

SETBACK IN THE VALLEY

BRINGING PEACE TO THE VALLEY WAS NEVER GOING TO BE EASY. IN FACT, THE BLOODSHED THAT FOLLOWED THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF CEASEFIRE BY HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN CONTINUES.

ANITA KANUNGO REPORTS ON THE SETBACK AND THE EFFORTS THAT WENT INTO GIVING PEACE ANOTHER CHANCE IN THE VALLEY

ON THURSDAY, 10 August, at around 12.20 pm a white ambassador car parked in front of the State Bank of India building on the busy Residency road in the heart of Srinagar blew up killing 11 persons and injuring several others. Barely two days after the peace talks broke down, death and destruction returned to the streets of the Valley and with a vengeance.

Was it the handiwork of the Hizbul Mujahideen, which wanted to make a point after calling off the ceasefire? Or was it the Lashkar-e-Taiyiba? Though the supreme commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen Syed Salauddin claims responsibility for the blast, facts tell a different story. Within an hour of the blast, at around 1.20 pm, the Central News Agency, the local news agency based in Srinagar receives a call from across the border. It is Abu Zarrar of the Lashkar-e-Taiyiba claiming responsibility for the explosion. It is normal for the militant outfits, which carry out the blast, to call up newspaper offices to accept responsibility. This serves a twin purpose. It not only gives the group publicity but more importantly it enables the group to be rewarded monetarily by the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan.

Just only three hours later, the Hizbul spokesman Salim Hashmi in an interview to the British Broadcasting Corporation claims the blast was the handiwork of the Hizbul Mujahideen. When the BBC correspondent questioned the claim by saying the Taiyiba has already taken the credit for it, an argument ensued. All that the BBC was



Above and below right: Policemen at the site of Thursday's blast in Srinagar. Pradeep Bhatia's last pictures

willing to say then was that both outfits have claimed responsibility. An hour later, the BBC office receives a call from Taiyiba withdrawing their claim. This is despite the fact that the police officials investigating the blasts later says they have evidence to show Taiyiba involvement. Then why was HM claiming to credit for it and why did the Taiyiba so magnanimously withdraw its claim? Was there some body else pulling the strings? Security agency sources in Srinagar are convinced the claims-tangle was resolved by the ISI. The aim was clearly to force the security forces to retaliate against the HM cadres in the Valley. And the message was clear: Punish them (the Hizbul) for their temerity to talk peace.

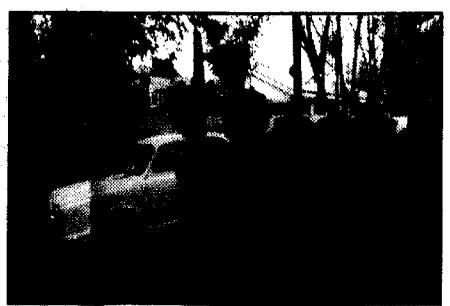
On the 24 of July the Hizbul deputy supreme commander Abdul Majid Dar pitched for peace by offering a three-month unconditional ceasefire in the Valley. The main emphasis of his statement at the press conference was that he was willing to talk to the Indian government so that peace could be brought to the Valley. Because, he said, he felt that the people in the Valley wanted peace. His announcement turned him into a hero overnight,

showing perhaps he was bang on target when he said the people wanted peace now more than anything else. According to reliable sources Syed Salauddin discussed the ceasefire offer with the ISI the next day and issued a statement a few hours later endorsing the offer. The leader was made to follow, his deputy, in this instance. Not a very comforting thought for Salauddin specially when he had also a very upset lot of patrons to handle, while his deputy was far away in India.

The groundwork for this move had been on for months. In February the Majlis-e-Shoora of the HM had authorised Dar to cross the border and go to the Valley to explore avenues for peace. There was a solid basis for this authorisation. After 11 years of bloodshed, the locals were tired of militancy and the HM being the largest militant outfit with its cadre belonging predominantly to the Valley, had realised support for militancy was dwindling.

The cadre too was tiring of living like hunted men. Moreover, its relationship with the ISI had turned frosty over the last two and a half years. ISI had started showing a distinct preference for the foreign mercenaries to local militants, who found themselves in a curious situation - somebody else fighting to get them azadi. Replacing it was a Taliban-style pan-Islamic Jihad. The moral edge of their violent struggle had been lost. There was a growing realisation of the futility of violence. Will dialogue instead of jihad yield fruits. They decided it was well worth a check.

With the United States nudging from the



sidelines, the churning within the HM suited Pakistan's gameplan. With an eye on the September visit of both Prime Minister Vajpayee and Gen Musharraf to the United States, Pakistan wanted to gain credit for creating an atmosphere conducive for talks. New Delhi too wanted to talk to the Kashmiri leaders. The Hurriyat which was the political front of the movement was the obvious choice. Since March, feelers were being sent to the Hurriyat for talks. But nothing concrete was seen as emerging from these efforts. This was also the time when Dar entered the Valley and began talking to people. He even met government officials. A day before the announcement, he met senior Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Lone and informed him of his plans to offer ceasefire. Lone advised him to wait for the call from Hurriyat before making the offer. Dar didn't. The rest is history.

The offer is initially greeted with cautious optimism by the government, but soon New Delhi embraces the opportunity to bring peace in the Valley. There is confusion over whether the talks are within the

constitution or outside it. The government finally agrees to unconditional talks. On Friday, July 28, the government asks the HM cadre to come overground and discuss the modalities of the ceasefire. A "Mr Gupta" from the Home Ministry contacts the militants. The Hizbul name Fazal Qureishi as their mediator.

Within a span of two days (August 1-2) opponents of the fledgling peace process slaughtered innocent Amarnath yatris in Pahalgam and brick kiln workers elsewhere in the state. While the government talked tough on terrorism, it ensures the peace process remains on track. Vajpayee says the government wants to talk to the militants within the ambit of humanity, "Insaniyat ke daayron me".

On August 3 for the first time since the militancy started more than a decade ago the militants and the government officials meet face to face in the Nehru guest house amid the glare of the television cameras. The Hizbul put forward a 12-point charter of demands. It included the revocation of the disturbed areas act, release of detainees, removal of bunkers, end to custodial killings and creating an atmosphere conducive to resumption of normal political activity. HM commanders also discussed the modalities of how the security forces would identify HM cadres, will they have a password?

But on the same day from across the border Syed Salauddin bowls a bouncer. "The talks have to be tripartite and Pakistan has to be involved." He sets a fresh deadline of August 8, by which the New Delhi must respond failing which he threatened to withdraw the ceasefire. Why these fresh conditions? The question of the inclusion of Pakistan made sense if the government was talking of a political settlement. The word 'peace' used by Majid Dar did not necessarily imply a settlement. He wanted an end to hostilities so that the ordinary man can get on with his life. Why should Pakistan be a party to discussions about modalities of ceasefire within Indian territory?

ADAY before the deadline expires, Abdul Majid Dar in a press statement states why he had made the peace offer. He speaks of the tremendous urge for peace that he encountered in the Valley. It was this fact that firmed his resolve to take a bold initiative for peace. He asks the government to categorically state that the talks were unconditional. He, however, leaves the final decision to the command council of HM. Vajpayee states that there is no condition on talks. The next day the ceasefire is called off. Why did Salauddin do it? Pressure from Pakistan and Hurriyat?

The local HM cadre still apparently wants peace. But Dar is not saying a word. The silence, in fact, is deafening. While Salauddin had endorsed Dar's offer, a similar endorsement from the latter has not come yet. Why? What's happening? We may never be able to solve this puzzle but there are a few pieces which fit. The Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani had in



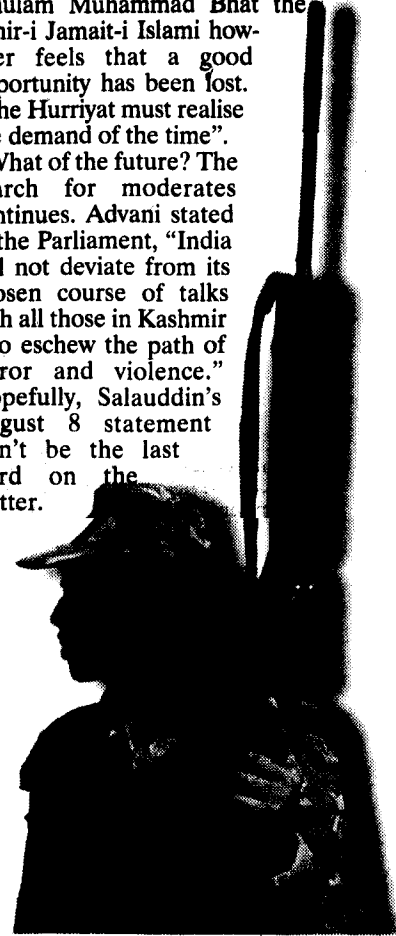
Advani: Pakistan is to blame

Parliament laid the blame squarely on Pakistan and the Hurriyat. Why did the Hurriyat and Pakistan behave the way they did?

While Pakistan initially was supportive of the HM initiative, Hurriyat was to be the party to negotiate with the government. Since it would insist on a tripartite talk, which is not something acceptable

to Delhi, the talks were bound to fail but Pakistan could have used it to derive international mileage. Prof Kalim Bahadur of the Jawahar Lal Nehru University says, "Apart from the fact that it is against our constitutional position of J&K being an integral part of India, tripartite would mean Pakistan and Hurriyat combining against India. But with Dar announcing the offer independently the tables were turned. Hurriyat was at the risk of being marginalised." Hardliners like Ali Shah Geelani and Prof Abdul Gani Bhat put pressure through the Jamait-i-Islami on the Pakistani government to rein in the HM. Hizbul mediator Fazal Haq Qureishi says, "Across the border Salauddin is very vulnerable and cannot act independently. HM grew as the militant arm of the Jamait and moreover the latter exercises great influence on the Pakistan government. Hurriyat was not pleased as they were being marginalised." Qureishi has been asked by the Hurriyat Chairman Bhat to explain his role and why he violated the discipline of the Hurriyat. Ghulam Muhammad Bhat the Emir-i-Jamait-i-Islami however feels that a good opportunity has been lost. "The Hurriyat must realise the demand of the time".

What of the future? The search for moderates continues. Advani stated in the Parliament, "India will not deviate from its chosen course of talks with all those in Kashmir who eschew the path of terror and violence." Hopefully, Salauddin's August 8 statement won't be the last word on the matter.



The Hartali Conference

DOES THE HURRIYAT HAVE THE STOMACH FOR BIG DECISIONS OR IS IT HAPPY CALLING FOR BANDHS AND STRIKES?



Bhat: Content to carp?

IN ITS eight years of existence, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) hasn't ever faced the kind of crisis of credibility as it does now. All these years it has claimed to be the only, and authentic, voice of the people of Kashmir yet it has failed to bring peace to the same people it claims to represent.

It was with the interlinked promise of delivering peace and solution to the vexed Kashmir problem that APHC came into being in May 1993 raising the hopes of people caught in an unending cycle of violence. The Hurriyat was expected to deliver as it brought under one umbrella all the divergent pro-Pakistan and pro-independence groups.

In profile received a major boost in 1994 when it welcomed Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front's hero-of-the-times Mohammad Yasin Malik and Peoples League's Shabir Ahmad Shah, who had earned for himself the sobriquet of "Nelson Mandela of Kashmir" for the over 20 years that he spent in jail. It had the necessary charisma now to complement the hardboiled politicians like Syed Ali Shah Geelani, ideologue of Jamait-i-Islami and a diehard pro-Pakistanist, and Abdul Ghani Lone who has travelled long and learnt the necessary political lessons.

Things went fine for the APHC till the beginning of 1995. Its strike calls found the support of people, who

participated in its processions and braved bullets. There was a belief, a firm one at that, this secessionist conglomerate headed by Awami Action Committee Chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq would get them either "Azadi" or freedom and peace above everything else.

But the Hurriyat was unable to capitalise on this overwhelming support. And primarily on account of it dogged refusal to participate in election; it lost thereby several opportunities to establish itself, beyond any doubt, as the sole representative of Kashmiris.

Then came the Hizbul's peace offer. The Hurriyat was caught unawares and found itself outmanoeuvred. And then its failure to push the July 24 Hizbul-Mujahadeen ceasefire further or to prevent its collapse, has exposed its weaknesses and the ego problems that afflict its leadership, which has already suffered because of the indifference of the Mirwaiz to the Hurriyat affairs and the parting of ways with Shabir Shah.

The leadership exposed itself, in fact, when it failed to offer an united reaction to the Hizbul's decision on August 9 unilaterally ending the ceasefire. To make itself relevant again, as a force to reckon with, it has to again take bold steps. But does it have the necessary will or the stomach for it? Or, is it happy being the "hartali conference" that some people call it uncharitably nowadays.

—AJ

LIFE IN THE SHADOW OF DEATH LOST CHANCE?

EVERYDAY, THE PEOPLE OF KASHMIR STEP OUT OF THEIR HOMES. NO ONE KNOWS HOW MANY WILL RETURN, WRITES **ARUN JOSHI**

APPARENTLY everything is normal. Shops are open and potential customers do the window shopping looking and marvelling Kashmiri hand-craft and girls and boys hiding themselves in corner tables in restaurants. There are some odd foreign tourists roaming freely and Sumos with pictures of Shivalingam of Shri Amarnath pasted on the window screens wizz past boulevard.

