow). It was an isolated incident which misfired since it left a deep impression in Clinton's mind against terrorism.

Do you fear an exodus by Sikhs from the Valley? The 'granthi' of the Chhatisinghpora gurdwara has said that Sikhs all over the Valley were feeling insecure and will start migrating after the 'antim ardas' of those slain.

Where else will they be secure? Have they forgotten the mass killings of 1984 (that happened outside the Valley)? All the leaders have told them to stay on and I hope they would pay heed.

Do you see any marked change in the U.S. viewpoint on Kashmir during Clinton's India visit?

It is too early to say anything. But I see a major directional change, looking at Clinton's interview to ABC World News in which he said plebiscite was a non-issue and that the sanctity of the Line of Control should be maintained. I hope his government and the governments that follow will keep to this word and not vacillate in the future.

What has been your role in shaping this shift in U.S. policy?

I have always accepted India as my motherland and opposed the demand for a plebiscite. I have been projecting the Indian stand at the U.N., at forums like Asia Watch, at meetings with U.S. officials, Congressmen and Senators. My discussions have dwelt on how Pakistan-exported terrorism is bleeding Jammu and Kashmir.

Does the emphasis on the sanctity of the Line of Control indicate that the U.S. is moving towards accepting the LoC as a permanent border?

It points in that direction.

Clinton has said the Indians have to find some way of talking to their own Kashmiris about their legitimate grievances. What, in your opinion, is the best way?

Once terrorism comes to an end and the various separatist organisations in the state give up the slogan of *azadi* or joining Pakistan, and begin to see that their future lies in India, then talks will start. The best way they can show their presence is to participate in elections.

Pervez Musharraf has said that the U.S. should play a role "in the background" over Kashmir since India has rejected mediation.

The first condition is that Pakistan should stop trans-border terrorism, then India will talk to it. For that, Pakistan does not need a third party.

Pakistani President Mohammed Rafiq Tarar has said Kashmir is crucial to Pakistan's survival. What do you feel?

I don't think Kashmir is that important to Pakistan as it is to India's secular traditions and ethos. Pakistan wants only the land and not the people.



VALLEY OF TEARS: The wife and mother of a Chhatisinghpora massacre victim mourn the loss of their loved one

## Do Kashmiri Sikhs need Punjab commandos?

This is just one of the solutions being propounded by the people of Punjab who feel Kashmir is not well equipped to contain militancy. Surinder Awasthi talks to Sikh leaders of neighbouring Punjab

CHANDIGARH: Send in our commandos. Send in our servicemen. Abrogate Article 370. Allow non-Kashmiris to own land in Kashmir. Let the migration start — to Kashmir, not from Kashmir...

Outraged by the massacre of Sikhs in the Valley's Anantnag district, dissident Akali leader Ravi Indar Singh is demanding drastic solutions to end the terrorist menace. "Punjab can spare its trained commandos and other officers who

have fought militancy to help J & K in its efforts to combat terrorist violence. Ex-servicemen from Punjab should be sent to help the locals defend their villages," says the former assembly speaker. For a long-term solution, he suggests the abrogation of Article 370. "Soldiers from all over the country die protecting every inch of the territory in J & K. Yet, they are denied the right to own land in the state."



DEPTHS OF DESPAIR: Sorrowful family members cry over the body of one of the 35 Sikh men slaughtered by militants in southern Kashmir on the eve of President Bill Clinton's visit to India

pro-militant groups in Punjab to build up hysteria by alleging it to be the handiwork of the some vigilante groups." Those who fear it could be a "vigilante act" include former Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) president Gurcharan Singh Tohra, members of the Punjab Human Rights Organisation, Mass Action against State Repression and the Institute of Sikh Studies.

At the political level, such a campaign gives the anti-Badal forces an opportunity to accuse the Centre — and, by extension, the Akali-BJP combine in Punjab — of not doing enough to protect the Sikhs in the Valley. But, as Kanwaljit Singh

points out, the role of the Punjab government and the Akali Dal is rather limited on this count. The SGPC and the Akali Dal can achieve more in terms of providing assistance and emotional support to the grief-stricken families.

While stressing the need to "ensure better protection" to Sikhs, the Akali leader concedes that this is "easier said than done as the militants have the advantage in selecting the time, place and target". The job also gets tougher because the

Sikhs, comprising about 2.7 per cent of J & K's population, have no pockets of concentration and are dispersed all over the state. "The unprotected villagers were sitting ducks," says former Punjab police chief B. S. Danewalia. "The J & K government and the Sikhs there have woken up from a false sense of security." Why did they assume that the "militants won't touch them," he asks. On the contrary, he points out, the militants are likely to regard Sikhs as part of the "enemy" since the state's director-general of police is a Sikh and so are many of the security forces personnel engaged in anti-terrorist operations in the Valley.

I'm not here to mediate on the dispute over Kashmir. Only India and Pakistan can work out the problems between them. And I will say the same thing to General Musharraf in Islamabad.

Your concern about the road Pakistan is taking. It is difficult to be a democracy bordered by nations whose governments reject democracy.

India cannot expect a dialogue to go forward unless there is an absence of violence and respect for the LoC. (In Parliament)

The massacre reminds us of

the tremendous suffering that India has been undergoing. We share your outrage and heartbreak over last night's brutal attack in Kashmir. (After 35 Sikhs were gunned down in Chhatisinghpora village in Kashmir's Anantnag district)

I believe that we can work against proliferation of weapons to fight ethnic cleansing and indiscriminate

## He Said It

What Bill Clinton said — and did not say — about Kashmir

Hands of friendship: U.S. President Bill Clinton and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee shake hands after signing the 'Vision Statement' in New Delhi on Tuesday

the entire community is in mourning and migration is a continuous refrain. Sikh shops and factories in the Valley remain closed; their transport business is off the road; the employees are not attending offices. The village has now been heav-

killings in places like Serbia, Bosnia and Balkan states. If we have the right kind of partnership, then Mahatma Gandhi's cherished hopes will become an expected reality for your children and ours. (At the Bombay Stock Exchange, where he didn't mention the 'K' word, but referred to it indirectly)

I believe that there are elements within the Pakistani government that have supported those engaged in violence in Kashmir. (Interview to ABC News)

## We did not leave in 1947. Must we leave now?

This question stares at the survivors of the Anantnag massacre as they prepare for an exodus from the Valley after the bhog ceremony on Friday. Law Kumar Mishra reports

sacre, personnel from the army camp located in Ranipura three km away, reached the scene "only eight hours later". Today, there is anger and an overpowering sense of betrayal. The governor and chief minister were greeted by protests and ministers' cars were stoned. Slogans rent the air as you enter the village. "Khooon ka badla khooon se lenge!" "Chaalis ke badle chaalis hazaar!" "Pakistan murdabad, Farooq Abdullah hai hai!"

Sikhs from all over the

being told that Sikhs living in 135 villages of the Valley will migrate en masse after the *bhog* ceremony on Friday. "We will not stay here for a day," declares Giani Rajinder Singh, the local priest, while addressing a gathering at the gurdwara.

Sikh leaders, on their part, are making reassuring noises. "We are with you and will support all your decisions. But do not act in haste," Badal told the villagers.

Chhatisinghpora is considered a prosperous village, inhabited by government employees, transport operators and owners of apple and almond orchards. The Sikhs have lived here for generations, even before 1947. Today,

## Now What?

A Sikh girl grieves after her father was gunned down by Islamic militants in last week's massacre in southern Kashmir

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# 'Kashmir crisis could lead to nuclear war'

## US Congress cautioned about India-Pak deadlock over Kashmir crisis

BY ASHISH KUMAR SEN

**San Francisco, March 25:** A prominent Indian-American professor has told the Congress that despite the Indian government's attempts to downplay the crisis in Kashmir the confrontation between India and Pakistan could eventually escalate into a nuclear war. Taking exception to Indian President K.R. Narayanan's blunt words of advice to his visiting US counterpart, Prof. Sumit Ganguly said: "I would like to underscore that there is a real danger of war in South Asia with the accompanying danger of escalation to nuclear war."

Mr Narayanan had, in a recent public reception in New Delhi, ticked off Mr Clinton saying that warnings by world leaders about the growing danger of the India-Pak-

istan confrontation were "alarmist."

Prof. Ganguly, who is a professor of international relations at Hunter College in New York and visiting fellow at Stanford University's Centre for International Security and Cooperation, was speaking before the Senate foreign relations committee that is hearing experts' opinions on India and Pakistan in context with the future of the non-proliferation policy. He felt that the possibility of the conflict between the two South Asian neighbours escalating into a nuclear war was now even greater since both countries had nuclear weapons and were developing delivery systems.

Prof. Ganguly told committee chairman Richard Lugar that a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would amount to "an unparalleled human catastrophe. It

would also dramatically undermine the post-Hiroshima nuclear taboo with far-reaching consequences for the international system."

He felt that the spiralling of the Indian and Pakistani weapons programmes could only be checked once the Kashmir issue had been resolved, adding that "breaking the (Kashmir) deadlock will require an imaginative and bold shift in American (non-proliferation) strategy." Explaining India's determination not to include the United States as a mediator in Kashmir, Prof. Ganguly said: "Old Cold War attitudes toward the United States in New Delhi will make US diplomatic intervention difficult. Because of the Cold War and India's ties with the Soviet Union, Indians do not believe the United States can be an honest broker (in the Kashmir crisis)."

He said US export controls on technology

had the opposite effect on India. "(The Indians just said) fine, we will now manufacture these things on our own... we will not be dependent on the international community and the United States." Prof. Ganguly felt that the American goal of getting India and Pakistan to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty must "realistically be tied to some viable incentives. Toward this end, the United States should offer to lift a swath of sanctions against both countries as a quid pro quo for their adherence to the CTBT's expectations."

Mr Fred Ikle, a former director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency also told the committee that a nation with some scientific and industrial capability that is determined to build nuclear weapons "can be delayed with export controls."



# Militants holed up inside J&K mosque

Major, jawan and two fugitives killed in gun battle

Arun Joshi  
Jammu, March 26

**T**ROOPS LAID siege to a mosque in Chak Dudhipora village (Northwestern Kashmir) where a group of heavily armed militants had taken cover last evening. Latest reports received here indicated that the fierce exchange of fire between the fugitives and the security forces had yet to die down, nearly 18 hours after it began.

Two militants were shot dead while attempting to escape from the mosque this afternoon. Major Ravinder Singh and a soldier too were killed in the initial stages of the exchange of fire. "There are at least three more militants are still hiding in the mosque," defence sources told The Hindustan Times. Sources said that despite grave provocation, the troops that have encircled the mosque are "exercising utmost restraint" and hope to exhaust the militants of ammunition in this war of attrition.

The events leading to the militants' presence in the mosque are unclear. One version has it that

they sought refuge there after attacking the troops. Another version has it that the fugitives were in the mosque in the first instance and had challenged the troops

## Advani in Kashmir

UNION HOME Minister L.K. Advani on Sunday visited Chittisinghpura village where 36 Sikhs were shot dead by militants last Tuesday. Mr Advani announced that the process of strengthening security in all the 150-odd Jammu and Kashmir villages that have a predominantly Sikh population has been set in motion.

He was addressing mourners at local gurdwara. The minister asserted that perpetrators of the massacre would have to pay a "heavy price".

PTI, Chittisinghpura

patrolling the area.

It is almost six years since Kashmiri militants have used a place of worship in an attempt to evade security forces. In May 1995,

Charar-e-Sharief, one of the most revered shrines of Kashmiri Muslims, was the epicentre of a long-drawn standoff between militants and security forces. It was eventually razed. Hazrathal mosque was the venue of a similar standoff that lasted for over a month (October-November 1993).