This calm shatters when a grenade explodes. The grenade goes up in air and falls with a big bang. Pedestrians, bystanders, shoppers pull down the shutters drivers run abandoning their cars. There is panic. That is the life the people in this city of nearly one million live almost every day. Some volunteers lift the injured, shift them to hospital. Others rush to hospitals wailing looking for their nears and dear ones, survivors make it a point to offer an extra thanks giving prayer as if to ensure that next time they are spared of violence. Over the years, habit has developed among the residents here to look over their shoulders look-

ing for any suspiciously parked car, concentration of security personnel or any unusual movement of the people. Many things whether certain areas were under crackdown, observing general strike or there was some minor or big incident of violence are invariably checked before the people move in what they perceive as the danger zones within the dangerous city.

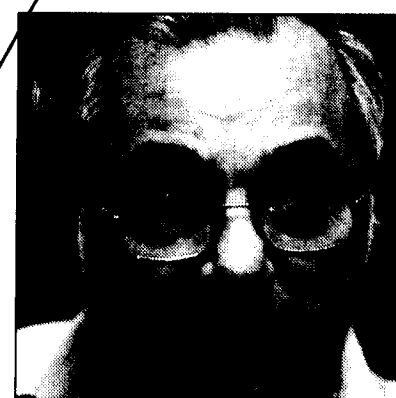
"Is everything okay at your end, any trouble in between". This is the way the conversations often start on telephone before many of residents of city venture into the areas considered unsafe and prone to attack by militants which invariably provokes security personnel to retaliate. "I make it a point to check all this with my friends before moving into town" says Manzoor Ahmad, a Government employee living in Jawahar Nagar, a locality of affluent in the north-western part of this city. "One has to ensure one's own security first", he says. There is no disagreement.

Manzoor had given up this habit toward the end of 1995 when the things had started looking relatively peaceful after the burning down of Charar-e-Sharief shrine. There was anger among the masses and the militants under pressure from security forces that had started getting help from militants turned counter insurgents, were either lying low or looking for peaceful options to settle down. "That was a period of relief", recalls Shamima, a school teacher who remembers having taken her kids to boulevard late evenings and treating them to icecream in

Regal Chowk. Her daughter Sheeba had seen Nishat garden for the first time in April 1997. Sheeba, 13, never had the chance to see Mughal gardens for her school would never go for picnic in the days of heightened violence and her parents wouldn't dare either.

Shamima laments that the relief did not last long. It ended in May 1998 when shadow of Kargil, and mine blasts started taking the toll. The scare started returning. The residents are fearful. They have lost contacts and the influence what they had with militants or their groups in the early nineties. "Pehle mujahadee (freedom-fighters) ko aankh kee sham hoti thee, ab hame maloom hee nahin kaun kaya hai" (earlier the (local) militants showed some respect toward us, but now we don't know who is who," regrets Ghulam Rasool Wani, an elderly shopkeeper in a downtown locality.

That is not the only problem. There were always two guns for the Kashmiris — militants and security forces. Now that number has multiplied. Counter insurgents have their own groups and so are the groups sponsored by various agencies. There is no idea who works for whom. That is the biggest danger that grips people here. They live in the middle of the orange flames of unexpected explosions on streets and in the back of mind are the visible and not so visible guns. "Kashmir is paradise on earth, but the life is a living hell here," laments almost everyone in this city where they talk to death every moment.



PAKISTAN HIGH COMMISSIONER ASHRAF JEHANGIR QAZI

The government has squarely blamed Pakistan for the collapse of the talks with the HM...

The assumption that Pakistan has sabotaged anything is completely mistaken. Pakistan has always been in favour of dialogue and a meaningful and substantive peace process. The recent developments where as a result of an initiative of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM). It had nothing to do with the government of Pakistan. The decision to the call off the ceasefire was also theirs. It is for the Kashmiri to decide what is the best approach.

Right from the start the HM said its offer was for dialogue with India but when they concluded that the Indians were not sincere for a meaningful dialogue they called off their offer.

But the fact that the offer for talks was made in Srinagar whereas the withdrawal came from Islamabad. Isn't this significant?

That has nothing to do with it. Irrespective of where the announcements were made the fact is that when Majid Dar made the announcement on July 24, Salauddin endorsed it, and similarly when

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Salauddin called off the ceasefire once again there's complete unanimity of view between Salauddin, Dar and the other commanders of the HM. Pakistan played no role in that.

Why was the ceasefire called off? What the Hizbul realised was that India instead of responding to their offer decided to try and divide them. It was trying to convert them into a bunch of renegades. Which was not acceptable.

But it was they who first offered unconditional talks and then introduced conditions like tripartite talks and the inclusion of Pakistan. All the Kashmiri parties have all along maintained that there cannot be any credible meaningful dialogue unless all the parties to the dispute are involved. And Pakistan is a party to the dispute. The UN resolutions recognise this and the character of the APHC explicitly says that.

The HM is associated with the Jamait-i-Islami, a component party of the Hurriyat, and how could it deviate from its own party and from the Hurriyat. And then, it was to divide among itself to conduct bilateral dialogue with India. Seeking to involve the Kashmiris in a bilateral dialogue means it is for autonomy within India.

It was seen by them as a dialogue aimed to bring about a peaceful surrender rather than the peaceful settlement of the problem. Kashmiris are not dissident Kashmiri-Indians. Hurriyat had already rejected offer for talks. Their basic position is that they are for unconditional talks not within the framework of the constitution and that they will not deviate from their long standing demand for the inclusion of Pakistan in the talks. India has squandered a valuable opportunity.

—AK

The battle for peace

MAKING PEACE is as hazardous an enterprise as persisting with conflict. The political leadership in three South Asian countries — India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka — has, by and large, never made any substantial intellectual or ideological investments in the idea of peace or reconciliation at home or abroad. No political leader has ever challenged his/her rival to explore peace; each political party has thrived by accusing the others of lacking in guts, courage, and will power to stand up to the "enemy".

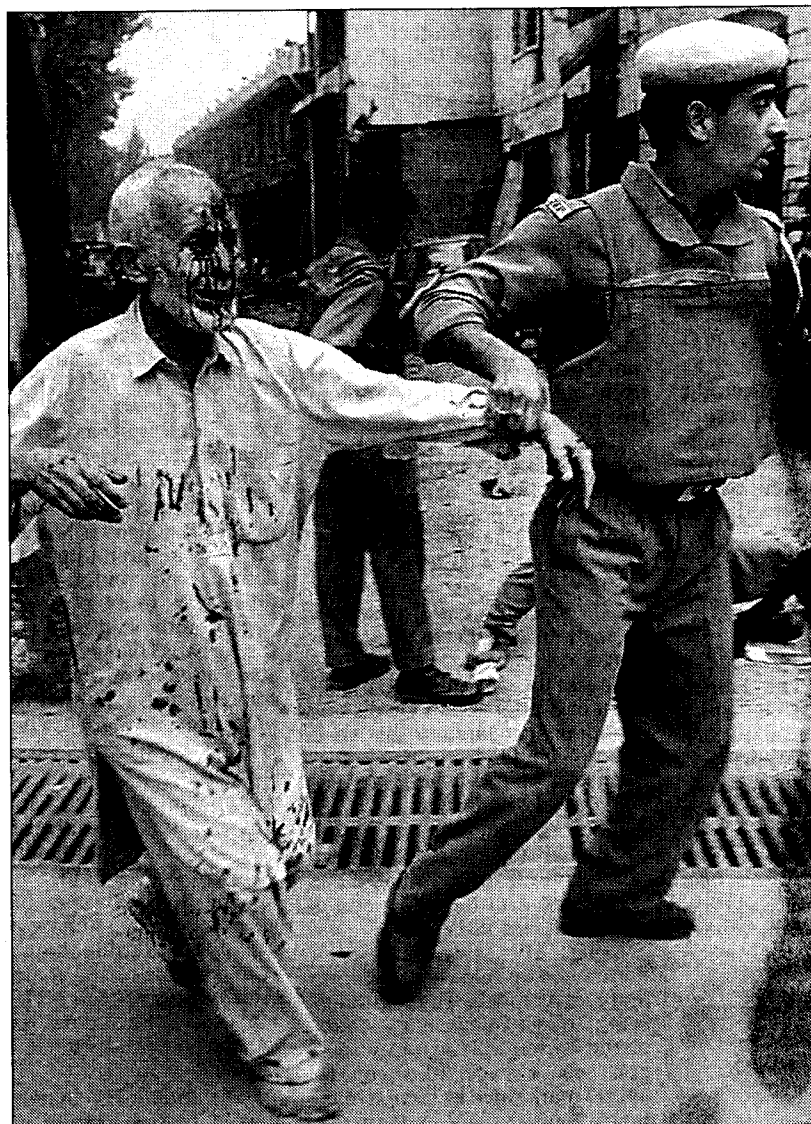
This competitive finger-pointing is more than evident in India in the matter of (the already aborted) peace-making in Kashmir. Yet it needs to be noted that when on July 24 the Hizbul Mujahideen announced a unilateral ceasefire, the Vajpayee Government responded positively and the entire Opposition supported the idea of dialogue. Over the years, Kashmir has been such a bloody affair that despite serious domestic differences, the Opposition parties have learnt the usefulness of closing ranks behind the Government of the day. As early as in 1993, the Narasimha Rao Government had invited Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee to lead the official delegation to Geneva to battle out the combined "freedom struggle-azadi-human rights violations" onslaught of the Pakistan-Robin Raphael-State Department combine.

But even at that time the BJP, out to administer to its Hindutva constituency, invariably talked of a tough, no-compromise approach to the Kashmir conflict; at times it wanted the Army to be in charge of this or that district. These habits have not completely been kicked. For instance, the latest issue of *BJP Today*, for no obvious rhyme or reason, has chosen to reprint an article Mr. L. K. Advani wrote in 1993; the burden of that polemical essay was to suggest, in the most tentative manner, that even the Congress/Nehru were not all that enamoured of Article 370. Or, take the case of Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, who is forever willing to ride the partisan horse and charge into the Congress (I) stall; the other day when the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha was demanding a judicial inquiry into the Pahalgam massacre, Mr. Naidu challengingly suggested that the inquiry should also look into the Charar-e-Sharif incident of 1994.

And just as the BJP could never concede that non-BJP Governments were capable of dealing with the Kashmir problem with sufficient patriotism and idealism, the Congress(I) finds it difficult to acknowledge that the BJP Government can achieve a

Competitive finger-pointing is more than evident in India in the matter of peace-making in Kashmir... A greater challenge for the Vajpayee Government is to mobilise political opinion in favour of peace.

HARISH KHARE writes on the search for consensus, with inputs from SHUJAAT BHUKHARI.



WHEN WILL THE VIOLENCE END?: One of those injured in Thursday's car-bomb blast in Srinagar is helped away.

breakthrough of any kind. Given the nature of the leadership structure in the Congress(I), the entire party finds itself hostage to the entirely individualistic, verging on whimsical, reflexes of Ms. Sonia Gandhi. Hence, the very elaborate, even if half-hearted, display of contrariness, and the demand for a judicial inquiry in the Amarnath pilgrimage incident.

While reflexive partisanship influences the political calculations in New Delhi, back in the Valley the people feel cheated, once again, of a well-deserved chance for peace. "It

has always happened with us, whenever there is a move to settle the issue, something goes wrong," commented an elderly Kashmiri who has seen the ups and downs. He recalled how Sheikh Abdullah's mission to Pakistan got aborted when Jawaharlal Nehru died, and how the Lal Bahadur Shastri-Ayub Khan breakthrough in Tashkent could not be followed through because of Shastri's fatal heart-attack.

Popular opinion was disappointed that the All-Party Hurriyat

Conference did not back the idea of peace-dialogue announced by the Hizbul Mujahideen on July 24. After all, the Hizbul Mujahideen is probably the most formidable militant organization still holding sway in the militancy setup, and is known to provide infrastructure and back-up to the foreign-dominated outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad. It is also a fact that almost all its militants are of local origin, mainly drawn from the Jamat-e-Islami, the potent political force in Kashmir. Though the Jamat has since distanced itself from the Hizbul Mujahideen, stressing political struggle, three years ago, the militant outfit's top leadership comprised of one-time Jamat activists. Therefore the July 24 announcement was seen as a political decision, with political backing.

However, the Hurriyat Conference belied the hope, and termed it a "hasty decision, a broken step, etc". The Hurriyat Conference simply could not rise to the occasion, and displayed a remarkable lack of vision and courage to grab the opportunity. Instead, the Hurriyat Conference leaders worried about getting marginalised in the competitive rhetoric arena, and feared that they would probably lose influence over the other pan-Islamic outfits. Still, the people and observers were hopeful that the Hurriyat Conference would be supportive of the peace process. In fact, the Hizbul Mujahideen itself had suggested that the initial dialogue was only for deciding the modalities of a ceasefire and that groups such as the Hurriyat Conference would have to come in at a later stage when political issues need to be sorted out. The people are plainly disappointed that the Hurriyat Conference preferred the negativism of rhetoric over the courage of peace.

Other political parties such as Mr. Shabir Shah's Democratic Freedom Party and the Jamat-e-Islami were disappointed over the ceasefire collapse. The Ameer-e-Jamat, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Bhat, who was re-elected recently, had welcomed the July 24 announcement and termed it a step in the right direction. "We had a chance of restoring peace, which is lost now," lamented Mr. Shabir Shah.