UNI adds that another set of militants attacked a police station at Pattan with rockets and automatic weapons in the northern district of Baramulla late last night. The police station was partially damaged but no one was injured.

Security forces also killed two militants during a search operation in Kanihama-Sathoo in central Kashmir last evening and another in Budnar in Baramulla. One grenade launcher and 16 grenades were recovered from the dead men.

Militants also shot at two persons in Srinagar yesterday. A blast rocked Sogam in the border district of Kupwara but no casualties were reported. In another incident, unidentified gunmen kidnapped two persons in south Kashmir last evening.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES  
27 MAR 2000



India's findings contradicted

# Body not of Al Faran hostage: UK

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 27. — The controversy over the fate of the four foreign hostages abducted in Jammu and Kashmir in 1995 by Al Faran is poised for a return to centre stage with the British foreign office today denying that the body exhumed by the state police was that of Britisher Paul Wells.

The body, which had been exhumed in September 1997 from Anantnag district, was identified as that of Wells, in January, after extensive forensic tests by the Central Forensic Science Laboratory in Calcutta. The British police flew down last month to collect samples for their own independent tests.

In a statement issued in London today, the British foreign office said it had conducted forensic tests which had proved conclusively that the body was not that of Paul Wells or of any of the other hostages.

"DNA tests in this country have established that the remains brought back to the UK... are not those of Paul Wells," the statement said, adding that it was not clear why there was a disparity in the findings.

The announcement, which will reopen speculation about the fate of the hostages, could

prove to be a major embarrassment for the Indian government, casting, as it does, doubts on the Indian criminal investigative process.

The Jammu and Kashmir DGP, Mr Gurbachan Jagat, said the identification of the body as that of Paul Wells was done "on the basis of the opinion of the forensic tests conducted by the Central Forensic Science Laboratory in Calcutta".

He said the matter would be brought to their attention.

The state police's identification of the remains earlier had provided what was then considered to be the first authentic information on the fate of any of the hostages who disappeared without a trace after they were kidnapped by the Al Faran.

A massive combing operation was launched then and continued for several weeks, tracking the hostages and their captors, but then the trail was lost. A rescue operation had been ruled out early on as it was considered too dangerous in view of the hostages' safety.

Since then, there has been no authentic information about the fate of the hostages despite attempts by the their relatives, who travelled to India several times, touring the villages to elicit information and appeal for help to the locals.

THE STATESMAN  
28 MAR 2000

# Kashmir: manufacturing ethnic conflict

By Jean Dreze

**K**ASHMIR HAS often been described as a paradise, and the term strikes the visitor as appropriate in more ways than one. The description usually refers to the landscape, which is indeed stunning, especially the panoramic view of the Himalayas in their full glory. On a less predictable note, Kashmir looks refreshingly prosperous and civilised compared with other parts of north India.

The Valley, where a majority of the Kashmiri population lives, boasts a vibrant rural economy that combines wide-ranging farm products (rice, apples, vegetables, saffron, milk, meat, fish) with a diversity of manufactures, from carpets to cricket bats. Living conditions are good by Indian standards, and so is the public infrastructure. What is more, most families own at least some land, so that extreme poverty is rare. "Yahaan roti, kapada aur makaan sab ke paas hai," I was told in the villages, and the statement has a ring of truth. It is all the more tragic that economic development in Kashmir is now stifled by armed conflict.

On a similar note, Kashmiri society and culture look anything but "backward" (as often implied in the Indian media). One gets the impression of a well-integrated society, with a fine blend of tradition and modernity. Most villages have a mosque as well as an "English-medium" school. Even Kashmiri women seem to enjoy a higher social status than their north Indian counterparts, in many respects. Of course, gender relations in Kashmir are quite conservative, with clearly demarcated gender roles and little tolerance for sexual liberation. However, the Kashmiri way of life also has much to offer by way of women's freedoms: purdah is uncommon, female infanticide and bride-burning are virtually unknown, married women retain a strong bond with their parents and siblings, widow remarriage is viewed in a positive light, and sexual harassment is regarded as a serious matter. There also seems to be a positive attitude towards girls' education.

Such are the initial impressions I formed of Kashmir when I visited it for the first time earlier this month. Curious to learn more, I hired a bicycle in Srinagar

*There is no simple solution to the Kashmir impasse. What seems clear is that the present stand of the Indian Government is a trifle contradictory.*

and spent a few days riding around the Valley and talking with local residents. My initial purpose was to study the schooling situation, but it turned out to be difficult not to focus on people's overwhelming concern: the endless *zulm* (repression) unleashed by the security forces.

The security forces were rarely out of sight, even in remote villages. As far as the local population is concerned, Kashmir is "occupied" by a foreign army. Everywhere I went, there were sobering tales of harassment at the hand of the Indian Army and paramilitary forces: curfews, searches, interrogations, killings of suspected militants, and accidental as well as intentional killings of innocent civilians, to name a few complaints. In one village, I was told that a father and son had recently been shot in the knee before being pushed into a house in flames. In several villages, shops and houses had recently been burnt in retaliation against recent killings of Army personnel — a prime example of "collective punishment", proscribed by international conventions. Physical hardships are compounded by constant humiliation. "Imagine how we feel when a Bihari or a Madrasite asks us for our identity card in our own country, when we should be asking them for their papers," said one. In a similar vein, a middle-class woman in Srinagar complained that her house had recently been searched by a "Chambal ka daku" in uniform.

Most people trace the beginning of this nightmare to 1989, when violence first spread in the Valley. The situation that has prevailed since then is referred to as "militancy" (sic). This does not mean that people hold militants — local or foreign — responsible for the problem. "Militancy" is simply the situation. As for the militants, they seem to enjoy varying degrees of popular support, partly due to their decent behaviour towards the people (often contrasted with the brutality of the security forces), partly because they are seen

gris at each other. While these clichés should not be taken literally, there is at least one tangible indication that they contain a grain of truth: Kashmir used to have one of the lowest murder rates in India.

The non-communal and peace-loving outlook of the Kashmiri people, however, is in danger of subsiding as Army repression pushes them into the hands of foreign-sponsored, fundamentalist groups. Soon after I returned to Delhi, news came of the massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chani Singhpore. No doubt this incident will be seen by some as confirmation that the Kashmir conflict is rooted in ethnic hatred. It is possible to take the opposite view: that ethnic animosity in Kashmir is so weak that the most gruesome provocations are needed to incite communities against each other. The incident reminded me of a comment made a few years ago by a bemused resident of war-torn Bosnia: "The war had to be so bloody because the ties between us were so strong".

On the train back to Delhi, I talked with members of the Border Security Force who were going home for Holi. In Kashmir, I had often felt a tinge of pity for the jawans, seeing how they had to stand for hours in the biting cold, bored to death, looking nervous if not frightened. Asked about Army brutality, one of them said, "we don't like to beat them up, but they don't talk straight, so we have to do it".

There is no simple solution to the Kashmir impasse. What seems clear is that the present stand of the Indian Government is a trifle contradictory. In international fora, mediation is rejected on the grounds that Pakistan and India have agreed to resolve the Kashmir dispute bilaterally. When Pakistan approaches India for talks, it is told that Kashmir is an internal matter (despite India's own claim to "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir"). Within India, however, Kashmir is treated like a colony, unworthy of democratic rights. It is no wonder that the Indian Government's attempt to entice the State into the national fold has failed to strike a chord with the Kashmiri people.

(The writer is Honorary Professor at the Delhi School of Economics.)

410-13  
31/3

# Musharraf not for status quo on Kashmir

By P.S. Suryanarayana

**SINGAPORE, MARCH 30.** The visiting Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, affirmed here today that the Kashmir dispute was important to Islamabad as an aspect of "national dignity" and that he would "not compromise" on it. He did not favour the "status quo" as a solution to the Kashmir issue.

Reinforcing the stance in the context of the South Asia visit by the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, accompanying Gen. Musharraf during his South East Asia tour, said Islamabad was now "waiting for a response" from India to Gen. Musharraf's offer to enter into a bilateral dialogue "at any place, at any level".

Gen. Musharraf drew a nexus between Kashmir and Islamabad's national "honour" as he sought to answer a question at a meeting with the Singapore Pakistani community here. The elaborate but direct questioning was as follows: "There is plenty of pressure from the world on Kashmir issue. Why is Kashmir so important for Pakistan? Are we going to mortgage Pakistan's future for Kashmir? Clearly, we have not done that for bringing back Biharis from East Pakistan? Why can't there be a status quo (on Kashmir) and (so that) we (Pakistanis) move on?"

Gen. Musharraf said that the Kashmir dispute was "recognised internationally by the United Nations" and "nations have their dignity and pride to guard, to stand by." He stressed that he was "not one of those who would compromise on national dignity"

which "shall never get threatened." Kashmir was, therefore, important to Pakistan, he said.

Answering a related poser on Pakistan's defence spending as a drain on its exchequer, Gen. Musharraf said only 19 per cent of Islamabad's annual budget was being allocated for military expenditure as against 56 per cent towards the servicing of the national debt that had more than trebled in the past decade. Moreover, even if the questioner could "not agree," Pakistan was at present "facing a very serious security concern," Gen. Musharraf said and contended that India had raised its defence budget by "28 per cent" which he did not seek to match.

Pakistan, according to the military ruler, was in quest of "nothing more than a deterrent capability" at a "minimal level" in the "conventional and unconventional areas." Pakistan, he said, had at present attained this, but he did not spell out specifics.

## 'India reluctant for talks'

Mr. Abdul Sattar viewed India's stance on the resumption of the bilateral dialogue as an "obstructionist attitude". Shortly before leaving Singapore for Jakarta, he said in response to a question from this correspondent, that "President Clinton feels that it is important for the two countries (India and Pakistan) to resume dialogue." Contending that "there have to be two partners in a dialogue," Mr. Sattar said that India, however, "appears to be reluctant." New Delhi "has placed conditions" and "that obviously is going to obstruct the resumption of the dialogue."

**THE HINDU**  
31 MAR 2000

# With or without US: Pak puts Kashmir on top

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

**New Delhi, Feb. 5:** Pakistan's chief executive General Pervez Musharraf has placed Kashmir right on top of his agenda in the weeks preceding US President Bill Clinton's visit to the region. He has also warned that tensions in the region will increase if President Clinton decides to exclude Pakistan from his itinerary.

General Musharraf has increased the hype on Kashmir in recent days, devoting considerable space to the issue in his recent public statements. Pakistan also observed "Black Day" in supposed solidarity with the people of Kashmir while the General prayed to "Almighty Allah to crown the freedom struggle with success and deliver the people from Indian brutalities."

Gen. Musharraf has put into words the veiled threat that tensions would escalate between India and Pakistan if the US President decided to fly to India without a substantial halt at Islamabad. He has said very clearly that it would be very regrettable if the visit, instead of contributing towards peace in the region, ended up increasing tensions.

Gen. Musharraf who at the very onset had offered to talk with India

on all issues, is now categorical that Kashmir is the only issue and others are just "minor irritants."

In passionate words for Kashmir, he has claimed that those "spilling their blood are not terrorists. I have explained (to the US) that the Kashmir struggle is a freedom struggle which is not linked to terrorism."

The General has made it very clear that terrorist activity will step up in Kashmir as the single point agenda now is to reach a "just solution" for the people. And that talks with India can only be on this issue. He has left an opening for President Clinton to engage both countries in a peace initiative but pointed out that a decision not to visit Pakistan could have repercussions outside his control.

President Clinton has projected his visit to South Asia as a peace initiative. The noises from Islamabad are now getting stronger, and more aggressive. At the same time Gen. Musharraf is not willing to make any dramatic gesture which can help President Clinton ride over domestic criticism about the visit.