It is possible that in the days to come the Hurriyat Conference may want to reposition itself in the post-August 8 "ceasefire breakdown" situation. Its obvious strategy would be to position itself as the possible interlocutor with the Union Government, while building on the all-too-obvious popular urge in the

Valley for peace and the dialogue route. The Vajpayee Government has probably sensed this and has already indicated that it is not averse to a dialogue with the Hurriyat Conference as long as the organisation does not insist on a role for Pakistan, at this stage.

A peace process in Kashmir, if at all its takes off again, will be a long-drawn-out process and will test the political skills of the entire leadership class in and outside the Valley. The Vajpayee Government will have to make an effort to bring

the various political antagonists on board its peace-wagon; as of now there is only mistrust and suspicion among the various local players — Dr. Farooq Abdullah's National Conference, Mufti Mohammed Syed's outfit, the Congress(I), the BJP, Mr. Shabir Shah and others. The egos, concerns and compulsions of these individuals will need to be addressed in order to make the peace process a popular preference.

A greater challenge for the Vajpayee Government lies in New Delhi, as it must mobilise political

opinion in favour of peace. The Vajpayee establishment knows that the most potent source of opposition to peace comes from the Sangh Parivar itself — the RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal crowd that over the years has craved to have the Indian state as an instrument of lumpenised Hindutva. What the BJP crowd says or does in New Delhi and others parts of the country has a definite bearing on the mood and calculations in the Valley. After all, over the decades the Kashmiri has come to nurse a suspicion of 'New Delhi', which has to be addressed.

Pulls and pressures in Pakistan

The Hizbul Mujahideen's announcement of a ceasefire triggered a furore in Pakistan with militant organisations calling it a betrayal... So, says
B. MURALIDHAR REDDY,
it led to the inevitable.

THE HIZBUL Mujahideen's short-lived ceasefire was hailed as one of the most significant breakthroughs towards resolution of the Kashmir tangle. But, in retrospect, was it a calculated move by the Pakistani establishment to embarrass India and neutralise its perceived gains after Kargil?

The events in Islamabad beginning with the 'sudden and surprise' announcement in Srinagar on July 24 by the top Hizbul field commander, Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, seem to suggest that Pakistan tried to make maximum capital out of the ceasefire. The Hizb move was used to pursue two clear objectives. The first was to project the Kashmir militancy as an indigenous move to counter New Delhi's charge that Islamabad was aiding and abetting terrorism in the State. The second was to convey to the world that India was reluctant to explore a negotiated settlement to the Kashmir dispute.

Islamabad believes the Hizb move has helped it get even with India which has been "riding a high horse" in every international forum over the Kargil 'misadventure'. The sense of satisfaction in the Pakistani camp after the Hizb revoked the ceasefire was evident in the statement of

the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

The military ruler not only expressed satisfaction over what he termed gains of the 'Kashmir liberation struggle' but made it a point to remind the world that India's own admission about the origins of the Mujahideen had exposed the 'falsehood of propaganda'. He followed up with yet another offer of "readiness to join a purposeful dialogue" with India. Indications in Islamabad suggest that the Hizb went ahead with the ceasefire declaration with the knowledge if not consent of Pakistan. Though the Hizb is the only



militant organisation in Kashmir that draws its support base from among Kashmiris on both sides of the border, it is dependent on Pakistan for material support. The Hizb leadership resides in Pakistan. Most of its cadres operate from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

One major factor that could have influenced Pakistan in giving the nod to the Hizb is the growing American pressure to address Indian concerns about encouragement to subversive elements from across the border. Several influential persons in Pakis-

tan, India and the U.S. were involved in the back-channel diplomacy.

The Hizb announcement triggered a furore in Pakistan with militant organisations terming it a 'betrayal and a sell-out'. Religious parties such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, whose protegee the Hizb is considered to be, turned their ire against the Musharraf Government and accused it of 'engineering' the ceasefire buckling under U.S. pressure. The All-Party Conference (APC) in its declaration at Lahore hinted at the role of the military Government in the latest developments in Kashmir and urged Gen. Musharraf to come clean. With Kargil fresh in memory, no regime in Pakistan can afford to ignore 'public opinion' on Kashmir.

Perhaps Islamabad did not envisage a quick response from India to the Hizb move. And when Delhi responded, came the counter from Islamabad in the form of conditionalities for talks. Any dialogue would have to involve Pakistan and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and no talks could be held within the Indian Constitution.

The rhetoric from Islamabad reached a new pitch once the Hizb announced the August 8 deadline. Perhaps the pressures on the domestic front forced the Musharraf Government to take a tough stand.

So it led to the inevitable. Perhaps it was a classic case of one step forward and two steps backward. Pakistan cannot be expected to give up its case on Kashmir but to insist on a tripartite dialogue right away, when a major militant group has silenced its guns, was a sure case of playing the role of a spoiler.

As the former Pakistan Prime Minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, put it, a chance should have been given for the bilateral talks to begin and Pakistan could have insisted on its inclusion at a later stage when things took a more concrete shape.

Sonia assures help to Govt on Kashmir peace process

HT Correspondent
Hyderabad, August 11

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Ms Sonia Gandhi on Friday said that her party would support the Government on whatever initiative it takes to bring peace to the troubled Kashmir valley.

Ms Gandhi, who was on a day's visit to the city, opposed any "third party" intervention on the Kashmir issue. "When there is a dialogue, we do not allow the third party or interpreters. We do not meet the third person."

In an informal chat with newsmen here, the Opposition leader expressed sadness over the breakdown of talks between the Centre and the Hizbul Mujahideen and withdrawal of ceasefire by the latter.

Responding to a query on the impact of the talks, she said, "We do not know if any headway was made or not. After the tragic incident yesterday, nothing seems to have gone ahead. We'll just have to

MLAs' appeal

FORTY-ONE CONGRESS MLAs from the backward Telangana region on Friday urged Congress president Sonia Gandhi to pressurise the Centre to consider the demand of the people of the region for a separate state. A delegation of the MLAs from the Telangana region met Ms Gandhi during her day's visit to Hyderabad and submitted a memorandum, urging her to focus on the demand for separate Telangana in Parliament. They also urged her to discuss the demand for separate Telangana in the CWC.

HTC, Hyderabad

wait and see. It is very difficult for us to make any assessment because we are the Opposition. What I know is more or less what you know."

She did not agree that the Government was hiding information from the main Opposition

party. "But in certain situations, under certain circumstances, the Government will not share information with the Opposition. I am sure the Government will come out with details at an opportune time. In these circumstances, this is not possible. We are always appreciative of the Government when they do brief us on what they are doing or what they intend doing. We always support transparency."

To another query on how the Kashmir problem should be tackled, she shot back: "It is not possible for us to make suggestions since we do not have all the information. Certain developments have taken place in the last few days. I cannot comment much on this. All I can say is that a peaceful solution is what the country is looking forward to. We support the Government's initiative to bring back peace".

Ms Gandhi denied that there was any difference of opinion between the Indian Government and her party on the autonomy issue raised by Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 AUG 2001

The sack of Beijing

44.7
IN Chinese, they were called *Yihe Quan* (Fists of Righteous Harmony). Many of the Boxers involved in the 1898-1900 Uprising belonged to the secret societies indigenous to northern China. Some traced their origins to the White Lotus secret society in the 17th century.

24/9
The movement gained momentum during the late Qing dynasty (1644-1911), when peasant youths banded together to practise martial arts and defend their villages from roving bandits. It became popular in Shandong province and began to draw local toughs and petty criminals. Some adherents believed that *qigong*, spirit possession and charms, could make them invincible to bullets.

In the 1890s, foreign powers and foreign missionaries were resented by the Chinese for throwing their weight behind Christian converts during disputes. The Boxers sided with the non-Christians against the foreigners and their Chinese proteges. Hostility reached a high point in Shandong in the late 1890s when a German branch of the Catholic Church, The German Society of the Divine Word, converted some fugitives from the law and offered them protection.

When two German missionaries were murdered mysteriously in 1897, the German government seized the strategic deep-water Jiaozhou Bay in retaliation, and exacted other concessions from the Chinese. Fearing a German invasion, the Chinese gave in to the demands.

In early 1898, several groups — Plum Flower Boxers, Red Boxers and others — formed a coalition called *Yihe Quan*, Fists of Righteous Harmony. The next year, it introduced the slogan *Fu-Qing mieyang* — Support the Qing dynasty, Destroy the Foreign — and transformed itself to a full-

THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2000

1 The centennial of the Boxer Uprising in China the world and led to the downfall of the Qing as a symbol of pride, the West saw the

China's 100-year scar

THE centennial of the Boxer Uprising in China has come and gone, barely noticed by the world's media. Wherein a peasant movement turned into an anti-foreign, anti-Christian crusade that culminated in the sacking of Beijing on 14 August 1900 by an allied army of eight colonial powers. Their victory was followed by the rape of the city and looting of the imperial palace — all of which combined to leave a deep scar on China's psyche as well as in its relations with the West.

To the West, the uprising, which led to a siege of hundreds of foreign diplomats and civilians in Beijing's diplomatic quarter for 55 days, became a symbol of China's irrationality and xenophobia. To the Chinese, this humiliating rout drove home the ignorance and folly of the Qing government.

To this day, echoes of the event which shook the world at the turn of the last century still reverberate in the corridors of power. But to a world media which often commemorates centennial activities depicting the triumph of Western culture and technology, the episode was all but forgotten, marked only by a low-key forum in Beijing, and a new book, *The Boxer Rebellion*, by British historian Diana Preston.

The Boxer Uprising was last officially examined in China during the Cultural Revolution, when it was hailed as a patriotic peasant movement. Under Jiang Qing, Mao Zedong's wife, who ran China's cultural policies then, one of her eight Model Revolutionary Operas — *Hong Dengzhao* (Red Lantern) — was about the female Boxers who were called red lanterns because they wore red.

But there had been no new defining works on the subject from the Chinese. Ask Professor Wang Gungwu of the East Asian Institute and he'll say it's partly because Chinese scholars still find it difficult to relive the pain and humiliation.

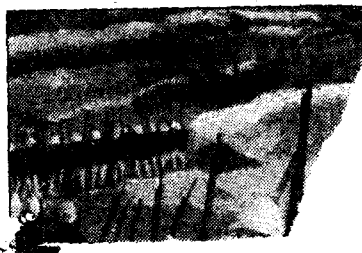
At any rate, first-hand Chinese writings on the subject are scarce. By contrast, Western reports on the Boxer story are relatively abundant, with many eyewitness accounts. Unfortunately, many of these were found to be deliberately skewed, like the despatches by the *London Times* correspondent, George Morrison, who knew no Chinese and had to rely on his Chinese-speaking protege, Edmund Backhouse, who was later exposed as a forger who spiced up facts with fiction.

The result was that the earliest accounts of the Boxer movement were told — as in most colonial history — from the winners' point of view. Only with the release of more Chinese records in the 1950s and 1960s, and with more balanced scholarship in the West, has a clearer, more complete picture begun to emerge.

What prompted the seemingly suicidal attempt by a weak and vulnerable China to rid itself of foreign domination? After all, having suffered for 60 years since its defeat in the Opium War of 1840, China should have been well aware of the military strength and ruthlessness of the colonial powers.

If the Opium War — which marked the Qing dynasty's first humiliating defeat by a Western power — was "tragic but inevitable", as the British were bent on finding an excuse to open China for trade, then the Boxer Uprising was "pathetic and desperate".

Offering this point of view, Professor Wang says that during the 60 years between the two wars, the colonial powers had been carving out spheres of influence and pushing for spe-



THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2000

Salahuddin urges Pak to send troops

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE
and AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 12. — Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin today urged Pakistan to send troops into Kashmir even if it means a war.

"Pakistan should physically involve itself in Kashmir. We want war because war will solve the issue," Salahuddin roared at his headquarters in a posh Islamabad neighbourhood.

He said Hizbul would step up attacks against Indian soldiers until New Delhi agrees to tripartite talks. The attacks will be more sophisticated and targeted at Army facilities inside Kashmir as well as elsewhere in India.

"Bilateral talks have not worked in the past. We have a history of talks between Indians and Kashmiri and between Pakistan and India, and they have failed," he said. He also alleged India was vacillating during the talks.

The Clinton administration has asked US citizens to evaluate carefully the implications for their security and safety before deciding to travel to Pakistan. The state department issued the travel warning on Thursday after it received information indicating that extremists from Afghanistan are preparing an attack on American interests in Pakistan soon.

Meanwhile, Pakistan said its offer to India for talks still stands. Gen Pervez Musharraf said during his visit to Multan yesterday that there had been no change in Pakistan's offer but New Delhi was unable to make up its mind. "Unfortunately the Indian Prime Minister is not firm, one

moment he says something, the next, another."

Gen Musharraf and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee may meet at the UN in New York next month, a Pakistani minister hinted today. "When the two leaders are present in the gathering, nothing can be ruled out," said Information Minister Mr Javed Jabbar. "Nothing has been discussed and agreed upon so far," he added.

He said Gen Musharraf would brief world leaders and UN Secretary General Mr Kofi Annan about the situation in South Asia and the necessity of finding a peaceful solution to the Kashmir tangle.

Back home, a 10-member Congress delegation headed by AICC general secretary Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, arrived in Kashmir today to make an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. The team visited the blast site.