Pakistan's foreign minister Abdus Sattar has said that the US President's visit cannot be conditional. Significantly the military regimes stand in finding support

from several liberals and professionals in Pakistan many of whom told *The Asian Age* that the people were happy that the general was not "scraping and bowing for US attention." Gen. Musharraf is regarded as a "staunch nationalist" whose position within the country is "very strong at the moment." It is pointed out that his image will not suffer, "but perhaps even enhanced" if President Clinton does not visit Islamabad. At the same time the military ruler has made some quiet gestures towards fulfilling US demands. He has announced a command and control system and given assurances on non-proliferation. He has said he will "never" be the first to use nuclear weapons. He is more than willing to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

Gen. Musharraf has now also announced his intent to visit Afghanistan to confer with the Taliban leadership about Osama bin Laden, a pet subject with the US administration. The chief executive has drawn a difference between terrorism per se and what he describes as a jihad for the liberation of Kashmir, a position incidentally which is endorsed by the Clinton administration as well. He has denounced terrorism as the West sees it, in strong language.

THE ASIAN AGE

- 6 FEB 2000

# Clinton visit to Pak. will help discuss

## Kashmir: Musharraf

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 6. Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, has said that it was his Government's endeavour to "rehabilitate" the democratic process through the devolution of power and ensure that elected representatives were in place at the district levels before the end of the current year.

"... It would be self-defeating to hold national elections at this stage, before the much needed reforms are implemented and consolidated", Gen. Musharraf said in his letter to the first-term Democratic Senator from South Dakota, Mr. Tim Johnson.

The Senator had written a letter to Gen. Musharraf at the beginning of the month drawing attention to the fact that the administration had not decided on the President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit to Pakistan because of concerns in primarily three areas — restoration of democracy, terrorism and non-proliferation.

In his letter, Mr. Johnson made the point that it was important for the President to visit Pakistan. "To visit India and not Pakistan would be counter-productive to the United States maintaining a balanced and even-handed position on the subcontinent which is so vital to ensuring that the United States can play a constructive role in reducing tensions", the Senator argued.

In his reply, Gen. Musharraf "agreed" with the Senator that it was important for Mr. Clinton to visit Pakistan when he was in the region in March. "In addition to a number of important issues of mutual concern to our two countries, a Clinton visit would provide a

unique opportunity to discuss and promote a peaceful solution to Kashmir which was the root cause of tensions and conflict in South Asia. This will also be consistent with Mr. Clinton's personal commitment which has been a source of hope for durable peace", the General said.

Aside from his views on the democracy front where the point was made that it was vital that "genuine functional democracy is built on the basis of sound institutions to avoid the disappointing experiences of the past", Gen. Musharraf reiterated that Pakistan's opposition to terrorism was "unequivocal and unconditional", recollecting his recent meeting with the President of Afghanistan, briefing him in detail on global concerns on terrorism and stressing the need for Kabul and Islamabad to take "practical steps" to combat the evil.

Islamabad had condemned the hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft and had publicly stated that the hijackers would be apprehended and brought to justice if found on the territory of Pakistan. Gen. Musharraf added, "We do not condone acts of terrorism even by misguided Kashmiri freedom fighters, since such acts can only hurt the Kashmiri cause. We, therefore, doubt the motivations and credentials of those who are responsible for this crime. India, on the other hand, is making every effort to use this episode to malign Pakistan and put a distance between Pakistan and the United States. Such sinister designs must be firmly countered and exposed".

Narrating the background for the May nuclear tests and the imperative for Islamabad to

"restore the strategic balance and establish nuclear deterrence", Gen. Musharraf argued in his letter to the South Dakota Senator that Pakistan was committed to pursuing a nuclear policy of responsibility and restraint based on a minimum credible deterrence to ensure the country's security. "We remain opposed to an arms race, nuclear or conventional in our region, and we believe that the resources of the region must be channelled for the welfare and the better future of its people", he said.

The tone and tenor of Gen. Musharraf's reply is yet another indication that Pakistan is trying to accommodate U.S. demands so as to facilitate including Islamabad in Mr. Clinton's South Asia visit. Although the White House has made it known that no decision has been made on other "stops", the administration is coming under varying degrees of pressure — from domestic political constituents as well — not to skip Pakistan.

One persistent thinking is that Mr. Clinton will drop by Pakistan — perhaps on March 20 — and that an announcement to this effect will be made closer to the date of departure. The Clinton administration will be making that decision based on American long-term interests in a bilateral, regional and global sense. That decision will ultimately be based on national interests and not on account of any "scare" scenarios coming out of Pakistan on the implications of Mr. Clinton not visiting that country; or in the fact that a decision to visit Pakistan may be "upsetting" the BJP Government in New Delhi.

# BJP, NC on a collision course over autonomy issue

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 7

THE NATIONAL Democratic Alliance partners, BJP and the National Conference, are on a collision course on the issue of granting of more autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, as demanded by the State Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah.

Differing perceptions of the two parties came to the fore when senior BJP leaders, including Minister of State for Civil Aviation Chaman Lal Gupta, vehemently opposed the autonomy proposal. The Minister was speaking at a seminar on 'Impact of Autonomy and its Impact on National Integration and Minorities of the State,' here today. The seminar was organised by Ladakh Buddhists Association.

Rejecting the National Conference sponsored autonomy proposal, senior BJP leaders K R Malkani

and T N Chaturvedi questioned the justification of Dr Abdullah's move to seek pre-1953 status for the State.

"What is the justification of special status for J&K?" Mr Malkani asked while questioning even the Article 370, which has granted special status to the State. Ruling out more autonomy for the State, he declared that "J&K will enjoy a status equivalent to other states. How could the new autonomy proposal be accepted when Farooq Government has not been able to deliver justice to the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, he asked.

Further, questioning the hasty manner in which Dr Abdullah got the proposal approved by his Cabinet, Mr Malkani felt that it would have been better had he articulated his views before the Constitution Review Commission.

Echoing similar views, Mr Gupta lambasted Dr Abdullah for raising the autonomy issue at a time

when the State was beset with serious problems. Criticising the State Government for its failure to rebuild state's damaged infrastructure, he charged the Chief Minister with trying to divert people's attention from the more pressing problems of the state.

Striking a discordant note, political analyst Balraj Puri, who was unceremoniously removed by the State Government from the chairmanship of regional autonomy committee, said that the report of the autonomy committee should not be linked with national integration, as certain quarters have been trying to portray it.

Criticising both BJP and NC for giving vent to their differences in public, he felt two political partners should have unilaterally resolved their differences rather than creating so much of confusion. Rejecting the two reports formulated by the State Government on State autonomy and the one on regional autonomy,

he claimed only the report of regional autonomy committee headed by him has a locus standi.

President of the Ladakh Buddhist Association, T Sampel said the people of Ladakh would never accept the autonomy proposal, as the State Government formulated the present report without any public debate. "We shall lay down our lives rather than succumb to any further assault on our social, cultural and religious identity," he said.

Mr Ghulam Hassan Commander, a former Ladakh MP, while opposing the autonomy proposal, said Dr Farooq Abdullah should explain as to how he would solve State's problems if the State acquires more autonomy. Panther's Party chief, Bhim Singh, described the autonomy committee report, as a conspiracy to implement the Dixon formula, which had suggested division of the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir on communal lines.

## HT-17 Talking upfront 78

CONSIDERING THAT most government pronouncements on Kashmir are usually devoted to explaining the situation in the Valley or arguing why it is not possible to hand over Kashmir on a platter to Pakistan, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's Jalandhar speech on Sunday was stiff stuff. In fact, the Indian Prime Minister need not have resorted to the kind of idiom that had been the staple of the responses from Islamabad for some time. It should not be difficult to see why General Pervez Musharraf has been striking hawkish postures on Kashmir. He needs to mark a departure from the policy line followed by his predecessor. Nothing short of this could be expected from someone who had masterminded the Kargil intrusions. Further, he is doing so to play up the prospect of south Asia turning into a nuclear 'flash point', and hence trying to make out a case for third party intervention on Kashmir. As a mature democracy, India does not have to respond in kind. Doing so, in fact, would be helping the General push his pet line.

However, there is a point in Mr Vajpayee's references to the part of Kashmir under Pakistan's occupation and its return to India that has been waiting to be made. The point is whether the Kashmir 'dispute' is just about the Valley or the State of Jammu and Kashmir as it existed before the tribal invasion of 1947. In the latter case, Pakistan has quite a few things to answer for. Mr Vajpayee's argument that the referendum in Kashmir could not be held because Pakistan had failed to pull out its troops from PoK, as required by the UN resolutions (invoked by Pakistan in its propaganda campaigns ad infinitum) is historically valid and must figure in any informed debate on the subject. Whatever the flaws in the working of the democratic system, human rights and economic development in Kashmir be — and these should be confronted without any reservations as a mature civil society should do — the corresponding picture in the PoK is far more dismal.

And yet, if world opinion has failed to take adequate note of these, it is partly because India has not effectively put its case across. Likewise, annexation of the Gilgit region — since rechristened as Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) — and the denial of basic rights to its people must figure in any discussion on the subject. As he stated in a television interview on Tuesday, General Musharraf wants to meet the Indian Prime Minister — and talk Kashmir. But the kind of bland denials he offered on Pakistan's involvement in trans border terrorism in Kashmir would not do for a dialogue. No would keeping issues concerning the Pak-held part of Kashmir out of a discussion enable a solution.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 9 FEB 2000

# Central team reviews J & K situation

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, FEB. 13.** The law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir was reviewed at a high-level meeting between a Central team and the State administration here today. The meeting decided that the militants be dealt with greater firmness to frustrate their designs.

After the blasts in Jammu on Thursday and Friday, the Centre today deputed the Special Secretary (Home), Mr. T. R. Kakkar, and the Director (J & K Affairs Department), Mr. Shishir Sinha, to Jammu to assess the situation.

The J & K police chief, Mr. Gurbachan Jagat, the Principal Secretary (Home), Mr. C. Phonsoung, the Divisional Commissioner (Jammu), Mr. Anil Goswami, and the heads of paramilitary and intelligence organisations were present at the meeting.

"It was a review meeting at which the overall scenario and the measures to check such incidents were discussed," Mr. Phonsoung told *The Hindu*.

Sources said the meeting discussed at length Intelligence reports on the infiltration of

Pakistan-backed militants and the precautionary measures to foil their attempts. Stress was laid on further strengthening the security arrangements especially in the city where a bomb blast on Friday claimed five lives. The blast in the Sealdah Express on Thursday was viewed as "disturbing".

The meeting took a comprehensive view of the militant threat in context of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit next month during which time the terrorists were likely to derive the maximum publicity. The State Government assured the Central officials that it would not allow the militants to succeed in their designs.

PTI reports:

The Rashtriya Rifles (RR) troops foiled a bid by pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen to eliminate three J & K Ministers on Saturday, official reports said today. The RR personnel, on specific information, detected an explosive device under a culvert at Siangwari village, from where the Ministers were to pass through to inaugurate a bridge.

THE HINDU  
14 FEB 2000



# Central team for Jammu

By Our Special Correspondent

**JAMMU, FEB. 12.** Following two bomb blasts in Jammu since Thursday evening, a Central team led by the Special Secretary (Home), Mr. T. R. Kakkar, is arriving here tomorrow to assess the prevailing situation.

Official sources said Mr. Kakkar, who was earlier scheduled to arrive here on February 18, has advanced his visit in the wake of the prevailing situation. The team will discuss the law and order with senior State Government officials and take a look at the existing measures to deal with militancy in the Jammu region, which was almost unaffected so far.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people today staged a sit-in dharna on the Tawi Bridge here and put the bodies of four slain civilians on the road leading to disruption in the traffic and chaos and confusion in the city. The demonstrators raised slogans against the Farooq Abdullah Government for its alleged fail-

ure in protecting the people. They also demanded an inquiry into Friday's blast and more relief measures for the affected families.

Later, the Jammu Divisional Commissioner, Mr. Anil Goswami, reached the spot along with the IGP, Mr. R. V. Raju, and distributed ex gratia relief in cheques to the next of kin of those killed in the blast. He assured the agitated people that the Government would take all steps for protecting the civilian population. The demonstrators then called off their dharna. Earlier, some youths threw stones on vehicles forcing the police to resort to a mild lathicharge.

## Two BSF jawans killed

At least three militants and two BSF jawans were killed in a fierce encounter between militants and security forces in Badergund (Ganderbal) of Srinagar district.

THE HINDU

13 FEB 2000

10/13

## Jaswant rules out third-party mediation

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 13.** The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, today said India would not accept any "mediation, intermediation or facilitation" from any third party on resolving issues related to Jammu and Kashmir.

The visit to India next month by the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, had "no linkage with non-proliferation issues," he said.

Mr. Singh was speaking informally to reporters after addressing a conference here on the contributions made by people of Indian origin. Mr. Singh's remark comes a day after the Prime Minister rejected at the same conference any American role in easing India-Pakistan tensions, especially the Kashmir issue.

14/2

The remarks by the Prime Minister and the External Affairs Minister have come even as hints have come from a number of officials in Washington suggesting that America may be interested in taking the initiative to start a process that could lead to a resolution of the Kashmir issue.

Washington has repeatedly expressed its concern over the possibility of Kashmir becoming a flashpoint for yet another armed conflict between India and Pakistan.

Mr. Singh said a decision on signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would be taken only after achieving "the widest possible consensus" on the issue at home and after a "full-fledged" debate in Parliament.

THE HINDU

14 FEB 2000

## Abdullah hits out at autonomy opponents

NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. The poll-plank of my party is getting greater autonomy for the State and if it is denied, it would amount to a breach of trust, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said here today. He said some "unfortunate noises" were being made against the report of the State-appointed Commission favouring greater autonomy and these would have an "adverse impact."

He claimed that the UF Government in 1989 had threatened to sack the National Conference-Congress(I) Government in Jammu and Kashmir, if the militants were not released in exchange for Ms. Rubiya Sayeed, daughter of the then Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. When Mr. Sayeed ensured that the militants were released despite his opposition, "it hastened my resignation as Chief Minister".

Asked about the Government employees joining RSS activities, Dr. Abdullah said the Centre should review its policy favouring the lifting of ban in this regard by the Gujarat Government as this could have "an adverse impact" on Jammu and Kashmir.

"Employees in my State will then ask permission to join Jamaat-E-Islamia (JEI). Should I open it for them?" he asked adding "after all, JEI also terms itself as a religious organisation. — PTI

THE HINDU  
15 FEB 2000

# Ackerman hails Clinton's statement on Kashmir

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, FEB. 17. The Co-Chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, Mr. Gary Ackerman, has commended the "categorical assertion" of the President, Mr. Bill Clinton, that the United States would not try and mediate the Kashmir issue unless both India and Pakistan sought Washington's assistance.

"I welcome this clear position of the administration and applaud the President for appreciating the complex nature of the Kashmir problem. The administration realises well that Kashmir is a bilateral issue that can be best resolved through bilateral dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad," the New York Democratic law maker said in a statement.

At a press conference on Wednesday the President, while responding to questions on India and Pakistan, had made a point clearly that the "business" of Kashmir has to be sorted out between India and Pakistan and the U.S. would not get involved in the issue unless asked to by both the countries.

"I applaud the President for taking an even-handed approach to the issue and reiterating that there were absolutely no plans for unilaterally trying to mediate in the dispute," Mr. Ackerman said.

Even while making his com-

ments on India and Pakistan or for that matter on the potential of the Indian sub continent, Mr. Clinton gave an indication of the possible things he could be dealing with while in the region next month. Responding to a question on what it would take for him to include Pakistan in his South Asia programme, Mr. Clinton argued that this was based on America's long-term interests.

"...I will make a decision about whether to go based on what I think will best serve our long term interests, in non-proliferation, in trying to stop particularly a nuclear arms race and trying to help to promote stability, democracy and a resolution of the conflict between India and Pakistan," Mr. Clinton said. Senior diplomats here believe that the President in the course of his remarks has further indicated that he will be stopping in Pakistan.

## U.S watching 'measurable milestones' in Pak.

The "very important" relationship the United States had with Pakistan has "unfortunately" been interrupted by the nuclear tests and the action of General Pervez Musharraf, the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeleine Albright, has said.

"Washington is now watching very carefully on the measurable milestones in the return to civilian government there as also on the terrorism front," she said.

Appearing before the full International Relations Committee of the House of Representatives to defend the Foreign Affairs Budget for Fiscal 2001, Ms. Albright was first asked by the Ranking Democrat, Mr. Sam Gejdenson, of the situation in Pakistan as also in the things that the administration was looking for from Pakistan.

"...first of all I think we have to remember the very important relationship that we have had with Pakistan and that, unfortunately, has been interrupted by both the nuclear tests as well as by the action of Gen. Musharraf. We have consistently urged Gen. Musharraf to move in terms of some measurable milestones, of a return to civilian government...We want to see some kind of a public show and not just show but real action in terms of returning to democracy," the Secretary of State responded.

Later responding to comments from the Democratic Congressman, Mr. Robert Wexler, who argued that the link between Pakistan's present regime and terrorist activity "is all but undeniable", Ms. Albright reiterated the stand that the Clinton administration was very much concerned about the fact that certain groups operate out of Pakistan and that this had been taken up with the present government as also the previous Government of Mr. Nawaz Sharif.

# Paris echoes Washington on Kashmir

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

**New Delhi, Feb. 18:** Echoing the US, France today said differences between the nuclear twins had created a "dangerous" situation on the sub-continent, and urged India to return to the talks table in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and the Lahore declaration.

French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine, who held a "short but intense dialogue" with Indian counterpart Jaswant Singh, said Paris was keen on deepening ties with Delhi in all spheres, but was worried, like other global powers, about the Kashmir problem.

Urging India to take urgent steps to resolve its dispute with Pakistan, Vedrine said: "The non-relationship between India and Pakistan has affected the stability in the region. We want India-Pakistan dialogue to resume so that the two sides can sort out their differences and put up confidence-building-measures to ensure nothing goes wrong."

Though he said bilateral talks were the best way to sort out the dispute, he added, in typical French diplomatese, that Paris would be happy if the US were allowed to nudge the two sides "in the right direction".

Speaking to reporters after his meeting with Jaswant at Hyderabad House, Vedrine said: "The US is worried over the situation in South Asia. We are worried too." He also expressed hope that the two sides would be able not only to "contain the situation but also overcome it".

Though Vedrine's remarks appear to have mounted pressure on

India, foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal played down the issue. He said the French minister had only wanted to know about developments in the region, but did not make any specific remarks on Kashmir or resumption of Indo-Pak dialogue. On the other hand, Vedrine had restricted his comments to cross-border terror and trafficking in narcotics and small arms, Jassal added.

Regardless of India's response, Vedrine's comments on the Kashmir dispute have not come as a surprise. At the seminar on multipolarity yesterday, he had hinted that India needed to sort out differences with Pakistan over Kashmir to realise its full potential as a world player.

Vedrine was non-committal on whether France had strategically tilted in India's favour by deciding not to strike any fresh arms deal with Pakistan. On Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's reported remarks on this issue in an interview to a French daily, Vedrine said: "I have not met the Prime Minister nor have I seen the interview. But we have not taken any decision in this regard." Later in the day, Vedrine called on both Vajpayee and President K.R. Narayanan. He is to return to Paris tonight.

Vedrine said France was ready to step up cooperation with India in the field of civilian nuclear energy, but would go only as far as global commitments permitted. He said the French government was looking for "positive signals" from India, including its signature on the CTBT and accepting increased controls for safeguards laid down by the IAEA.

THE TELEGRAPH

19 FEB 2000

# Opposition calls autonomy report a secessionist move

HT Correspondent  
Jammu, February 23

HT-9 29/2

ALMOST ALL Opposition parties held protests condemning the State Autonomy Committee (SAC) report as a "secessionist document". The Opposition also interrupted the Governor's address to the joint session of the State Legislature on the opening day of the budget session today. A violent mob clashed with the police, echoing the Opposition's slogans on the streets.

Governor Girish Chandra Saxena, in his 30-minute-long address, made a scathing attack on Pakistan for causing trouble in Jammu and Kashmir. He also highlighted the need for a special dispensation for the state for overcoming its financial crunch that he said had assumed dimensions of "acute fiscal distress". He concluded with a call for "revival of many of the constitutional arrangements of the past". He hoped it would "pave the way for a contended and resurgent Jammu and Kashmir", that signifies the reversal of the Central laws and restoration of the greater autonomous status for the state as recommended by the SAC.

It was at the fag end of the Governor's address when two of the BJP MLAs Ashok Khajuria and Ch. Piara Singh moved ahead and tore the copy of the State Autonomy Committee report that recommends "restoration of greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir". They were joined by colleagues of their party and members of Congress, Janata Dal, Panthers

9800 J&K  
Party and Awami League in staging the protests.

The protesters were on their feet the moment the Governor read the portion of his address focusing progress made on the autonomy front. For almost 10 minutes, the Governor's address was interrupted as Opposition members raised slogans in the well of the Central Hall. The Opposition members later staged a walk out even as the national anthem was being played on at the conclusion of the Governor's address.

The protests within the legislature complex were echoed outside violently. Hundreds of BJP workers clashed with the police in their bid to reach the legislature complex in response to the party's call to "gherao" the complex. The party was also highlighting the issues of what it called worsening of law and order situation, rising militancy, poor governance and absence of regular water and power supply. After fighting pitched battles with police for a while, more than 300 BJP workers courted arrest.

In his address, the Governor dealt at length with the Kargil conflict and the resulting violence that has risen in the Valley, making tourist trade its immediate casualty. The Governor, while affirming that "Pakistan stands singularly exposed as an instigator and abettor of violence," regretted that the "manner in which violent activities of foreign mercenaries received a fillip in the aftermath of the abject withdrawal of the enemy, speaks volumes about the extent to which a cynical and amoral Government can go to retain its stranglehold over the levers of power in that country."

## Assembly Session

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 FEB 2000

# Terrorists' release will roll back anti-militancy drive in J&K: experts

By Ravi Bhatia and Bisheshwar Mishra

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The release of three terrorists in exchange for the hostages on IA Flight 814 will roll back the fight against militancy in Jammu and Kashmir by several years, say several security



Mushtaq Zargar

experts in the government. "This (the hijacking) had to happen when we almost had a firm grip on the situation for the first time in many years," said a senior officer of a paramilitary force engaged in anti-terrorist operations in the Valley.

These sources claim that many of the terrorists, including foreign mercenaries, would perceive this as a major victory. To buttress their argument, they draw attention to the fact that the floodgates of militancy were opened after the release of some terrorists in the Rubaiya Sayeed kidnapping case.

All the three terrorists released on Friday are recognised as ideologues by various terrorists and extremists groups active in the Valley. Maulana Masood Azhar and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar were the two topmost leaders of the terrorist movement in Jammu and Kashmir before they were arrested.

Thirty-three-year-old Zargar, better known as Mushtaq Latram, was the founder-chief of the Al-Umar outfit. He was responsible for escalating terrorist violence in the Valley before being arrested in 1993 from downtown Srinagar.

Zargar is known for his ruthlessness and used to reportedly strap

hand grenades on the bodies of his victims and blow them to bits. One of the five founders of the terrorist movement in Kashmir along with Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leaders Yasin Malik, Javed Mir and others, he later parted ways with them and formed his own group.