Journalists in Jammu organised a silent procession to mourn the death of Pradeep Bhatia.

Wearing black badges, over hundred scribes, videographers and photojournalists carried placards demanding freedom of press and security.

The procession started from Jammu Press Club at Dogra Chowk and culminated in front of the divisional commissioner's office in Mubarak Mandi area of the city. Later, a journalists' delegation submitted a memorandum to the government through the divisional commissioner. The memorandum condemned Thursday's blast.



Syed Salahuddin

■ Scam, not Kashmir,
behind Sahara Cup
pull-out, page 10

TWO FOREIGN TOURISTS INJURED IN BLAST NEAR HAZRATBAL

States asked to upgrade security for I-Day

110-1
13/8

NEW DELHI, AUG. 12. All States and Union Territories have been asked to follow a stringent security drill to check any terrorist activity at the behest of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) during the Independence Day celebrations.

Home Ministry sources said police in all the States and Union Territories have been directed to carry out concerted efforts to prevent any untoward incident or loss of life or property.

The direction comes in the wake of repeated incidents of terrorist violence, and activities of extremists and anti-national elements.

Every year intelligence reports warn of militants' threats just prior to the national days, thus endangering the lives of even protected VIPs. Police barricades have been put up at all entry points into the National Capital territory and vehicles coming into the city and particularly travelling towards the Red Fort and VVIP residential areas are being checked.

In Calcutta, police arrested a person suspected of having direct links with the Pakistan-based militant outfit Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, from a house in central Calcutta on Friday night, a top police official said.

Several documents seized from the person,

identified as Jamil Akhtar, suggested that he had been maintaining direct contact with the Harkat's Karachi office. — UNI, PTI

High alert in J&K

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 12. Following repeated threats from the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) chief, Syed Salahuddin, from Islamabad, threatening intensification of attacks in Kashmir, security forces in the State have been put on a high alert. In today's incidents, four people were injured in a militant attack near the Hazratbal shrine; nine people were killed in militancy-related incidents across the State.

The militants lobbed a grenade towards a security picket near the Hazratbal shrine. It missed the target and exploded on the road, injuring four women, two of them tourists from Hungary — Ms. Maria and Ms. Rita. All the injured have been hospitalised.

Security authorities in Srinagar have taken cognisance of the threats emanating from Islamabad in which Syed Salahuddin has outlined his outfit's plans to carry out attacks against security forces at a high level. Heads of the security agencies have been asked to keep a vigil on identified Hizb militants in their re-

spective areas with instructions of avoiding a direct confrontation. Though the militants who are active are known, their sympathisers are also being included in the list, a top security official said. However, the security forces would not be silent if attacked by the militants of any group, including the Hizb. One HM militant, Abdul Ahad Mir, was arrested from Ganderbal today. Earlier, a district commander of the Hizb was killed in Kupwara district. Highly-placed sources said a top-ranking militant working as an ISI sleuth was also arrested from a local hotel in the Civil Lines area.

Strict arrangements are being made in and around the Bakhshi Stadium, venue of the parade. Checking and frisking of commuters have been intensified and parked vehicles are being checked thoroughly in the wake of the car-bomb blast on Thursday.

Car-bomb by Lashkar

The Director-General of Police, Mr. Gurba-chan Jagat, confirmed the extra vigil. "We are taking all possible precautions," he told *The Hindu*. The DGP said the blast on the Residency Road was carried out by Lashkar-e-Taiba and not the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. When asked about the threat of the Hizb chief, he said, "We do not react to such threats".

Hizb wants Pak. to send troops

ISLAMABAD, AUG. 12. The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen chief, Syed Salahuddin, today urged Pakistan to send troops into the Kashmir Valley, even if it means a war. "Pakistan should physically involve itself in Kashmir.

We want war because war will solve the issue," Salahuddin told the Associated Press. Salahuddin sharply criticised India for last week's collapse of the ceasefire offer.

From the outset, Salahuddin said the ceasefire hinged on a "meaningful dialogue"; "meaningful" meant talks that included Pakistan, India and the Kashmiri leadership.

"Bilateral talks have not worked in the past. We have a history of talks between the Indians and the Kashmiris, and between Pakistan and India, and they have failed," he said.

He said the Hizb would step up attacks until New Delhi agrees to tripartite talks.

Jamat wants Geelani back: Page 11

THE HINDU

Ceasefire possible again if India accepts Pakistan as third party: Salahuddin

Musharraf supports Kashmir militants

Blasts kill five BSF jawans

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Aug. 13. — Five BSF jawans were killed and 46 injured in two blasts on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway today in Udhampur.

The first blast blew up a bus carrying 36 BSF jawans from Jammu to Baramulla near Tator crossing, 95 km from Jammu, around 9 a.m. Head constables, BA Kuttan and Ugrasen Linka, and Pandurang Singh, died on spot. Thirty-three people were injured, 13 of them seriously.

Another powerful blast occurred about a kilometre from Tator crossing around 3 p.m. The improvised explosive device exploded between two BSF vehicles, killing two jawans and injuring 13.

The Hizbul Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the first attack, a report from Islamabad said. "We accept responsibility for the attack," Salim Hashmi, Hizbul spokesman told Reuters from Rawalpindi over the phone. Hashmi said a Hizbul commander, Salim Javed, led the landmine attack. He said eight securitymen were killed and 35 injured.

Ten militants were killed in a gun-battle with security forces at Gul-Gulabgarh in Udhampur district today. Officials said the encounter during a search operation.

Seven "foreign mercenaries" were killed in an encounter in Rajouri last night and weapons were seized. Another foreign mercenary of Al-Badr was killed by the forces in Kupwara last night. Two ultras were killed at Magam, Kupwara, and Goda-Kaniyal in Kathua.

DEUTSCHE PRESS AGENTUR

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 13. — General Pervez Musharraf today reaffirmed his support to the anti-India struggle in Kashmir and assured the world that Pakistan wanted to live in peace with its neighbours.

In a message to Pakistanis on their 53rd independence day, the military ruler promised "all out diplomatic, political and moral support" to the separatist struggle in Kashmir.

gen. Musharraf congratulated the people of India on their Independence Day (that falls on Tuesday) and appealed to Indians and the media to influence New Delhi to respond to Islamabad's offer to solve the Kashmir problem through talks. Peace is not possible in the region without settling the dispute, he said.

In an apparent counter to India's description of Kashmir insurgency as Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism, he said the Kashmiris were struggling against "state-sponsored terrorism".

"We desire tranquility and harmonious co-existence with all the countries of the world, particularly with our neighbours," he said.

Ceasefire 'offer': The Hizbul Mujahideen chief, Syed Salahuddin, today said the outfit could declare a ceasefire again if India accepted Pakistan as a third party to solve the Kashmir problem, says PTI. "There is a possibility of ceasefire



The daughters (left) of a police officer, who died of injuries sustained in Thursday's Srinagar blast, cry as the body is taken for cremation on Sunday. (Right) The bus carrying BSF jawans damaged in a blast in Udhampur on Sunday. — AP/PTI



again if India accepts our logic that talks must be tripartite. Our doors are open," he said.

Accusing Indian leaders of adopting an "intransigent" stand in not accepting the tripartite talks, he said the truce was called off only because of this.

Salahuddin said the USA must persuade India to accept Kashmir as a tripartite issue and criticised Washington and other Western countries for their "biased" approach towards the Kashmir problem. The West has failed to exert pressure on India to solve the problem.

He said another Indo-Pak war over Kashmir would be "most catastrophic and detrimental" to world peace.

Will a war or a dialogue solve the Kashmir problem? Salahuddin said: "The gun is only to bring India to the table. We believe the ultimate solution will be on the table. But fighting will bring India to the table."

The Hizbul today, for the first time, criticised the Hurriyat Conference for failing to take a decision on its ceasefire which was later withdrawn. It asked Hurriyat leaders to spell out their plan for "J&K's freedom".

Vajpayee: Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today said the division in Hizbul's ranks over the ceasefire call was to blame for the spurt in violence in Kashmir, reports SNS. The Prime Minister said at a Kisan Day function in Delhi that India

was ready to solve the Kashmir problem through talks.

Baba Amte

Social worker Baba Amte has proposed to visit Pakistan to improve ties between the neighbours and expressed sorrow over the killings of innocent people, adds PTI. Baba Amte, in Indore for a medical check-up, said some Pakistani youths have written to him to undertake a peace march on bicycle to Pakistan to improve bilateral ties with India. Though at his age (86 years) "it's difficult to ride a bicycle", he would certainly like to visit Pakistan soon.

■ Another photograph, more reports, on page 8

THE STATESMAN

14 AUG 2008

Crafting a peace process

By Malini Parthasarathy

10-12 14/8

New Delhi's peace initiatives in Kashmir have not as yet acquired the necessary credibility and this could be because of certain fundamental contradictions in the policy approach of the Vajpayee administration.

THE UNSAVOURY experience of the last few weeks, manifesting most starkly in the brutal killings of Amarnath-bound pilgrims and the ominously exploding bombs that resonated through the Kashmir Valley immediately after the dominant Kashmiri militant force, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, abruptly called off its ceasefire, should not lead to undue bitterness and cynicism of the sort that could imperil prospects for an enduring peace process. In one sense, it was no real surprise that the hope which flared brightly after the pro-Pakistan militia, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, considered one of the most ruthless terrorist groups waging war on the Indian state had suddenly decided to suspend their military operations, rapidly became acute disappointment when the Hizb revealed their lack of commitment to the idea of peace in their attaching *post-facto* conditions to their offer. To begin with, the expectation that a peace process could take root within days in the Valley, just because the Governments in New Delhi and Srinagar had all of a sudden decided to speak the language of peace and reconciliation, was unrealistic and at odds with the ground realities.

Years and years of alienation of the ordinary Kashmiris, who since the State's accession in late 1947 had not really forgiven New Delhi for renegeing on its historic commitment to respect Kashmir's conditional accession by placing limits on its own jurisdiction in the Valley State, cannot be wiped out overnight on the basis of mere declarations of intent to install a peace process in Kashmir. It might be true that the signals from the Central Government and the Government of Dr. Farooq Abdullah in recent months have been singularly conciliatory. The dramatic steps taken by the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, to force the Centre to restore to his State the political and constitutional autonomy that it was historically entitled to, and the gestures made by the Vajpayee administration, noticeably after the visit of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, including the release of prominent leaders of the Hurriyat movement and the implication of a dialogue with them, did offer promise of revitalising the moribund political process in the terror-consumed Valley. But what is also painfully evident is that the strenuous efforts to signal New Delhi's sincerity in talking peace "to our own people" in the estranged State do not seem to have captured the public imagination in the trou-

bled Valley. There is not the sense of an overwhelmingly enthusiastic response from ordinary Kashmiris. This would suggest that New Delhi's peace initiatives have not as yet acquired the necessary credibility and this could be because of certain fundamental contradictions in the policy approach of the Vajpayee administration as regards the complex issue of preserving Kashmir's affiliation to the Indian Union.

The first major gap in the policy approach of the Vajpayee administration relates to the glaring failure to set out a conceptual framework for the peace process. As pointed out by Dr. Radha Kumar in these columns (August 8 & 9), unlike in the case of the Northern Ireland peace process, where meticulous groundwork had been done for the talks on its political future, virtually no groundwork has gone into the peace process intended for Kashmir. One striking feature of the approach to the Northern Ireland peace negotiations was that the basic elements that would underpin and provide consistency to the negotiating process were set out and articulated well before the progress in narrowing the gap between the opposing sides finally reflected in the famous Good Friday Agreement of April 1998. As early as 1991-92, the British Government, the Irish Government and the political parties in Northern Ireland had agreed that the peace talks would hinge on "three strands", the first dealing with internal political arrangements for Northern Ireland, the second dealing with future North-South relations in Ireland and the third addressing relations between London and Dublin. The "three strands" approach remained the basic institutional frame upon which a series of peace negotiations were pinned, culminating in concrete advance in reconciling the positions of the Nationalists and the Unionists. Likewise, the Mitchell Principles, the outcome of the painstaking efforts of the former U.S. Senator, Mr. George Mitchell, which laid emphasis on the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations including the IRA and on using only democratic and peaceful means to resolve political issues, provided a context for the peace process to take root.

It may be noted that in Sri Lanka, similar painstaking and meticulous effort has gone into the crafting of a framework that would provide the sharply polarised ethnic communities, Tamil and Sinhala, an equal sense of entitlement in the island nation. Since 1983, there have been several devolution proposals drafted by Indian, Sri Lankan and other constitutional experts which have served to identify the core issues at the heart of the Sri Lankan Tamil discontent which require addressing — land issues, control of law and order, decades of Sinhala colonisation, discrimination against Tamils in education and employment. The result of having identified these core issues manifest in the successive attempts since the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement, culminating in the visionary devolution package presented by Ms. Chandrika Kumaratunga, to devolve substantive powers on the Tamil people in Northern Sri Lanka. More significantly, this exercise has yielded space for a greater "federalisation" of Sri Lanka's constitutional structure.

Despite the fact that in the case of Kashmir, there are already several agreements and a major Constitutional provision offering a very clear idea of the direction in which the State's political and constitutional future ought to be taken, there has been no indication from the Vajpayee administration of what would be the structure or the framework of the peace process envisaged and how the key interlocutors are to be placed within the negotiations, and more disturbing, absolutely no acknowledgment of the fact that whether India likes it or not, Pakistan is historically an interlocutor in the debate over Kashmir's political identity. It is an issue that will not go away unless India addresses it.

But another aspect of the Government's attitude to Kashmir that is cause for concern is its failure to harness an internal political consensus on the approach to the Kashmir question. On such a major development as the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's adoption of the State autonomy resolution, the Government did not consult the national Opposition parties. Such

a consultation might have allowed for some basic elements of a conceptual approach to the Kashmir problem to emerge. The administration has also not offered any clear idea as to how it proposes to reconcile its approach to its NDA partner, the National Conference of Dr. Abdullah, to the Hurriyat leadership, who the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, hinted could be major negotiators in the process, and to the militant groups who might, like the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, suddenly decide to come in from the cold and warm their hands around a negotiating table.

But the real conundrum to crack is the issue of Pakistan's role. It is clear that if India has had considerable political space to implement its strategies of peace-making in the Kashmir Valley, it is also a reflection of the current geopolitical realities. Pakistan's military coup, the continued evidence of a nexus between its military establishment and the terrorist mujahideen groups and its relative staidness have earned it the disfavour of the United States, even as a triumphalist Government in India has made a reliance on Washington's pressure on Islamabad, the virtual centrepiece of its strategy in relation to Pakistan. The danger in New Delhi's increasing dependence on Washington to share its perspective of issues and events in the subcontinent is that it dilutes the Government's credibility as a sovereign interlocutor in the context of building a peace process in Kashmir. Successive agreements between India and Pakistan — Shimla in 1972, the Joint Statement of June 23, 1997, and finally the much acclaimed Lahore Agreement — have all acknowledged that both countries would have to resolve all issues "including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir." For India to dodge the implications of this commitment and to continue to resist an engagement of the regime in Islamabad would be viewed by the alienated people in Kashmir as yet another instance of New Delhi's bad faith. If indeed as is definitely the case, cross-border terrorism is a major cause of the continuing unrest in the Valley, it becomes all the more imperative to engage Islamabad and make this issue a key condition to be adhered to or core principle to be respected if the peace process is to work. This would put the military establishment in Islamabad on the defensive and also yield more political space for India to turn its attention to the really relevant interlocutors in the Kashmir context. There is really no other way forward.

THE HINDU

14 AUG 2000

Pandian panel may submit report on J&K firing in September

By Law Kumar Mishra
The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: The Justice S.R. Pandian Commission, probing the causes and circumstances leading to the event of firing at Brakpora, Bulbul Nogwam in Anantnag district on April 3, when eight persons were killed and 14 others injured, is nearing completion of the probe. The report may be submitted two months in advance before the term of the commission expires on November 15.

The commission, headed by a retired judge of the supreme court, may be first of its kind in the country to complete the investigations in a record time, while other commissions had been seeking and getting extensions. The first sitting of the Pandian Commission was held on June 7 and since then it has examined over 35 witnesses, mostly complainants and witnesses of the firing. Six doctors, who had performed post-mortem and treated the victims, have also been cross-examined.

On August 16, the commission is expected to examine the then station house officer of Achabal police station, sub-inspector of Bakpora police outpost and the chaukidar, who had informed the police about the five villagers who were missing and later found killed by the armymen, who had termed them as foreign militants.

The commission had received 69 affidavits from the complainants, including witnesses and 15 from the police officers in their defence. The police officers may be examined next week. The state gov-

ernment had suspended the SSP, SDPO, SHO and transferred the DIG and the deputy commissioner of Anantnag, following the firings.

The Anantnag police station has filed FIRs against three officers of the special operation group of the state police and four members of the Central Reserve Police Force and charged them under Section 302 (murder). They had received complaints against 27 officers and jawans of the CRPF and SOG, but after investigation, seven of them were identified and prosecuted on murder charges.

According to lawyers, representing the complainants, the witnesses had told the commission that the procession of the villagers to the deputy commissioner was being escorted by policemen. They claimed the procession which was agitating for exhumation of bodies of the five villagers who had been missing after the Chhatisinghpura massacre, in which 35 Sikhs were killed on March 21 night, was targeted with excessive firing and without provocation.

Some women also appeared as witnesses before the commission. The security forces had declared they had killed five foreign militants who had been found responsible for the Chhatisinghpura carnage. The ministry of defence had claimed the operation was led by a brigadier and SSP of Anantnag jointly. However, the local people were agitated and claimed securitymen had killed innocent people of the area.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 AUG 2000

Go for military option in J&K, say Sangh hawks

By Bhaskar Roy and Rajesh Ramachandran

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Despite setbacks, the government seems keen to give peace another chance in the Kashmir Valley. During discussions at various levels, a view has emerged that despite the recrudescence of terrorist violence since the Hizbul Mujahideen's announcement of a cease-fire and its subsequent withdrawal, a dialogue with the ultras is still a valid option.

However, the strongest resistance to the peace efforts has come from the Sangh Parivar. Organisations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the RSS have further hardened their attitude following the recent massacres in the Valley.

Openly advocating the policy of 'hot pursuit' of militants across the Line of Control, RSS leader M.G. Vaidya on Monday called upon the Centre to be prepared for "any eventuality, be it war". The government should attack the terrorist camps across the LoC in Pakistan, if need be, he said.

Mr Vaidya told *The Times of India* that hot pursuit would not draw flak from the international community because it was aware of Pakistan's barbarity in getting Indians killed. Besides, he said, "taking a battle into the enemy territory is always advantageous". In 1965, the Indian troops' thrust towards Lahore had relieved pressure in the Akhnoor area, he pointed out.

Wouldn't crossing the LoC lead to a war? "We'll face it," Mr Vaidya said. "If we have to cross the LoC to crush terrorism, we

have to be prepared for any eventuality."

"We want either the Farooq Abdullah government to be dismissed or Jammu and Kashmir to be declared a disturbed area and placed under the army," VHP general secretary Giriraj Kishore said last week, responding to the killings of Amarnath pilgrims. He also wanted the NC expelled from the ruling NDA at the Centre.

This hardline approach, often derisively dismissed by the government as an expression of anger is, however, increasingly finding takers in the BJP. Opinion is building up in the party that the Kashmir situation calls for a hard option. After the failure of peace talks with Hizbul Mujahideen, this view has been reinforced in the party.

The hardliners feel the government should exercise the military option in the Valley without delay. Like the VHP hotheads, they too view the situation as beyond the stage when negotiations could yield results.

Although Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has said India will talk to any Pakistani government, military or elected, the RSS feels a military dictator will talk only from a militarily strong position. Mr Vaidya pointed out that the present escalation of violence and a readiness for talks were the two faces of Pakistan's military's policy.

Sangh Parivar sources are anxious about the government playing down the seriousness of the Kashmir situation by terming it a "proxy war". The issue is expected to be debated intensively at the forthcoming BJP national executive session in Nagpur.

ID cards for J&K border residents

VINAY JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 31. — The government will issue identity cards to residents within a five-kilometre stretch of the Indo-Pak border in Jammu and Kashmir, so that intruders can be identified.

Work on issuing the cards is expected to begin soon.

Intelligence reports say the release of Hurriyat leaders and the proposed talks have made militant outfits apprehensive. They are trying to push in a large number of mercenaries to foment trouble in the state.

The Rs 2-crore project follows the issuing of identity cards to shepherds, who have begun moving their livestock to higher reaches for grazing.

Identity cards for residents in areas close to the border will make "the task of the three-tier security ring along the Indo-

Pak border a lot simpler as 'strangers' can be identified", a home ministry official said.

The expenses of the exercise have been provided for by the Union budget. "Each card, with distinctive features to ensure against forgery, will cost approximately Rs 15," an official said. The project is likely to be complete by the end of the year.

The government is also preparing to finally begin fencing the 198-km stretch of international border in the state.

Border fencing was taken up by the Central Public Works Department about four years ago, but firing and shelling from the Pakistani side hampered work. This time, a paramilitary force or the Army itself is expected to be entrusted with the task.

The government hopes the ID-cards will do the trick till fencing is complete.

THE STATESMAN

31 JUN 2000

HURRIYAT DEAL?

5/16 // The chances are thin 9/16/94

TALKING to the Hurriyat is useful because they are an important element in Kashmir. But if the government assumes that the Hurriyat may be brought around to being a factor for peace defined in terms favourable to the Indian position, they may have to think again, if they haven't done so already. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed says that the Hurriyat is the overground organisation of the militants. How far is this true? We heard the Mirwaiz Moulvi Omar Farooq saying that the Shoura-e-jihad which coordinated militant activities earlier was disbanded in 1996, after which the Hurriyat has had a limited say in the field. The Hizbul Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Toiba take their orders from their spiritual guides in Pakistan and the ISI. What can Hurriyat do about them? Is the Hurriyat willing and in a position to broker a deal between the government, on the one hand, and the militants and their backers, official and unofficial, in Pakistan, on the other, so that all guns fall silent in Kashmir? Several leaders of the Hurriyat have, in fact, begun receiving death threats ever since the idea of talking to the government came up. How does Pakistan propose to back a relatively moderate Hurriyat in its initiative with the Indian government and continue to lend support, at the same time, to fanatics who will have none of it? How does the idea of trilateralism hold up in this perspective? These are questions which the Hurriyat will have to answer coherently. There is a chance that US pressure may force Pakistan to rein in *jihadi* instincts on its territory and, ultimately, in Kashmir, but that will remain aleatory as long as the US is not involved in conflict resolution arrangements.

The Indian government doesn't seem to have much to offer the Hurriyat. Of course, talking is also about finding out what and how much can be taken or given. But the Hurriyat has an anti-Indian constituency. It cannot be seen to be involved in any manoeuvre that gives in on crucial points. It will resist the idea of participating in elections, or being a part of any constitutional entity. Its preoccupation is with looking for some kind of historic settlement that keeps Farooq Abdullah out of the picture and for which no one, not even the Pakistanis, are prepared, no matter what Qazi Ashraf Jehangir may tell them. Prospects for peace look pretty bleak.

Vajpayee keeps tabs on Kashmir situation

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 3. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, camping at Manali, was reported to have telephoned Moulvi Ifthikhar Hussain Ansari, the influential Shia leader who was injured yesterday in a bomb blast.

Mr. Vajpayee also spoke to the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and sought to gauge for himself the motives behind the attack which killed nearly a dozen people.

Also, in a statement issued from his holiday camp, Mr. Vajpayee

expressed serious concern over the attack on a Shia congregation. The immediate concern for both the Prime Minister's entourage and the Union Home Ministry is that yesterday's incident should not be allowed to acquire a communal overtone.

The attack is seen as part of a pattern in which Pakistan-backed militant groups have been trying to target minorities — the Hindu Pandits, later the Sikhs, and now the Shias. The attack on a Shia congregation reveals, according to officials, the agenda of ethnic

cleansing being pursued by the "jehadi" outfits.

The Union Home Ministry, too, has been in touch the state government officials who have been advised to watch out against similar attacks in other parts of the state. The police and other security forces are being redeployed in sensitive areas to ensure that there were no Shia-Sunni face-off in the valley.

At the same time the attack on a prominent Shia leader refutes the comfortable assumption in New Delhi and Srinagar that the security forces are once again in the process of gaining the upper hand vis-a-vis the militant outfits.

Dr. Subramanian Swamy, president of the Janata Party, has used the latest incident to question the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's claim on checking militancy. Dr. Swamy demanded Mr. Advani's resignation.

From the Congress(I) side, Mr. Rajesh Pilot observed that "the new trend of attacks at Chattisinghpura and Pattan is intended for further communal polarisation, which, if not curbed instantly, will spell a dangerous portent. He sees in the latest incident at Pattan "the alarming failure of the Government to deal with the situation" which is "vitiating the hopes and aspirations of the people".

Protest near Srinagar: Page 8



Shia youth holding a rally against the bomb blast in which 12 persons were killed and 34 injured at Gund Quasim on Saturday. The former J&K Housing Minister, Moulvi Ifthikhar Hussain Ansari, was among the injured. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

THE HINDU

4 JUN 2000

France tells Pak to rein in Kashmir militants

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, June 3. — France has asked Pakistan to stop “armed infiltration” across the Line of Control and use its “influence” with militant groups operating in Kashmir for reduction of the level of violence there, as it asserted that there could be no military solution to the issue.

“France is very attentive to the situation in Kashmir, in all its aspects. It recognises fully the sensitivity of this long-standing issue between India and Pakistan,” the French ambassador to Pakistan, Mr Yannick Gerard said.

In an interview to Pakistan’s official APP news agency, Mr Gerard said Pakistan should “prevent armed infiltration across the LoC and use its “influence with militant groups to reduce the level of violence in Kashmir”.

He said the European Union and France believed that a peaceful settlement of this crucial issue could begin with the implementation of the already agreed confidence-building measures between the two sides.

This should be followed by more steps in this regard, he added. Pakistan and India should

resume dialogue in the spirit of the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, he said, adding “at the same time, we urge Pakistan and India to continue to respect the LoC”.

Welcoming the reported willingness of Pakistan’s military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, to have dialogue with India at “anytime, anywhere and at any level”, Mr Gerard said the continuing confrontation and violent clashes along the LoC bear a great risk of uncontrollable escalation and pose a major threat to regional stability and security”.