Zargar was involved in scores of killings, including that of two Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, and kidnappings and was lodged in Srinagar jail after his arrest.

Maulana Azhar, a Muslim cleric, was a religious preacher in an Islamic institution in Karachi before he entered India illegally for taking part in the 'fight' for Kashmir's *azadi*. A school dropout, Azhar obtained a degree in Islamic studies and speaks Punjabi, Urdu, Arabic and English. He also edited *Voice of Freedom Fighters*, the official magazine of Harkat ul-Ansar (HUA) of which was the general secretary.

Azhar is said to be a soft-spoken but gifted with oratorical skills. He belongs to an affluent farmer's family of Karachi. He was arrested in 1994 along with Sajjad Afghani at Khannabal in Anantnag district of Kashmir. His release has been demanded by many outfits, including Al-Faran which had abducted six foreign nationals from Pahalgam in July, 1995.

Ahmad Omar Sayeed Sheikh is a British national and said to have graduated from the London School of Economics. He led a small team in the kidnapping of four foreign nationals near Delhi in October 1994. He was later arrested near Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh.

# No message of peace for Kashmir

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, JAN. 1. Even after ten years of militancy and at the end of the century, there is no message of peace in sight as Kashmir seems to be stepping into the new millennium with a "disgusting note" of a plane hijacking directly connected with the problem of Kashmir. The senseless violence not only continues unabated but has taken new dimensions.

While the entire world witnessing rapid changes in almost every sphere of life, a commoner in Kashmir is as dejected as he was a decade ago.

Having seen many ups and downs, not necessarily since 1989 when the Kalashnikov arrived to change everything in their life but when India was partitioned 52 years ago and this part of the sub-continent plunged into an era of uncertainty, the Valley along with parts of Doda, Rajouri and Poonch in Jammu had to go through the pain of bullets, bombs and mines taking a heavy toll.

## 'Popular Government

Notwithstanding the fact that a "popularly" elected Government is in power which replaced the tiring seven years of gubernatorial rule in 1996, the things are changing from bad to worse with the security forces losing grip over the situation.

Though those at the helm of affairs are reluctant to accept the ground reality it is evident that the dawning of the new century holds no message which could give a sense of comfort.

For the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, it is Pakistan which is responsible for the destruction in the valley. "Pakistan has now earned the title of being mother of terrorism" he remarked.

This year the violence started increasing with foreigners taking control of the militancy and devising "devastating" policies to take on security forces.

The militant organisations of local origin barring Hizbul Mujahideen started going to the background with more organised militant outfits, Lashkare Toiba, Harkat Jehadi Islami and Harkatul Mujahideen calling the shots.

They not only registered their presence by striking "effectively" at security forces but started a major front with the help of Pakistan in Kargil which lasted for 72 days.

## Kargil conflict

Though the climax was seen as a setback to Mujahideen, there was hardly any indication of them leaving the ground.

More significantly, the foreigners who earlier chose to leave valley for winter months have stayed back this season. After Kargil, the militants resorted to a new strategy of storming camps of the security

force starting with an attack on BSF in Bandipore in the border district of Kupwara, then sneaking into the highly protected 15 Corps headquarters where the Public Relations Officer Major Pramod Purushottam was gunned down along with seven others.

Even as the authorities maintain that PRO's office hardly forms part of headquarters, the fact remains that it is within the compound of the army's head office in Srinagar.

And lastly came the suicidal attack on the headquarters of the Special Operations Group (SOG) of J & K Police in Srinagar on Monday killing 13 policemen including a DSP.

The Director General of Police, Mr. Gurbachan Jagat, who has been heading the police since 1997 candidly admits that the recent attacks were a setback to the process of fighting militants.

"They are better trained, know the war skills and are well equipped as far as arms are concerned" he said. Explaining that the militancy has many phases and it is one of them, he hoped to "overcome it". However, reports indicating larger presence of these hardcore militants with sizable number of suicide squads may not make it easy for the forces to ensure lasting peace.

"For a determined person it is no problem to sneak in" remarked a senior army officer when asked about the entry of Lashkar militants into Badamibagh cantonment in November.

On political front, the vacuum as ever remains there. The ruling National Conference (NC) fails to show its presence in the valley as its cadres are the regular target which forces the workers to take refuge in the protected areas or Jammu.

Separatist conglomerate All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is in shambles with most of its leadership behind the bars.

Its acting chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has been registering his presence in Jamia Masjid on Fridays and the senior leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, who returned from U.S. without being treated is convalescing in Delhi, though active despite being cardiac patient.

THE HINDU

- 2 JAN 2000



# J & K Govt. opposed release of militants

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, JAN. 2.** The release of two top militant leaders from the Kothbhalwal sub-jail in Jammu and the Central Jail Srinagar, has generated much debate with legal experts saying that no norms were followed and that the exercise was "illegal", carried out "under pressure" and done in a hush-hush manner.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Srinagar and Jammu were agog with rumours about the possible freeing of these militants, the Government did not follow any legal formalities to effect the release. The State Government said it was wrong to release the militants as it would be against the "national interest". The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, in an interview, also denied having any role in freeing seven militants in exchange for Dr. Rubiya Sayeed, daughter of the former Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

It is reliably learnt that the chief of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Mr. A. S. Dulat, flew down here to convince Dr. Abdullah and others. A "personal friend" of the Chief Minister, he held a detailed meeting with him and the Governor, Mr. G. C. Saxena, and apprised them about the Centre's "compulsion".

Even otherwise, the State police

had failed to prove any case against the Harkat-ul-Ansar general secretary, Moulana Masood Azhar, as also the chief commander of Al-Umar-Mujahideen, Mushtaq Zargar, and though they continued to face trial, no challan had been produced against them.

Legal experts point out that the manner in which these two were moved from the State jails has put a question mark on the functioning of the system. The prison department did not receive any official communication from any State or Central agency to release Masood. "We have not received any communication but there were verbal orders from the State Government to hand him over to the police," a senior prison official told *The Hindu*, pleading anonymity. What was done to the cases pending against him is not known.

In the case of Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar, a senior lawyer of the J&K High Court said his being taken to Kandahar was "illegal" as the court, was not informed and no permission was sought. The consent of his family members too was not sought. If his relatives ask the Union Government to bring him back what will be the Government's legal position, the lawyer asked. But the Minister of State for Home, Mr. Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, said "all procedural formalities were complied with."

## 16 killed in Srinagar blast

By Our Special Correspondent

JAMMU, JAN. 3. At least 16 people, including two security force personnel, were killed and 23 injured in a powerful mine blast in the Sabzimandi area here on Monday morning.

According to reports, the blast took place at about 9-50 a.m. in the crowded Sabzimandi area near Batamaloo bus stand. The city police chief, Dr. B. Sirinivas, said that the mine, planted in a hand cart in the vegetable market, exploded with a big bang killing 14 people on the spot. "Among those killed were two jawans of the Special Security Bureau (SSB). Five BSF personnel were among the injured. The rest were civilians."

The area has been cordoned off by the security forces. Sources said that the mine, which had a timer device, was detonated with

a remote control. Some shops and vehicles were completely destroyed in the blast, which was heard in a radius of 4 km, reports reaching here said.

An eyewitness said that the site of blast wore a ghastly look as blood was splattered in the area. Bodies were thrown hundreds of metres away under the impact of blast. The security personnel fired in panic, which led to people running helter skelter. The traffic came to a halt.

The IGP Kashmir range, Dr. Ashok Bhan, and other senior civil and police officers rushed to the spot.

The injured were shifted to different hospitals in the city. The condition of many of the injured was critical, sources said, adding that two of them died of their injuries on way to the hospital. Some of the deceased have been identified as Ghulam Mohiuddin,

Ghulam Rasool, Ghulam Nabi, Abdul Majid, Mohammad Ayub Mir, Mushtaq Bhat, Parvez Sofi, Irshad Ahmed, Ghulam Mohammad Bangroo, Abdul Majid and Ali Mohammed. The SSB personnel who died were S. Bir and Tonka Chanderwan.

A red alert has been sounded in the city and search operations launched. Dr. Sirinivas said that searches were being conducted in Noorbagh and other localities but no arrests had been made. No militant outfit has claimed responsibility.

Militants last night attempted to storm an Army camp in Kreeri village of Baramulla district. Police sources said that some militants fired towards the camp and tried to enter it but the forces foiled their attempt. Three Army personnel were reported to have been injured in the action.

UNI reports from New Delhi:

The Ministry of Home Affairs today reviewed the overall security situation in Srinagar.

An official spokesman said that since no group had claimed responsibility for the blast, investigations had started to trace the persons responsible and their modus operandi.

The State Government was making arrangements for the prompt payment of ex-gratia to the next of the kin of the deceased, he added.



Bodies lie scattered at the blast site in the busy vegetable market in Srinagar on Monday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

THE HINDU

- 4 JAN 2000

## Terror in the valley

<sup>Page 11</sup>  
SINCE THE targeting of innocents has always been one of the main objectives of terrorists, there is nothing out of the ordinary about the explosion which took a toll of nearly 20 lives in a Srinagar market on Monday. The aim of the militants in choosing such a spot which is visited by a large number of ordinary people was evidently to create a sense of panic as well as despair among the locals about the steady deterioration of the law and order situation in the valley. In the immediate aftermath of the Kargil conflict, the subversives were seemingly concentrating on the security establishments with the objective of demoralising the armed forces. It is possible that increased vigilance at these offices and barracks has now forced the militants to turn their attention once again to the soft targets. Few will doubt that there is an element of desperation in these attacks, fuelled by an evident failure on the part of the terrorists and their sponsors across the border to create a situation where international attention will be focussed on Kashmir. Only last month, the chief executive of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, had spoken of Kashmir as a possible nuclear "flashpoint". Since even such irresponsible and provocative statements have evoked no response and, instead, the focus is now on Islamabad's complicity in the recent hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane, there is every possibility of the terrorists indulging in further atrocities to create the impression that Kashmir is in a state of turmoil.

<sup>945AK</sup>  
It goes without saying that, to counter such heinous efforts, the security measures will have to be made much more stringent than what they are at present. Besides, greater emphasis will have to be placed on gathering information about the activities of the militants so that they are unable to carry out any surprise attacks, of which there have been quite a few in recent weeks. It is no secret that the security steps can only be effective if they are backed by adequate inputs from the intelligence agencies. Regrettably, the state government's performance in this respect has left much to be desired. Yet, the present time is perhaps the worst period in all the years of the proxy war conducted by Pakistan because the military regime there, smarting under the humiliation of its retreat in Kargil, is hell-bent on creating as much trouble as it possibly can in Kashmir with the help of both the mercenaries and the terrorists it has trained and armed in its training camps.

~~THE TIMES OF INDIA~~

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 JAN 2000

# J-K Govt withdraws jailbreak case against Azhar Masood

HT Correspondent  
Jammu, January 7

HT 22  
811

THE GOVERNMENT forgot to withdraw a case against Maulana Masood Azhar in one of the courts and faced embarrassing moments in the court of Forest Magistrate yesterday.

Maulana Masood Azhar, one among the three militants released in exchange of hostages aboard a hijacked Indian Airlines plane in Kandhar, Afghanistan, is now in Pakistan. Another militant released from Srinagar jail, Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar, has been seen in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Forest Magistrate Bala Jyoti raised the issue of the Maulana's absence in her court where he was one among the 25 to be produced in a jail break case.

The Government has moved an application for the withdrawal of the case against Maulana Masood Azhar. The judge has fixed January 10 for the case to discuss how cases could be withdrawn against the accused in his absence.

It was on the intervening night of December 30th and 31st that the Government had withdrawn cases against Maulana, who was set free on 31st December morning. The prosecution wing of the State police had moved the judges for withdrawal of the cases against Maulana and Mushtaq Ahmad Zargar.