He said the EU and France have been calling for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue during their contacts with the two countries. To a question, he said as far as human rights are concerned, “the EU has regularly expressed its concerns regarding Kashmir in the framework of the UN Human Rights Commission”.

Replying to a question on nuclear proliferation, he said the EU has urged both India and Pakistan to sign the CTBT.

It urges the USA and China to do the same and to take part constructively in negotiations on a cut-off treaty.

16 killed in blast at J&K Shia meet

By Shujaat Bukhari

HD-1
B/6

SRINAGAR, JUNE 2. A senior member of Kashmir's Shia clergy and former State Minister, Mbulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, today escaped an assassination bid when a powerful bomb exploded in a north Kashmir village, killing 16 people, including a police official, and injuring 19. According to reports, Mr. Ansari, chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Shia Association, was addressing a 'Hussaini majlis' (religious meeting) in village Gund Khawja Qasim, some 30 km from Srinagar.

The high-intensity blast occurred at around 4.30 p.m., when the meeting was in progress leaving seven people dead and many injured. People ran helter-skelter even as those injured were removed to a hospital. Nine persons succumbed to injuries in the hospital. However, police said the number of dead persons was yet to be confirmed.

Mr. Ansari received splinter wounds in his back and shoulder, police sources said. Mr. Ansari, along with the other injured, was rushed to the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences, Soura, where the condition of at least three people was stated to be critical. "A time bomb had been planted under the podium from which I was addressing the meeting," Mr. Ansari told presspersons in hospital. Senior police and civil officers have rushed to the village to take stock of the situation.

Police said the blast was caused by an improvised explosive device (IED) planted at the venue of the meeting. Further investigations are on.

The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, his Ministerial colleagues, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Ashok

Jaitly, and the State police chief, Mr. Gurbachan Jagat, visited the hospital to enquire about the welfare of Mr. Ansari.

Mr. Ansari, who was formerly with the Congress(I), had shifted loyalties to the National Conference and was considered to be a close confidant of Dr. Abdullah. He was the Minister for Housing and Urban Development and was sacked after the Sidhra land scandal surfaced in November 1999. Mr. Ansari was alleged to have received kickbacks worth lakhs of rupees in the scam, which he has denied. A former High Court judge is investigating the case.

Home Ministry concern

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 2. The Union Home Ministry has expressed "serious concern" over the blast near Pattan in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir this afternoon. It blamed Pakistan-supported militants for the attack on the Shia congregation, describing it as a "dangerous dimension" in militancy.

Senior officials said this evening that the Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, had sought a detailed report from the State Government. Officials said that according to reports from Baramulla district, there was tension between Shias and Sunnis. Sources said the blast at the congregation was the first such incident in the Valley and was aimed at creating a rift between the two communities.

Photograph on Page 15

RSS move an attempt to build pressure for J&K division

Arun Joshi
Srinagar, June 2

THE RSS's suggestion to trifurcate Jammu and Kashmir to evolve a solution to the Kashmir crisis is seen here as an outcome of behind-the-scene pressure-building tactics to bring about the division of the state.

There is a feeling that there couldn't be so many coincidents. First, a US-based study group, Kashmir Study Group suggested a division of the state. All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani in an inter-

view voiced division of the state as a solution. A senior RSS leader offered identical suggestions as a solution.

Observers feel that there is something more than what meets the eye. The surprising element is that the extremists on both the sides appear to be talking of the similar solutions. There were some invisible forces pushing this agenda. The voices mooted these suggestions otherwise represent diametrically opposite viewpoints. The RSS stands for "Akhand Bharat" of which Kashmir is an integral part. The APHC sees Kashmir as a "disputed territory" that should either get free-

dom or merger with Pakistan or the peoples allowed to decide their future status. The trifurcation of this state means separating states of Jammu, Ladakh and Kashmir. The three divisions are dominated by three different communities and have altogether different cultural and ethnic origins. A section belonging to Jammu region is opposed to the thought of trifurcation, which to them means shrinking the boundaries that their forefathers had fought to expand to Skardu and Tibet. Buddhists dominate Ladakh and are extra-

News Analysis

ordinarily possessive about their heritage and inimical to the thought that distances them from India. The Kashmir Valley, known for its beauty and culture world-wide, is in the international focus for the armed rebellion by Muslim separatists for the past over decade.

The western analysts are also worried over the newly acquired nuclear capabilities of the two South Asian neighbours. It has been described as a nuclear flash-point. The controversy originated with an interview to a local newspaper in Jammu in which RSS prant pracharak Inderash Kumar reportedly suggested that the trifurcation of the state might form a solution to Kashmir crisis.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 JUN 2000

The Taliban connection

EXPRESS FOCUS KASHMIR

The Taliban are slowly but surely enlarging their influence on militancy in Kashmir, reports MUZAMIL JALEEL

A MAJOR incident that rocked the country late last year has started paying dividends for the fast growing pan-Islamist militancy in Kashmir.

The hijacking of IC-814 to Kandahar and the subsequent release of militant leader and Harkat ideologue Maulana Masood Azhar in exchange for the hostages has strengthened the Taliban-style Jehadi campaign here, more so after all factions of the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen merged into Azhar's newly floated Jaish Mohammad, or 'Army of the Prophet'.

With the emergence of this Jehadi group as a major force, the Taliban are bound to have an increased influence on militancy in the Valley, since the Deobandi creed forms the primary religious and ideological base for both the Jaish and the Taliban. In fact, the Taliban movement was launched by students of the 9,000 madrassas which the Jaish's (formerly Harkat) parent organisation — Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam — runs across Pakistan. Masood only strengthened these ties after his release when he toured Kandahar to secure the blessings of the Taliban leadership.

The Jaish organisation made its presence felt in Kashmir with a suicidal attack on the main entrance of the Army's 15 Corps Headquarters at Badamibagh Cantonment. A 17-year-old local recruit attempted to ram an explosive-laden car inside the headquarters. The group has also surfaced in Srinagar, negating the government's

claim that the capital city has been cleansed of militancy.

Only recently, Jaish militants fired around 17 rifle grenades at the high-security Civil Secretariat building in the heart of Srinagar. The next day, grenades were hurled at heavily guarded buses carrying state government employees. And just a week ago, a girl was shot in her leg in a busy Srinagar locality for wearing jeans.

The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen had also earlier shot at girls wearing jeans in Srinagar, branding them as "un-Islamic", besides attacking cable operators and banning their operations. Though the ban was later relaxed, music and entertainment channels like MTV, Channel V and Star Movies are taboo.

Ideology apart, most of the Taliban and Jaish leaders and cadre have been classmates in the madrassas run by Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) in Pakistan. Taliban's links with the JUI date back to the years of the Afghan Mujahideen resistance movement against the erstwhile Soviet Union. The JUI first set up the madrassas preaching the Deobandi school of thought in Pakistan in 1947 as part of a "purely religious movement to propagate their beliefs and mobilise the community of believers". But the outlook of this movement changed irrevocably when its leader, Maulana Ghulam Ghaus Hazarvi turned it into a political party.

A leading Pakistani journalist and expert on Afghan affairs, Ahmad Rasheed, writes in his latest

for the post-Soviet period," Rasheed writes.

According to Rasheed, the most important leader of JUI is Maulana Samul Haq, a former member of the National Assembly and Senate whose madrassa — Dar-ul-Uloom Haqqania — became a major training ground for the Taliban leadership. "In 1999, at least eight Taliban cabinet ministers in Kabul were graduates of Haq's madrassa and dozens more served as Taliban governors in the provinces, military commanders, judges and bureaucrats," notes Rasheed. Haqqania is in Akhora Khatak in NWFP and has a boarding school for 1,500, a high school for 1,000 day scholars and 12 affiliated smaller madrassas.

In February 1999, says Rasheed, the madrassa had a staggering 15,000 applications for some

400 seats. It is learnt that most of the Jaish commanders operating in Kashmir are products of these madrassas, many among them from Haqqania itself. Maulana Samul Haq, according to Rasheed, is in constant touch with Mullah Omar, the Taliban chief, helping him deal with international relations besides offering advice on Sharia decisions. "Haq is also the principle organiser for recruiting Pakistani students to fight for the Taliban. After the Taliban's defeat in Mazar in 1997, he received a telephone call from Omar asking for help. Haq shut down his madrassa and sent his entire student body to fight alongside the Taliban, thus providing 8,000 fresh recruits to Omar," Rasheed writes.

Moulana Azhar Masood, who is emerging as the ultimate leader of Deobandi pan-Islamist militants

in Kashmir after his release, has however been directly associated with Jamia Abu Yousuf, Madipore Karachi and Jamiat-ul-Uloomi Islamiyah in Binori town, Karachi. The Binori madrassa has around 8,000 students and several top Taliban leaders are from this institute. According to Ahmad Rasheed, this madrassa sent 600 students to join Taliban in 1996 alone.

The Taliban connection of Kashmir's pan-Islamist militancy seems an established fact now and as their strength in the Valley grows, the Amar Bil Maroof Wahabi An al-Munkar (Department of the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice), whose religious police enforces a strict code of conduct and restrictions on women in Afghanistan, is bound to have a greater say in Kashmir as well.

Do's and don'ts in Afghanistan:

According to the General Presidency of Amr Bil Maruf, Kabul, December 1996:

- To prevent sedition and female uncovers, no driver is to pick up women even using Iranian burqa. In case of violation, the driver will be imprisoned. If such women are observed in the street, their houses will be found and their husbands punished. If the women wear stimulating and attractive clothing and no close male relative is accompanying them, the drivers should not pick them up. (Women are duty-bound to behave with dignity, walk calmly and refrain from hitting their shoes on the ground, making noise)
- In shops, hotels, vehicles and rickshaws, cassettes and music are prohibited. This matter must be monitored within five days. If any music cassette is found in a shop, the shopkeeper will be imprisoned and his shop locked. If a cassette is found, the vehicle and the driver will be imprisoned.
- If anyone is found having shaved and/or cut his beard, they will be arrested and imprisoned until their beard gets bushy.
- The keeping of pigeons and playing with birds must be prevented. This habit/hobby will be monitored and the pigeons and any other

playing birds be killed.
■ Kite-flying and kite shops in the city are to be abolished.

- In vehicles, shops, hotels, rooms and any other place, pictures/portraits will be abolished.
- No British and American hairstyles will be allowed. People with long hair are to be arrested and taken to the Religious Police and their heads will be shaven. The criminal has to pay the barber.
- Young ladies cannot wash clothes in city streams. Violators will be picked up in a respectful Islamic manner, taken to their houses and their husbands severely punished.
- No music and dances at wedding parties. In case of violation, the head of family will be arrested and punished.
- No male tailor is to sew clothes for women and take measurements of women. If women or fashion magazines are seen in the shop, the tailor will be imprisoned.
- Prayers should be done at their due time. Traffic should be strictly prohibited and all people are obliged to go to the mosque. Young people seen in shops will immediately be imprisoned.

Rules of work for the State Hospitals and pri-

vate clinics based on Islamic Sharia principles — Ministry of Health, on behalf of Amir ul Momineen Mullah Moharomad Omar, Kabul, November 1996.

- Female patients are to go to female physicians. In case a male physician is needed, the female patient should be accompanied by her close relative.
- During examination, the female patient and male physician must both be dressed in Islamic veil.
- Male physicians are not to touch or see other parts of female patients except for the affected part.
- Waiting rooms for female patients are to be safely covered.
- Male and female doctors are not allowed to sit or speak with each other. Any discussion has to be done in *hujab* (veil).
- Female doctors are to wear simple clothes, no stylish clothing or cosmetics or make-up.
- Female doctors or nurses are not to enter rooms where male patients are hospitalised. (Translated from Dari by Taliban for western agencies for implementation. These decrees were reproduced in — 'Taliban- Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia' by Ahmad Rasheed)

A Fine Balance

Commandments for a Kashmir Policy

By AMITABH MATTOO

UNION Home Minister L K Advani has admitted that the Centre has opened channels of communication with Kashmir separatists. This is encouraging. For ever since Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed as the *Wazir-e-Azam* of Jammu and Kashmir in 1953, New Delhi's policies towards the state have been characterised mainly by ad hocism and shortsightedness.

After more than ten years of militancy, during which thousands of Kashmiris have been killed or displaced, there is now growing evidence that the Centre has finally realised the need for articulating a serious and well-thought-out Kashmir policy. The new initiatives will, however, flounder — like so many others in the past — if New Delhi demonstrates the same lack of sensitivity, subtlety, imagination and foresight that has been the mainstay of its Kashmir-related policies for nearly half a century.

Indeed, there are several axioms, almost commandments, that must guide any enlightened move to bring back peace and normalcy to, what is arguably, the most vital part of the Union of India.

First, Kashmir is unique, and must be dealt with specially. Jammu and Kashmir's uniqueness is obvious for a variety of historical reasons recognised even by the Supreme Court, but its singular importance to the very idea of India is often forgotten. A Muslim majority state that voluntarily acceded to India in 1947 lent tremendous strength to the construction of India as a vibrant, secular and pluralistic state. The battle, therefore, to win back the hearts and minds of the Kashmiri people is critical not just for the recovery of the ideals that inspired Indian nationhood, but central to the war against obscurantism and fundamentalism. In other words, Kashmir must no longer be dealt with the kind of political ineptitude and bureaucratic inertia that has often characterised the Centre's policies towards many other states over the last decades.

Second, autonomy must not be viewed as a dirty word, and an "autonomous" Kashmir could become a model of cooperative federalism. It is often not realised that autonomy is synonymous with devolution or decentralisation of power. The demand for greater decentralisation has been part of the charter of virtually every Indian political party — at one time or another. Even if Article 370 is restored to its pre-1952 shape, it is still possible to strike a harmonious balance between the need to integrate Jammu and Kashmir within the national mainstream, and the state's demand for au-

tonomous self-governance. If this balance is struck, Jammu and Kashmir could become a model of "co-operative federalism", a special model that could be gradually applied to other states of the Union.

Third, the admission of mistakes is the first step towards restoring trust between New Delhi and Kashmir. Over the years, the Centre has made a number of appalling mistakes in Kashmir. Several elections have been rigged, genuinely elected governments have been dismissed, puppet-leaders have been installed, and — in the last decade — the ordinary Kashmiri has faced tremendous harassment from security forces. Some of these mistakes were avoidable, others inevitable given the complex situation on the ground. Admission of these mistakes will not be construed as an expression of guilt, but will signal a recognition that fresh initiatives towards Kashmir will be based on an awareness of past

oured by Pakistan. In Kashmir today, there is an overwhelming sentiment against violence, irrespective of its origin. Militancy may not be down and out, but it has lost a great deal of popular legitimacy. Indeed, there is virtually no enthusiasm or sympathy for the foreign militants. Reports that Afghans, belonging to the dreaded Lashkar-e-Tayyba, may be dominating the militancy, has generated deep discomfiture in significant sections of the valley. Kashmiris have always had an uneasy relationship with the Afghans, rooted in the history of the tyrannical Afghan rule over the valley.

Similarly, there is an equally strong disillusionment with Pakistan. The political and social conditions prevailing within Pakistan have not gone unnoticed in the valley. The near total absence of a civil society, the deep ethnic conflict in Sindh and other areas, and the almost Orwellian control that is exercised in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, has gradually left a deep impression on the Kashmiris. The coup by General Pervez Musharraf has strengthened the growing feeling in Kashmir that a country whose commitment to democracy is so weak and imperfect can hardly be a real supporter of the democratic aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sixth, a dialogue between the Centre and the Kashmiris should be as inclusive as possible, and no group or individual must be considered untouchable. Nor should any conditions be attached at the beginning of a dialogue. It is quite obvious that any negotiations the Centre conducts can in no way compromise the unity and integrity of India. Even separatists realise this, but any explicit conditionalities make it difficult for many to make the initial leap from the streets to the negotiating table. Similarly, even militants, who are willing to give up arms and eschew violence, should be given a place at the negotiating table, as must representatives from minorities and different regions of the state.

Finally, a dialogue must not be for merely buying time or for transferring power to a new leadership, but for arriving at a *modus vivendi* that can ensure long-term peace in the state. It is essential, therefore, that this dialogue is carried not through dilettante Track II wallahs, but by a specially constituted negotiating team that has the backing of the top political leadership of the country. A specially constituted task force on Kashmir may perhaps be needed to carry out negotiations, as well as to address other pressing problems in the state.

IN BRIEF

- Opening lines of communication with Kashmiri separatists is a step in the right direction
- New initiatives are needed to bring back peace and normalcy
- Kashmir could become a model for cooperative federalism
- There's need to restore Kashmir's traditional society based on peaceful coexistence
- Ordinary Kashmiris should not be seen as militants, separatists or as being pro-Pakistan

mistakes and a genuine desire not to see them repeated.

Fourth, the recovery of Kashmiriyat is vital to sustained peace. While there does seem to be a genuine, all-pervasive, desire within the state to recover the social capital lost in the last decade, and to restore Kashmir's traditional society based on ideas of peaceful coexistence and the common syncretic identity of Kashmiriyat, the Centre must make the recovery of this ethos central to its efforts to build peace in the state. It is essential, therefore, to ensure that there is no division of the state, and especially not along communal lines. Ensuring the return of the Kashmiri pandits is quite obviously also vital for the resuscitation of Kashmiriyat.

Fifth, ordinary Kashmiris must be viewed as neither militants nor separatists nor even as being enam-

Enchanted Valley

Selling the Kashmiri Brand

By LALITA PANICKER

SRINAGAR: "Indians not allowed" said a sign some years ago outside one of this town's best-known shops. The sign is long gone, but the sentiment remains. Not towards the ordinary Indian, but solely towards the security forces. Any residual antipathy, however, does not deter the Indian tourist whose ebullient presence is once again being felt in Kashmir. Under the watchful gaze of security forces bristling with guns, they disembark from buses near Dal Lake — plump women, babies in their arms, hitch up their saris and leap nimbly into precariously swaying shikaras and head out to the picture postcard houseboats that dot Dal Lake. The boats themselves have quaint names — Egypt, Miss England, Maid of the Mountains, Apollo 11 and Aristotle are some.

The once magnificent lake itself has gone to seed; thick weeds have choked its clear waters. Come morning the lake is abuzz with activity. Living on a deck with houseboat is the leisure tourist's dream come true. As you lounge on deck with a long, cool drink, the snow-capped peaks in front and the rhythmic lap of water on the hull, shikaras glide up offering everything from foreign chocolate to chilled beer. The washerman paddles across a while later and collects your laundry; roving cooks flit by to whip up whatever your palate fancies. And, in case of a fire, the fire brigade shikara will come skimming to the rescue across the lake.

One of the most picturesque characters on the lake is the seed and bulb seller. "My name is paradise", he says — he has a big clientele in Delhi which he visits every year. "These are Kashmiri rose seeds, these are Kashmiri tulip bulbs, these are Kashmiri daffodils and these Kashmiri poppies and peonies," he tells me. "Do you have ordinary daffodils?", I ask. He looks astonished. "There is no such thing", he says with an air of finality. Investing the most ordinary of things with a unique 'Kashmiriyat' is something that all Valley-dwellers tend to do. By establishing the Kashmiri identity of everyday things, it is almost as if the Kashmiri seeks to establish his incorruptible pedigree and the unchallenged superiority of the Kashmiri brand.

It is this strong belief in a separate Kashmiri identity that puts him off the militants' exhortations to join Pakistan. As Jammu and

Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yaseen Malik says, "We are not animals, we cannot be apportioned to either India or Pakistan. Are you saying that we are not capable of running our own affairs? Of course, we understand India's security concerns but that does not mean that New Delhi's dictate should run here." The canny local understands the meaning of the Indian market and has no time for esoteric visions of an Islamic paradise. 'Show me the money,' is their motto, as they move with ease from Kashmir to other parts of India selling their merchandise.

It is only when night falls, that the atmosphere visibly tenses. Even the lake seems to suppress its ripples and gurgles. Jumpy and terrified security personnel begin their search operations on anyone found on the roads. My own car was stopped on numerous occasions but I was spared too much harassment when

IN BRIEF

- All Valley-dwellers have a strong belief in a separate Kashmiri identity
- But this does not mean that they are partial to Pakistan
- The militants and security forces have learned to co-exist
- Though the Indian state is not popular in Kashmir, Indian culture is

it became clear that I was not a local. It did help that I had in my company a retired British diplomat who would leap out at every stop and enquire whether the security men had had a good day and would wish them *khuda hafiz*.

In a strange way, the militants and security men have learned to co-exist. A prominent local journalist speaks of the symbiotic relationship between the two. It is not unknown, he said, for a militant to slide into a CRPF or BSF bunker at night to effect the swift exchange of money for ration rum. Another example is that of Srinagar's posh hotels. Faced with the prospect of zero occupancy, most hotel owners have rented out their entire premises to security personnel or other central government staff. The militants take their cut from the hotel owner and everyone is happy.

If the symbols of the Indian state are oppressive to the local Kashmiri, the other symbols of India definitely are not. Next to Dal

Lake, the idli-dosa stand does roaring business. At night as I was sailing back to my houseboat, the silence was suddenly shattered by two young men in a boat singing a song from the Hindi blockbuster *Kaho Na Pyaar Hai*. Nothing seems to animate the Kashmiri, especially the women, more than Bollywood's filmstars. Starved of any entertainment barring Door-darshan and cable whenever it works, their desire to know more about the lives of film personalities has intensified. "Have you really seen Aishwarya Rai, how lucky you are, is she really as beautiful as she looks in her pictures?" asks Akila, a local television journalist who bears a startling resemblance to Waheeda Rehman. Her colleague Sheba said she thought Sridevi was the cat's whiskers and was positively belligerent when I disagreed.

At a recent filmi jamboree comprising mainly B-grade Mumbai stars, the crowds were electrified by the performances. From Shakti Kapoor's less than savoury jokes to Shilpa Shetty's by now famous sinuous dances, the crowd could not get enough of it. They stomped, clapped and sang along, yelling for encores. It is a different matter that the local papers blasted the show the next day, accusing the organisers of not incorporating an element of Kashmiri culture. When I sought to enquire whether local people really wanted homegrown cultural fare at a Bollywood extravaganza, people reluctantly agreed that they were quite enthralled by the show.

If women are the most eager to know about culture elsewhere, it is because they have been most affected by the oppressively chauvinist fatwas issued by the militants. The educated among them feel a deep sense of frustration at their potential being suppressed. One of the pioneering NGOs in the state speaks of the difficulties she faces in the course of her work with militants who want the Talibanisation of women. This, however, is a futile exercise given the Kashmiri women's refreshing refusal to accept any such imposition, she says. They are hampered by the conservative rules of society, but any attempt to make them follow what is not part of Kashmiri culture will come to naught. It is this indomitable spirit of Kashmiriyat that will eventually carry the day. It is this which the government must understand and accommodate.

Cong.(I) to oppose J&K autonomy package

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 16. The Congress (I) has decided to oppose the proposed autonomy package for Jammu and Kashmir in the State Assembly. The party's decision comes in the wake of reports of the State Government's plans to get the autonomy report passed in the Assembly session starting from Monday.

The decision to oppose the autonomy package was taken after a series of meetings among the Congress(I) president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the PCC(I) chief, Mr. Shafi Qureshi, the AICC general-secretary in-charge of the State, Mr. Ahmad Patel, Dr. Karan Singh, Mr. Ghulam Nabi Azad, Mr. Mangat Ram Sharma and its CLP leader, Mr. Ashok Sharma.

Five years ago, it was the Congress(I) that first hinted at such a proposition, when the then Prime Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, made it clear that as far as the Congress(I) was concerned "the sky was the limit" provided the solution was within the parameters of the Constitution.

The change in the Congress(I)'s position has come about because the party believes that the current package could end up dividing the State on communal lines, as both Jammu and Ladakh have already opposed the move. According to Mr. Ahmad Patel "the Congress party is not opposed to the idea of autonomy but is certainly opposed to any division on communal lines". Mr. Patel also told *The Hindu* that his party had decided to oppose the proposed move because it had not been taken into confidence, and the autonomy committee was packed with National Conference members. The committee was initially headed by Dr. Karan Singh but he resigned after a few months and

the Government appointed its own nominee, and has studiously avoided taking any of the other parties into confidence.

The party also believes that the J&K Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, has suddenly woken up to the issue with just a year to go for the Assembly elections in order to deflect attention from the rampant corruption, four years of gross misgovernance and his inability to check militancy.

"This is nothing but an attempt to hoodwink the people," says a senior leader of the party hailing from the State. In the party's view, the 1953 accord signed between Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah formed the broad parameter from within which a solution to the problem could emerge.

According to Congress(I) leaders, the solution can come through good governance which the NC Government had "failed" to provide. The party believes that the Chief Minister had frittered away the atmosphere created by the Rao Government, which finally paved the way for the Assembly elections in 1996.

The party's opposition to the move may not however amount to much on the floor of the House given the fact that it has only six members in the 86-member J&K Assembly, while the National Conference with 62 MLAs enjoys a brute majority in the House.

Assembly session may be stormy

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 16. The special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which begins here on Monday to discuss the report of the State Autonomy Committee (SAC) is likely to be stormy as the BJP is against it and the Congress

members have reservations over the move. The National Conference Government has initiated discussions on the issue, which the party claims is the only solution to the 50-year-old Kashmir tangle. It took the party more than three years to give a formal shape to the debate.

Analysts believe that the Farooq Government was prompted to push forward the demand for greater autonomy only after the Centre divulged its plans to hold talks with the alienated sections of society. However, the report of the Committee constituted in 1997 was tabled in both Houses of Legislature in March last year.

Announcing the revised calendar of the special session, the Speaker, Mr. Abdul Ahad Vakil, said the document has been an honest exercise. "It is a legal, constitutional and political document that has wider ramifications within and outside the State and even on the international front," Mr. Vakil told newsmen here on Wednesday.

Mr. Vakil, earlier a member of the SAC, said that there would be threadbare discussion among the members but "it is upto the Government whether or not to adopt a resolution".

The session will continue till June 28. Adequate security arrangements have been made in and outside the Assembly hall.

The announcement of the special session was made by Dr. Farooq Abdullah during the budget session in Jammu in March last, when a resolution was moved by a private member. Autonomy is the solution under the given situation, Dr. Abdullah said adding that "trilateral talks on the issue were not possible". The Centre should honour the 1952 agreement between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, Dr. Abdullah said.

THE HINDU

17 JUN 2000

WE WILL FULFIL OUR PROMISE: NC

J&K Assembly session on autonomy begins today

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 18. Amid tight security, the special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly begins here tomorrow to deliberate on the issue of greater autonomy to the State in the light of State Autonomy Committee (SAC) report, which has been cleared by the Cabinet.