There were two criminal cases against Masood Azhar. One pertained to his illegal entry into the country by travelling on a forged passport. The police records had shown that Maulana Masood Azhar had reached Kashmir on a forged Portuguese passport. He was also

facing another case of casing law and order problem in Kotbhalwal jail, where he was shifted from Tihar four years ago. He was arrested on February 11, 1994 from Mitigund, a village in Anantang district in south Kashmir.

The cases under TADA were withdrawn against Zargar before he was shifted out of Srinagar Central Jail.

Official sources told *The Hindustan Times* that all the legal formalities were completed before the two militant leaders were moved out of the prisons. The third militant Ahmad Umar Sayed Sheikh was in Tihar jail, Delhi and the cases were listed against him by Delhi Police.

The case in the court of the forest magistrate too would be withdrawn. The application has already been moved, sources said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 JAN 2000

# US-rapped Pak reins Masood rhetoric

9-8 131  
Islamabad, Jan. 8 (Agencies): Slapped with a US notice to rein in Masood Azhar, Pakistan today told the Harkat-ul Ansar leader not to make provocative statements against foreign countries.

Masood, freed by India in exchange for the Airbus hostages, had reportedly said in Karachi on Wednesday that "Muslims should not rest in peace until America and India are destroyed".

Stung by the outburst, the US said it "would hold Pakistan responsible for Masood's activities which threaten the lives of our citizens". State department spokesman James Rubin also asked Islamabad to investigate if Masood's activities had violated any law. If so, Rubin added, he should be prosecuted.

Rapped on the knuckle, the Pakistan interior ministry has advised Masood, who reached his Bawalpur home yesterday, to lie low and not make statements which can be considered inflammatory.

The Harkat leader, however, denied that

9-8 131  
he had given a call for *jihad* against the US and India and said his cause is Kashmir. "I want Muslims to unite against Indian terrorism. I am not Osama (bin Laden). I'm just fighting for Kashmir," he told AP.

He accused Washington of adopting double standards on Kashmir, saying the US "should not interfere in matters which do not concern it".

Masood described as a "big lie" the evidence furnished by India to establish Pakistan's complicity in the hijack. "Their pictures are fake because good Muslims never shave their beards," the Harkat leader said on the photographs of the hijackers released by India.

Delhi has said the onus is on Islamabad to extradite or arrest the sky pirates as Pakistan is a signatory to several international conventions on hostage-taking. India claims the terrorists are hiding in Pakistan.

Denying that the hijackers are on its soil, Pakistan said it will try them if they are apprehended. "If we can get hold of the

hijackers, we will try them in accordance with the law. This is our firm commitment and we are absolutely intent on it," foreign office spokesman Tariq Altaf told a television network last night.

He accused India of not providing information on the hijackers. "We had said they should provide us whatever information they have on the identity of the hijackers, or transcripts of their negotiations which they were exclusively holding with the hijackers, so that we can pursue those. But they have not given us anything at all," Altaf said.

In a bid to convince the US that Islamabad is keen on getting back to the negotiations table with Delhi, Pakistan's ambassador in Washington, Maleeha Lodhi, said her country was prepared for talks with India "to resolve tensions".

"The Pakistani government reiterates our calls for India to engage in good-faith efforts to resolve the tensions between our two countries, especially on the issue of

Kashmir," Lodhi said.

Coinciding with her talks offer, human resources development minister Murli Manohar Joshi said India was still trying to build international opinion to get Pakistan declared a "terrorist state".

Joshi said Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee was "very much clear" in his objective in this regard. "I am optimistic that Vajpayee will succeed in his mission," he added.

## British official visit

A British defence chief will travel to Pakistan on Thursday for a three-day visit seen as a move towards normalising relations with the military regime.

Charles Guthrie, chief of the British defence staff, will meet Pervez Musharraf, who ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a military coup last October, *The Guardian* said. The aim of the visit will be to discuss the prospects of a return to democracy and ways to reduce tension with India, the paper said.

# 'Pakistani mujahideen are involved in Kashmir attacks'

■ Pak daily *Ausaf* gives details of fighters sent across the border to foment trouble

JYOTI MALHOTRA  
NEW DELHI, JAN 9

**T**HE Pakistani press is beginning to acknowledge the death of Pakistanis in Mujahideen attacks against the Indian Army in Kashmir valley.

The most recent stories have appeared in an Urdu daily called *Ausaf* and a translation of its November 28 issue offers direct and compelling evidence.

Meanwhile, New Delhi and Islamabad have exchanged notes on "threatening statements" made against Prime Minister A B Vajpayee by the terrorist group Lashkar-e-Toiba during a rally in

Muridke, near Lahore, in early November.

When the Government said it wanted Islamabad to take action against the group, the Pakistani Government is believed to have replied that it could not violate "the freedom of speech and expression" in its country.

It is, however, the 'Al-Badar annual report' in *Ausaf* newspaper that interests analysts more. According to these Pakistan watchers, the pressure on the Pakistani press, especially the Urdu press, to acknowledge the deaths of Pakistani citizens "for the Kashmiri cause" has prompted the appearance of

such a story.

"Al-Badar succeeded in attacking (the) Indian Army in high-security zones and launched attacks on Indian Army camps in Bandipura, Gandarbal, Budgam, Anantnag, Rajauri, Naushera and Udhampur," the report says.

The Al-Badar outfit is said to be directly linked to the Jamiat-i-Islami in Pakistan and, according to analysts, is "tasked and trained" by the ISI, Pakistan's intelligence agency.

The report has details of as many as 113 people killed in Kashmir valley, "almost all Pakistanis", between October 1998 and October 1999.

Besides attacking Army camps stationed across Kashmir, the report admits to Al-Badar men fighting battles in "Kargil, Drass, Batalik and Mushkoh sectors".

It goes on to add that fighters from this group mounted an operation called the 'Badar operation' and snatched a large number of arms and ammunition from the Indian forces, "which are now being used by the Mujahideen in the Valley".

The surprisingly candid report gives besides names, other details such as aliases, where these men were killed in Kashmir and where they live in Pakistan.

INDIAN EXPRESS

10 JAN 2000

## Pak. plea to U.S. on Kashmir

**ISLAMABAD, JAN. 14.** Pakistan today said it was committed to the restoration of democracy in a phased manner on the basis of devolution of power by holding district-level elections during the year.

In meetings with a U.S. delegation headed by Senate minority leader, Mr. Tom Daschle, Gen. Pervez Musharraf and the Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, also stressed the need for the resolution of the Kashmir issue saying it 'lies at the heart of peace and security in the region'.

The Foreign Minister also said that the settlement of the Kashmir issue "will result in an environment conducive to the long-term economic development of the region".

He hoped that the U.S. would play a "pro-active role to help resolve the Kashmir problem. President (Bill) Clinton's visit to South Asia would provide an important opportunity in this regard."

Gen. Musharraf welcomed the visiting delegation which also included Senators Christopher Dodd, Harry Reid and Daniel Akaka.— PTI

**THE HINDU**

**15 JAN 2000**

# Prime Minister calls meeting on Kashmir

51-6  
15/1  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 14. — The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, has called a meeting on Monday on the deteriorating law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

The meeting was originally planned for tomorrow but it cannot be held as the Defence Minister, Mr George Fernandes, is busy with Army Day functions.

The Home Minister, Mr L K Advani, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mr Farooq Abdullah, and the Governor, Mr Girish Saxena, are attending the meeting.

A major issue under discussion is the change in the tactics of militants who are now hitting bases of security forces to reduce mobility and their "area domination". Home ministry officials said by hitting hard targets, militants hoped to keep the security forces pinned down in their own camps.

Home ministry officials admitted that the militants had succeeded for a month but new orders have gone to the security forces to keep minimum troops within the camps, and go out and hit the enemy in the field.

The new efforts by the security forces come just as the Governor, Mr Saxena, is being increasingly involved in day-to-day security issues. Though the Chief Minister met the Home Minister recently, it was Mr Saxena who held a long meeting with Mr Advani to discuss the agenda. When the Chief Minister was away, it was again the Governor who held an important meeting in Srinagar.

## DIPLOMATIC ROW

ISLAMABAD, Jan. 14. — The Indian Deputy High Commissioner to Pakistan was summoned by the Foreign Office here and a protest was lodged against the alleged harassment of a Pakistani mission official in New Delhi on the charge of paying school fees with counterfeit currency notes. Mr Sudhir Vyas said he had pointed out that the matter was between the school and the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi and had asked how the government of India was concerned in it.

— PTI

Explaining the Centre's plan to involve Mr Saxena, officials pointed out that the Chief Minister did not appear to have much control over state affairs and for political reasons, could not be removed.

**UK to Pak:** The UK has made clear to Pakistan its "deep concern" on developments in Kashmir and asked Islam-

abad to join the international efforts to eradicate terrorism in all its forms, adds PTI.

The United Kingdom's position was made clear by its visiting chief of defence staff, Sir Charles Guthrie, during his meeting with Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, here yesterday during which he said he also discussed the recent hijacking of the Indian Airlines aircraft.



# PM calls meeting on Kashmir

By Law Kumar Mishra  
The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has convened a high-level meeting on Kashmir on Monday. It is expected to be attended by home minister L.K. Advani, defence minister George Fernandes, state governor G.C. Saxena and chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

Heads of security agencies involved in the counter-insurgency operation in the state would also attend the meeting. Mr Abdullah briefed the home minister on Wednesday.

The Monday meeting will discuss the security scenario in the

state, particularly after a series of attacks on highly fortified security and army camps in the state by 'Fidayeen' group of the ISI on Saturday, official sources said.

These sources denied reports in local newspapers that the J&K chief minister was being removed. Industry minister Mustafa Kamal, younger brother of Mr Abdullah, had accused a section in the Union cabinet of conspiring to remove the chief minister on Thursday at a news conference here. The state governor had a meeting with senior security officials here on Monday.

Meanwhile, a ruling National Conference leader Ghulam Qadir

Bhat alias Qadir Hindustani was among seven persons killed, while militants damaged the Uri-Wagoora transmission line in the Kashmir Valley during the past 24 hours.

**PTI adds:** U.S. assistant secretary of state Karl Inderfurth is arriving in Islamabad on January 20 to hold talks with Pakistani officials on issues including non-proliferation, terrorism, economic cooperation and trade and regional security issues. Mr Inderfurth is leading a three-member delegation including Donald Camp, member of the U.S. national security council and Michael Sheehan, coordinator for counter-terrorism in the state department.

THE TIMES OF INDIA  
17 JAN 2000

## 'Fake companies in Britain raising funds to promote militancy in J&K'

LONDON: Islamic fundamentalists living in Britain have established a network of front companies and bogus societies to work undetected for Muslim militants operating in Kashmir and other places abroad, *Sunday Telegraph* said.

An investigation by the newspaper has found that extremists across the country are using 12 different companies to raise funds and volunteers. According to the paper, the businesses, which exist in name only, allow the activists access to facilities and financial help that they would otherwise be denied.

Andrew Dismore, Labour MP from Hendon, is likely to ask the department of trade and industry to investigate the "blatant abuse" of company law for political purposes. "This is an extremely worrying development and I intend to table questions in the House of Commons as a matter of urgency," Mr Dismore told the daily.

One of the companies is based on a council-run business estate in north London and it has the use of conference facilities, 24-hour security and reception facilities. The estate has been set up for the exclusive use of information technology companies.

The daily probe revealed that the companies, based in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Crawley and Leicester, operate on behalf of an organisation called Al-Muhajiroun, which means the voice, the eyes and the ears of Muslims. The society urges its supporters to "formulate a fifth column for the spread of Islam".

It has strong links with Islamic militants in Kashmir, Chechnya and Afghanistan, many of which are regarded as terrorist organisations by security sources in the West.

One of the companies, called 'Info-2000 Software', is based on Haringey Council's Lee Valley technopark in north London. The company was set up in March 1998 and has never traded. Its London offices act as a base for Sheikh Omar Bakri Mohammed, the Syrian-born founder of Al-Muhajiroun. Sheikh Mohammed and his followers gain access to the company's offices every day by signing themselves as company visitors at the central reception of the business park.

They can use the office's six computers, scanner, fax machine and phone lines to drum up support for Islamic organisations abroad, the daily revealed. According to the reports, the office contains thousands of Islamic leaflets and the walls are plastered with propaganda posters.

The existence of the company will seriously embarrass council officials, who closed a Muslim college in 1995 on the same industrial park after they discovered that it was linked to Sheikh Mohammed, who has admitted that the company does not trade and that it is effectively acting as a front for him and his supporters. He has also confirmed that it is one of a number of companies that operate along similar lines in other parts of the country. (PTI)

GOVT. DECIDES ON 'OFFENSIVE STRATEGY'

# Proxy war in J&K will be defeated, says Advani

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JAN. 17. The Vajpayee Government has decided to embark on an 'offensive strategy' to meet the challenge of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. This was decided at a high-level meeting presided over by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, — held to review the security situation in the State.

The meeting was attended among others by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, the Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. G. C. Saxena, the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. V. P. Malik, besides, the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Lalit Mansingh, and representatives of various security agencies.

The meeting was the Vajpayee Government's response to the fast changing situation in Jammu and Kashmir, where the militants were seen to have stepped up their terrorist activities, and the security forces were presumed to be demoralised after the surrender at Kandahar. Mr. Advani, who spoke to news-men after the meeting, admitted to 'a fresh intensification of the proxy war' in the aftermath of the Kargil conflict. As the Home Minister put it, 'we will defeat also this proxy war.'

It was decided at today's meeting to raise 'specialised battalions of the Central paramilitary forces', specifically trained for 'waging counter-terrorist operations'. Another decision was to enhance deployment along the Line of Control and international border. The stress appeared to be on intensifying the

already being strengthened, security forces have been asked to adopt a proactive approach against the terrorists in the hinterland and to establish area domination both during day and night. Security in Srinagar city has also been beefed up and the security forces have been asked to carry out round-the-clock operations based upon pinpointed intelligence to neutralize terrorist modules in the city."

The review meeting also decided to use the Village Defence Committees in the counter-insurgency operations, and to provide the village-based teams with 'sophisticated arms and modern communication equipment.'

The Vajpayee Government recognised that the battle against terrorism would mean an added accent on economic development 'so as to relieve the sufferings of the masses.'

The press note talks of 'new job-generating projects will be put in operation' in order to address the problem of unemployment among the youth, though it is not clear whether the Centre has agreed to provide additional funds to the State Government, as Dr. Farooq Abdullah has been demanding.

The decision also was to impress upon the State administration the need to provide effective governance.

Mr. Advani did not think much of Gen. Pervez Musharraf's diplomatic overtures, which he dismissed as a 'desperate bid' to break out of the diplomatic isolation that has come Pakistan's way because of the growing international recognition that Islamabad was abetting cross-border terrorism.



**A BSF personnel stands guard during a search operation in Srinagar. The security forces have intensified their operations as Republic Day approaches.** — Photo: Nissar Ahmed

counter-insurgency measures.

The most concrete decision of the evening was to 'divide the counter-insurgency grid into 49 sectors as part of a three-tier command and control structure under the unified headquarters.' There is a recognition, in Mr. Advani's words, that whereas the Government had managed to achieve a turn-around in the undeclared proxy war in the 1997-98-1999 period, the post-Kargil situation has changed qualitatively. As the Home Minister pointed out, even though the security forces have managed to kill the hordes of suicide squads, perhaps the militants have had the upper hand in the battle of publicity.

The press note, issued after the meeting, read: "It was also decided to set up an additional UHQ for areas north of Zojila. While the State Police and the Intelligence apparatus is

# Militants will find it hot in J&K

19/1 By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, JAN. 18. The Vajpayee Government's "offensive strategy" to tackle cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir has turned the focus on 49 newly-carved sectors in the Counter-Insurgency (CI) grid and making them self-sufficient.

The "pro-active" strategy, announced last night after a high-level meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, however, has not revealed any new element in deployment of additional forces, strengthening of the intelligence network and fighting militancy.

According to top officials of the Home Ministry who were involved in evolving the action plan in association with Defence Ministry officials, a majority of the 49 CI sectors can be described as "hyper-sensitive". All CI sectors will be self-sufficient in terms of information and operations.

While the "hyper-sensitive" sectors will be under the control of the Army, the Central para-military forces will have control of other sectors. All the sectors will be linked by a sophisticated communication network and the sector commander given full authority and made accountable for the CI operations.

Senior officials said the "pro-active" approach would not allow the militants to escape irrespective of the consequences. (As part of the move to flush out the militants, "if we have to blow up even our own buildings, we would do so as we don't want the militants to go back alive," PTI reported quoting the sources.) In the post-Kargil scenario, particularly after the military regime took over in Pakistan, the attacks became more desperate and were launched deep inside the areas held by the security forces in Ba-

damibagh, Bandipur, Handwara, the Government Secretariat in Srinagar and Jammu.

According to the sources, as against over 6,800 incidents of terrorist violence each year during 1994 and 1995, the number came down to less than 3,000 in 1998 and 1999. The sources cited the increased flow of domestic tourists to the Valley as an indicator of things turning around during 1998 and 1999. From just 322 tourists in 1995, the number rose to 99,636 in 1998 and to over 1,72,000 last year.

The sources claimed that popular support to terrorist activities had declined over the past three years. As against 85 foreign mercenaries killed in 1995, as many as 319 were killed in 1998 and in the first 10 months of last year about 260 foreign mercenaries were killed in the CI operations.

In the post-Kargil phase, militants and foreign mercenaries infiltrated from across the border, while the troops were engaged in firing along the LoC. The sources said the mercenaries headed for areas which they found were less attended to by the security forces. As "suicide squads" or "fidayen" targeted army and para-military camps, it was obvious that the militants were bent on demoralising the security forces.

Eleven attacks by "suicide squads" took place in the post-Kargil phase in the Valley. But the militants were feeling "demoralised." All the militants of the suicide squads had been eliminated by the security forces. "This kind of operation will die its own death," the sources said.

In the Valley, nearly 3,500 militants were operating, of whom 80 per cent were mercenaries from Afghanistan, Sudan, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

# No policy innovation in J&K strategy

By Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI, JAN.18.** The Prime Minister-led review of the security scenario in Jammu and Kashmir has expectedly led to a reaffirmation of the Vajpayee Government's resolve to defeat the "proxy war", unleashed and sustained by Pakistan. The stress on counter-insurgency measures, to the total exclusion of political solution and political ideas, is the most conspicuous outcome of the review.

That the Prime Minister himself should have presided over the review is itself revealing. It was with much fanfare that the stewardship of the Jammu and Kashmir affairs was restored to the Home Ministry. That the Jammu and Kashmir review, first since November 18, 1999, should have taken place at 7, Race Course Road clearly indicates a realisation that Mr. Advani has not exactly succeeded in getting the better of the situation.

In the event the January 17 review did not produce any policy innovation. The Army leadership did not have its way, and the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, will continue to preside over the "unified command" mechanism. On his part, the Chief Minister played out his "helplessness" act rather well; he simply told the Prime Minister and his colleagues: "Give me more funds if you want me to deliver". And, Mr. Vajpayee and his colleagues had no choice but to agree to provide the State Government with adequate funds to meet the "developmental" needs and the demands of the Government employees.

The problem for the ruling coalition at the Centre is that it has allowed itself to be so unseemingly and so inextricably bracketed with the National Conference regime; and, to the extent Dr. Farooq Abdullah is seen as not commanding popular acceptance, New Delhi is seen siding with an unpopular regime against the people of Kashmir.

The utter dependence upon Dr. Abdullah has drastically reduced the Central Government's op-

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110-13  
tions; the Centre has not been able to expand the democratic political space in the Valley. Individuals and forces who are pro-India but do not necessarily believe in the Abdullah dynasty find themselves totally marginalised in the Kashmiri schemes of things. One major argument throughout 1995-96, it will be recalled, in favour of restoration of "democratic" rule was that an elected Government in Srinagar would provide a buffer between New Delhi and the alienated masses. That strategic purpose stands negated.

And because New Delhi is seen as hostile to the non-National Conference political voices, the anti-Abdullah and anti-Centre sentiments naturally gets channelised by the All Party Hurriyat Conference. Had the central leadership in the last two years displayed political imagination, the democratic space in the Valley could have expanded and the doubtful claims of Hurriyat leadership would have been exposed.

Then, there is the other side to this political imagination. The accent on more battalions, counter-insurgency units, additional manpower, etc. betrays lack of strategic clarity. While these macho noises help reassure the domestic constituency, all this din about "extra security measures" help Pakistan sustain the notion internationally that "Kashmir" was at a flash-point, and that the international community better force New Delhi to enter into a dialogue.

Moreover, the "pro-active", offensive strategy is flawed on another count: it is not intended to make a distinction between the foreign mercenary and the local militant. Any blurring of the distinction could help generate for the militants indigenous support and sympathy. But, above all, the January 17 review sends out signals of a leadership that has run out of ideas. Having cranked up a militant mood during the Kargil conflict, the Vajpayee Government is now caught in its own rhetoric.

THE HINDU  
19 JAN 2000

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## Major decisions on N-E likely

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, January 20

THE GOVERNMENT is set to take a major initiative in re-defining its policy on the North-Eastern States, including Sikkim.

Besides security-related issues, the neglect of the region in terms of its uneven development is slated to be discussed threadbare at a two-day conclave convened by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee at Shillong.

Instant decisions on some of the long-standing issues are expected to be taken at the high-level conclave, billed as the first of its kind ever organised by the Centre.

The conference that begins tomorrow is to be attended by Home Minister L K Advani, Defence Minister George

Fernandes, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission K C Pant, besides Governors and Chief Ministers of the sister States, including Sikkim.

Several other dignitaries such as Union Ministers of State for Water Resources and Youth and Culture, senior officials from the Ministries of Home, Finance, Power, Information Technology, Commerce, Health, Civil Aviation and Railway Board are also expected to attend the meeting.

Official sources said that the conference would specifically take up the restructuring of the North-Eastern Council so as to make it broad-based with the inclusion of Sikkim and also all the State Governors.

A Bill on restructuring of the

Council that paved the way for the replacement of the Governors of the sister States with Chief Ministers as members could not be passed in Parliament following the sudden dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha. A fresh Bill with appropriate changes on the revamp of the Council is likely to be finalised for its later-day introduction in Parliament.

Among other developmental issues to be taken up for discussion are financial position of the States and the inter-linked implementation of the plan schemes, measures connected with non-plan revenue expenditure, review of the MoUs entered into by the States concerned with the Finance Ministry and various other aspects of employment generating schemes and youth activities.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JAN 2000

# J&K Govt endorses autonomy report

Arun Joshi  
Jammu, January 20

THE JAMMU and Kashmir Government has again endorsed the State Autonomy Committee report that demands full restoration of the 1952 autonomous status to the State, which barred Centre from any control barring the three crucial matters of defence, communications and external affairs.

The State Cabinet dwelt on the issue of the Centre seeking State Government's stand on the autonomy report that was submitted to the Centre in April last year.

The Cabinet endorsed the report in full and agreed with all its contents that called for the restoration of the titles of "Sadar-e-Riyasat" equivalent to President and "Wazir-e-Azam" or Prime Minister for head of the State and government, respectively.

The report had also sought removal of all the Central laws that extended among other things the jurisdiction of Election Commission and the Supreme Court.

The National Conference Government is under pressure to forego all formalities of discussing the report with the Centre and pass a resolution in the Legislature restoring greater autonomy to the State. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has resisted those pressures so far even when he agrees

that the time has come when the people want results on the issue.

The Centre in its latest communication to the Jammu and Kashmir while acknowledging the receipt of the autonomy committee report had raised a technical point about the State Government's stand on the report.

According to the political observers, it was a "clever tactic" by the Centre to throw the ball in the court of Jammu and Kashmir Government.

But, as expected, the Government has endorsed the report and urged the Centre to start discussions on its contents.

The National Conference had regained power by securing a two-thirds majority in the Assembly elections in 1996 on the plank of restoration of autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.

The National Conference that has ruled the State for most years favours autonomy to the State because of its distinct identity and the circumstances and conditions in which the instrument of accession was signed by last Dogra king Maharaja Hari Singh in October 1947 following tribal invasion of the State.

The Government had constituted a panel to study the autonomy aspect and make recommendations. Karan Singh, a renowned scholar and son of Maharaja Hari Singh headed it.

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# Darkness over the Valley



**An Army camp targeted by militants.**

**E**VERTHING LIES shattered in Kashmir. Peace, prosperity and development, promised on the return of democratic rule in October 1996, remain a dream. Militancy continues unabated. And, all of Kashmir is literally groping in the dark, with only two hours of power supply a day. Besides, the nearly three lakh State employees have been on strike since December 20, 1999. As the new millennium begins, this is what the people have been "gifted" by the Governments at the Centre and in the State.

The widespread view is that the situation in the State now is worse than that prevailing in the early Nineties when the crack of Kalashnikovs was first heard. But, the authorities claim they can contain what they call the "frustrated moves" by the militants. But, a political solution remains elusive and no party to the crisis seems inclined to move in a positive direction. Why this spurt in militancy, pushing into the background the political set-up whether pro or anti national? The reasons are many, not just the ruling elite's favourite refrain: Pakistan is abetting militancy. There is a lack of will in the political system; the rulers whether in New Delhi or Srinagar are seen as having taken the people for a ride and this has led to restlessness. Earlier caught in the crossfire of militants and security forces, the hapless Kashmiris are now witness to the exchange of allegations and counter-allegations between Dr. Farooq Abdullah's National Conference regime and the Centre.

The NC accuses the Centre of not be-

*Everything lies shattered in Kashmir. Peace, prosperity and development, promised on the return of democratic rule in October 1996, remain a dream. SHUJAAT BUKHARI details the plight of the people.*

ing wholehearted in supporting the State financially and of punishing it for the wrongs of the seven-year-long gubernatorial regime. The NC says that the compensation packages announced for Punjab and the Northeast from time to time smack of different yardsticks being used. Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, State Industries Minister and younger brother of the Chief Minister, minces no words in accusing a section of the bureaucracy in New Delhi of pushing Jammu and Kashmir to the wall. "The Kashmir affairs department in Delhi has turned into a department of intrigues against the State," he alleges.

The Centre, on its part, stresses the need for accountability in the State administration. For, the State Government has been facing a storm of allegations. The main charge is that it has not been able to deliver the goods. The NC regime claims to have broken the political stalemate and given the people a sense of relief at all levels. But this is not reflected at the ground level. Most people do not see their honour and dignity as having been restored. In fact, the general feeling is that the NC Government had developed a contemptuous attitude towards Kashmiris, notwithstanding the fact that after seven years of death and destruction, they again embraced the party in 1996 with the hope that the much-talked-about

dearness allowance instalments and the passengers and crew of the hijacked Indian Airlines flight has implementation of more recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission. boldened the militant ranks, admit Talks have failed and the State has in-security authorities. Though there has been an increase in militant activities, the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) to deal with the putting the security forces on tenterhooks, so far there have not been the striking employees. The State is reeling under a severe financial crisis and is scenes of jubilation among the people in a position to bear the Rs. 400 as was seen after the release of five top JKLF leaders in exchange for Rubaiya crores need to pay DA etc.

The Centre, it is alleged, is sticking to its game of putting the Farooq Government on the defensive. Though, the NC is part of the National Democratic Alliance, the BJP has joined other Opposition parties in supporting the employees against the State Government.

In the absence of a serious effort on the political front, the militancy has assumed dangerous proportions. The recent addition is the *fidayeen* culture which so far has maintained its pace to inflict losses on security forces with little effort and fewer casualties on the militants side. Even as the home-grown Hizbul Mujahideen are still in operation, the pan-Islamic Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba have been calling the shots. Since July last, the militants have adopted a new pattern of sneaking directly into camps of the security forces. Starting with the attack on the BSF headquarters at Bandipore, they have inflicted heavy losses — at the Badamibagh Cantonment where the Defence PRO, Major P. Purushottam, was killed alongwith seven others, at the Special Operations Group office at Khanabal and the latest being at Tootoo Ground.

The release of three top militants — Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Zargar and Ahmed Omar Sheikh — in exchange for

"Kashmiriat" was still alive in it, though its leaders took refuge outside the Valley in the bad days.

The NC leaders claim credit for providing jobs to over 45,000 youth, streamlining the administration, reconstructing bridges and schools and above all the promise to restore greater autonomy to the State. But, on the ground, the results are yet to be seen. Challenges to the NC regime are increasing with each passing day, the latest being the total breakdown in power supply to the Valley as a result of two bomb blasts at transmission towers at Uri and Qazigund. At the Chief Minister's instance, an emergency restoration system (ERS) was rushed from Delhi in eight special flights. But the fact remains that otherwise also most parts of rural Kashmir are facing acute shortage of power. According to one assessment, over 250 transformers are out of order in the Valley and for lack of funds these cannot be set right.

The same is the case with other civic problems, though a senior Minister says "One should appreciate the role of the NC as the situation is not conducive with Pakistan continuing with its proxy war."

The entire administration is paralysed with all Government offices nearly empty for more than a month now. Its employees have locked horns with the State Government over the release of

The latest militancy phase is sending shivers down the spines of the people and the politicians, even as security officials assert that the situation is well under control and that "it should not lead to any kind of worry at all". Mainstream politicians, including NC men who have been the main target of militant attacks, have chosen to lie low; even separatist politicians concede that militancy has taken centre stage relating them to the background. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), even with its entire leadership behind bars, has been managing to issue press statements.



## HD-13 Three-pronged strategy to combat insurgency in Kashmir

By Atul Aneja

**NEW DELHI, JAN. 30.** The Government has decided to adopt a three-pronged strategy to combat insurgency in Kashmir, based on larger force mobilisation and proactive deployment.

Highly placed sources said that a decision had been taken to increase the force level, especially in the Rajouri, Poonch, Nangi Tekri, and Sudarbani areas, south of the Pir Panjal ranges. Fresh induction, mainly in the 16 corps area, was partly due to stepped up infiltration in the area. It was also anticipated that Pakistan may seek more engagements with the Indian forces in this area.

But more troops may be required in some other areas in Jammu and Kashmir. For instance, a strengthened counter-insurgency grid, now being set in

place, requires additional deployment of the Army and para-military forces.

Besides, the "imbalance" caused in the force level, owing to larger post-Kargil deployment along the Line of Control (LoC), resulting in the presence of fewer troops in the insurgent zones in the valley and the Doda area is yet to be "corrected" fully.

This apart, the Government has decided to adopt a pro-active posture in the counter-insurgency drive. As a result, troops are being encouraged to seize the initiative and push militants to the defensive. "Encounter seeking" which includes chasing and engaging cross-border militants in areas including the border zone is likely to be given emphasis.

All this comes in the backdrop of a changed threat perception,

vis-a-vis the internal security situation in Jammu and Kashmir where an estimated 300 hard-core insurgents have infiltrated in this area in the recent months.

While the Government has decided to alter the balance of forces in its favour in the current round of the counter-insurgency campaign, its response to insurgency is being constrained by two key factors.

There is a clear perception here that an intensified drive against externally aided militancy should not result in a larger conflict between India and Pakistan. Besides, official circles are clear that the application of force should be such that Islamabad is prevented from making political capital out of "human rights violations" in order to blunt the new counter-insurgency thrust.

## 55-10 WRONG SIGNALS

### J&K autonomy proposals misconceived

**T**HE Jammu and Kashmir government's acceptance of a report recommending reversion to pre-1953 status shows the irresponsibility of Farooq Abdullah's government. Any proposal that seeks to dilute the role of the Centre is bound to give the militants in Kashmir the message that government do not have the requisite will to come down hard on them. An elected government is in place in the state. It has been elected under the provisions of the Constitution it is sworn to uphold. It follows that the state government is bound to co-operate with the Centre in curbing the activities of militants — most of which are sponsored by neighbouring regimes. Instead the regime seeks to subserve selfish ends rather than the welfare of the Kashmiri people. To achieve the twin goals of frustrating militancy and working for peace and order, the state government needs to focus on issues of development, which has to be central to the integration of Kashmir into the national mainstream. This cannot happen by regressing in time. The report which the state Cabinet has forwarded to the Centre includes demands for the restitution of the old offices of "Sadr-i-Riyasat" and "Wazir-e-Azam". In symbolic terms it looks backwards at an archaic, feudal order rather than a progressive, development-oriented regime.

Asking for the kind of autonomy that the report prepared by GM Shah envisages represents a dangerous way of hedging bets. On the one hand, it still looks to be with the Union of India, thereby retaining benefits of handsome subsidies provided to the state. On the other hand, it pleads for special autonomy which enables it to escape scrutiny of the central government as well as the local population. Even more crucially, the proposal for autonomy will give Kashmir a special status setting it apart from other states. This will raise questions about its position vis-a-vis the nation-state. Pakistan will seize the opportunity to insist that Kashmir is not integrally part of the Indian state and intensify calls for international mediation on the status of Kashmir. The charitable interpretation of the Abdullah government's position is that it has failed to realise the implications of the report and sought the easy option of populism. It still has the opportunity to clarify its position — it will be the duty of the central government to impress upon the J&K government that the autonomy proposals are misplaced and send out wrong signals to militants.

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# Centre urged not to accept J&K Govt's report on autonomy

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, February 3

PEOPLE'S INITIATIVE on Peace and Unity (PIPU), a newly formed front comprising representatives of Kashmiri Pandits and people of Jammu and Ladakh, has asked the Centre to "unambiguously" reject the autonomy committee report which was recently sent to it by the J&K government for acceptance.

Addressing a joint press conference on Wednesday, the representatives of Panun Kashmir, Ladakh Buddhists Association and Jammu Joint Students' Federation which comprise the PIPU, charged the state government with trying to divert public attention from burning problems by raking up the contentious autonomy issue.

The PIPU has demanded reorganisation of the state by carving a separate state of Jammu, union territory status for Ladakh and granting a "homeland" to Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley to be governed only by the Constitution of India.

The PIPU demanded that the Centre should immediately

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declare the setting up of a unified command under the Governor to effectively combat terrorism rather than succumbing to Dr Abdullah's autonomy theory.

Dr Ajay Charangoo of Panun Kashmir while opposing the autonomy theory, felt that the granting of autonomy to the state will destroy the spirit of federalism. He cautioned that certain international forces acting in tandem with the National Conference were conspiring to weaken the northern frontiers of the country under the garb of the autonomy theory.

Mr Rajinder Jamwal, president, Jammu Joint Students Federation, said that the majority of people in the state were against the autonomy theory as projected by Dr Abdullah.

Mr T Samphel, president, Ladakh Buddhists' Association, also complained of a systematic attempt which was underway to change the demographic character of Ladakh, particularly Leh district. He alleged that conversions of Buddhists to Islam were being carried out in a planned manner.

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