The ruling National Conference's Legislature Party met here on Saturday while the erstwhile SAC members held a detailed meeting today to devise floor strategy.

All eyes are on the session with the NC claiming that it would fulfil its promise on the restoration of autonomy. But the Opposition is critical of the decision to hold the session, saying, "It is meant to divert attention from its failures." The separatist camp has rejected the autonomy theory, stressing on tripartite talks.

The NC, which has 62 members in the 87-member House (three seats are vacant), on Saturday convened a meeting of its MLAs and MLCs, which was presided

over by the party president and Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah. The party discussed the issue threadbare and also the line to be adopted in the House, concluding that "autonomy was the only answer to the present imbroglio".

The members of the SAC, who drafted the report which has been sent to the Centre, met today, with the committee chairman, Mr. Mohiuddin Shah, in the chair.

Along with the BJP, which has always opposed any move for autonomy, the Congress(I) has also made it clear that it would oppose the demand tooth and nail.

The BJP has seven members in the House and the Congress(I) five. The two parties will be joined by a member each from the Panther's Party and the Janata Dal.

The State BJP leader, Mr. Abdur Rasheed Kabuli, said, "Whenever the NC becomes weak, it raises the autonomy issue."

The four members of the Bahujan Samaj Party and the lone member of the CPI(M) have supported the demand. The People's Democratic Party (PDP), which

has two members, has not made its stand clear.

The PDP president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, accused the NC of sabotaging the dialogue process which the Centre had initiated with Hurriyat leaders.

Though there is no enthusiasm among the separatists on the move, they are concerned as the demand for autonomy, if given legitimacy by the Legislature, may dilute their stand to a great extent.

The Hurriyat Conference chairman, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who has been a member of the Assembly for three terms, said, "The session is of no significance as it does not represent the people."

In view of the recent militant attacks, security in and around the Raj Garh lawns, where the Assembly is situated, has been increased.

A senior police official said a three-ring security had been planned. High-rise buildings in the nearby localities which have been used by militants to fire rocket grenades have also been occupied by security forces.

THE HINDU

JUN 2000

19 JUN 2000

Sliding into trouble

Political games do not improve the J&K scenario

ALL the signs are pointing one way: Jammu and Kashmir is slipping deeper into trouble. A special session of the State Assembly to debate the report of the State Autonomy Committee is now being held. It is hard to imagine that anything can prevent the National Conference from using its large majority in the House to pass a resolution in favour of greater autonomy for the state and the accompanying panoply of new titles and powers for state leaders. Feroz Khan Noon has indicated clearly enough this is what he desires. There are several problems here. In all the years that Abdullah has gone on about the need for the restoration of the status quo before 1953, he has never explained to the people of the different regions of Jammu and Kashmir why more power for Srinagar is the answer to all their prayers. The fact is more autonomy is less essential for their well-being than good governance under the present set-up. Popular support for autonomy is still restricted to one part of the state. Whatever the feelings of the people of the Valley (and they are as liable today to be sceptical or simply fatigued), the people of Jammu and Ladakh are not persuaded it will be good for them. Leaders of the Ladhakh Buddhist Association, who are organising a week-long protest against the devolution of greater power to Srinagar, say they will be better off with Union Territory status.

Abdullah's timing suggests sheer political expediency rather than genuine conviction. That he has chosen this juncture to press his claims is very revealing about his motives. No doubt, proper form was observed by obtaining recommendations from a committee but

the committee was not broad-based enough to inspire total confidence. Significantly, its recommendations were withheld for more than a year. There are two reasons, both linked to the government's poor record in office. One, the release of Hurriyat leaders from jail presents Abdullah with a political challenge from regional forces such as he has not had to deal with for some time. Two, elections in a year's time necessitate a strong political platform. With nothing else to show for itself, the government has decided to make a pitch for autonomy. It may suit the National Conference in the run-up to the elections to be seen to be battling the Centre but it also risks arousing popular sentiment within the state which could become unmanageable. It would be less of a masquerade if the autonomy demand were moored to the present, instead of the past and to practical needs, instead of raw emotions.

It will be surprising if any good comes out of the political games in Srinagar. Meanwhile, with the Army anticipating a fresh influx of militants 3,000 of whom are training in camps in Pakistan and POK, it looks like a continuation of terrorist violence and counter-measures for Jammu and Kashmir. In the midst of all this the Centre's peace initiative consisting of the release of some political prisoners and talk of political negotiations appears dismayingly to have ended as suddenly as it started. A DD channel for and about J&K is a good idea but the Centre seems to have gone on holiday after that. More and bigger ideas are urgently needed to prevent conditions getting worse.

INDIAN EXPRESS

JUN 2000

NC proposal for autonomy Farooq stands isolated over his is 'politically-motivated' insistence on pre-'53 status

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 19

MAJOR POLITICAL formations have strongly opposed the Jammu and Kashmir autonomy package that calls for the return to the pre-1953 situation. While the BJP is totally against any move that smacks of autonomy, parties like the Congress and the CPI are ready to discuss the issue if it is based on the 1975 Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord, maintains the country's secular traditions and upholds national interests. The CPI-M, on its part, made it clear that it was for greater autonomy for the state within the framework of Article 370 of the Constitution. Charging that the autonomy package mooted by the National Conference is "politically motivated" to deflect attention from the state government's failures, most of these parties have already instructed their legislators to vote against it. They have also strongly

opposed the division of the state along communal lines.

Although one of its own NDA allies was behind the latest proposal, BJP vice president J P Mathur emphasised, "the mistake committed by Jawaharlal Nehru by granting special status to the state cannot be allowed to be repeated." He recalled that his party has systematically demanded the abrogation of Article 370 until it decided to keep it in abeyance in the interests of the NDA.

"Since there is already a parliamentary resolution that calls for reclaiming Pakistan occupied territory, the BJP cannot support any measure which will encourage divisive forces and give a further fillip to terrorism," Mr Mathur said. While reacting to the issue, AICC treasurer in charge of Kashmir affairs Ahmed Patel stressed the need to end militancy and give an impetus to development. He emphasised that any talk of autonomy should be based

only on the 1975 Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord. It should be people-oriented, reinforce the country's secular traditions and safeguard its national interests, he said. "The autonomy committee report is not in the interest of the people of Kashmir," Mr Patel said, pointing out that not a single Congress legislator or central leader was included in the committee which looked into the crucial autonomy issue.

The CPI vehemently opposed to the return to the pre-1953 situation, with Mr Atul Anjaan pointing out that there has been a qualitative change in the situation since then. Instead, he said, the 1975 accord could be the basis for discussing the issue of autonomy and the problems of the people.

While going along with the issue of greater autonomy for the three regions of the state, the CPI however was against the proposal that calls for its subdivision into 11 zones because that is based on 'communal lines', he said.

Anil Anand
New Delhi, June 19

JAMMU AND KASHMIR Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's insistence on a pre-1953 status for the State as a means to resolve the lingering Kashmir crisis has given a new twist to the oft-repeated demand for grant of greater autonomy to the State.

Unnerved by stiff opposition to the recommendations of the State Autonomy Committee, which has sought to put the clock back, Dr Abdullah's action in convening a special session of the State Assembly to discuss the controversial report, is being viewed in political circles as a desperate attempt by the beleaguered Chief Minister to hold his ground.

Dr Abdullah stood isolated on this issue as neither the Centre nor the majority opinion in the State spoke in favour of the Committee's report. It has forced Dr Abdullah to look for some kind of legitimacy for his autonomy proposal through seeking a stamp of approval from the Legislative Assembly. The ruling National Conference enjoys a brute majority in the House.

The Jammu and Ladakh regions are already up in arms against Dr Abdullah's move, while the displaced



Kashmiri Pandit community has equivocally rejected any proposal aimed at resolving the Kashmir crisis without their involvement.

"Proposals like autonomy, trifurcation of the State or starting a dialogue with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, are irrelevant until Kashmiri Pandits were involved in the process," felt Kashmiri Samiti chief C. L. Gadoo.

The Autonomy Committee's report, among other things, has suggested repealing all matters in the Union List, save defence, external affairs and communications, so as to provide greater autonomy to the State.

Significantly, it wants Jammu and Kashmir to be kept out of the ambit of the Supreme Court and Election Commission while recommending reversion to the pre-1953 nomenclature of *Sadar-i-Riyasat* in place of the Governor and the Prime Minister for the Chief Minister.

The Committee, which was headed by State Works Minister Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah — who assumed the charge after Dr Karan Singh had resigned — has gone a step further by suggesting that Article 370 of the Constitution providing a special status to J&K be accorded permanence, which was originally enshrined only as a temporary measure.

FAROOQ MOVE 'A NERVOUS REACTION'

Centre wary of debate on autonomy demand

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 19. The Centre is keeping its fingers crossed as it tries to discern the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah's motives in cranking up "the autonomy" debate in the State Assembly. The move, as of now, is seen as a "pressure tactic", though no one is even sure that the Chief Minister would get the Assembly to pass any specific resolution on the "autonomy". There is also a note of confidence that the debate would not strain the National Conference's ties with the National Democratic Alliance.

The "autonomy debate" move is seen as Dr. Abdullah's response — a nervous response at that — to the Centre's much-talked about inclination to start a dialogue with the "separatist" groups, including the All-Party Hurriyat Conference. Perhaps the Chief Minister had concluded that the Centre was about to dump him. Obviously the attempts to reassure him have not had the desired effect. Dr. Abdullah's public pronouncements, especially those ridiculing the Hurriyat Conference leaders' credentials, have not been very helpful in creating an atmosphere conducive for any kind of dialogue.

Last week when Dr. Abdullah was here, he was assured by most responsible quarters that the Centre would not want to achieve breakthrough of any kind in the State behind the Chief Minister's back. He was told in no uncertain terms that the Centre would not be able to move forward without the expressed and willing cooperation of the constitutionally-elected Government in Srinagar.

Against these repeated assurances of continued central support, Dr. Abdullah's "autonomy debate" move has not been much appreciated, at least by sections in the Union Home Ministry. In this view the debate is bound to be acrimonious and would generate unnecessary bitterness about past events.

At the same time the Centre

would be in no mood to oblige the Chief Minister should he try to get the State Assembly demand a return to the pre-1953 status of ties with "New Delhi".

Neither the Congress(I) nor the BJP has found any merit in Dr. Abdullah's attempt to revive the "autonomy" talk. Dr. Abdullah has already invited a public rebuff from the Hurriyat leadership on the question of "autonomy".

And though the prime ministerial advisers remain sanguine about the National Conference's continued relationship with the NDA, the "autonomy" debate is bound to be resented. For instance, Mr. Chaman Lal Gupta, Minister of State for Civil Aviation in the Vajpayee Government, has already broken ranks to criticise Dr. Abdullah's call for greater autonomy.

In a statement issued from

Jammu, Mr. Gupta has termed the autonomy demand as being "guided by purely communal and regional considerations".

Warning of the "serious repercussions of this music of autonomy both for the unity of the State as also for the national interest", the Union Minister demanded that "the ruling leaders of the National Conference must stop the bogey of autonomy which is bound to generate more heat than light."

Another Union Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, reportedly cautioned Dr. Abdullah. In Patna, the Defence Minister told reporters that, "I am confident that the National Conference Government will do nothing at the cost of national unity and integrity or do anything that would worsen the already volatile situation in the State."

26 JUN 2000

'Autonomy? Over our dead bodies'

Syed Liaquat Ali
Leh, June 20

VEN. KUSHOK Bakula, the octogenarian head Lama of Ladakh, may be feeling his age, but his zeal to fight for the rights of the people of this backward region of Jammu and Kashmir has not died out.

After his 11-year stint as India's Ambassador to Mongolia, 84-year-old Lama has experienced little transformation in the region since its annexation with India. He thinks the State and the Centre had always ignored Ladakh despite its strategic importance on all fronts. "I was always unhappy the way Srinagar and New Delhi looked upon the people of Ladakh," Bakula said.

Extending his whole-hearted support for the ongoing agitation in support of a Union Territory status for Ladakh, Bakula, a legendary Ladakhi figure, made it clear that the Buddhists would not accept anything else.

The week-long agitation has been launched in protest against the Jammu and Kashmir Government's move on the restoration of pre-1953 administrative

status to the State.

"The Ladakhis will not allow the National Conference to proceed with the autonomy move. The Assembly can only ratify the autonomy report after killing all of us," Bakula told an LBA-sponsored meeting on Monday.

Indeed, the Ladakhis' opposition to the "rule from Srinagar" is traced back to Bakula's time, when he was a member of the Kashmir Constituent Assembly. The

Ladakh in ferment

Buddhist leader then had made it clear that "the rule from Srinagar was unpalatable".

Recalling his days in Srinagar, Bakula said: "There was not a single example where Srinagar gave us something without our constant pleading and threat of agitation."

Asked why the Ladakhis were demanding a Union Territory status instead of statehood, he said: "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is under the direct control of the federal Government. New Delhi should

take the cue and make Ladakh a Union Territory, in view of its strategic position."

Bakula is upset over the policies of the Central Government on the region. "Despite the Ladakhis playing a significant role in the Kargil war, little acknowledgement came from the Government," he said.

The grievances have culminated over the years, the head Lama said, adding that a step-motherly treatment was meted out to the Buddhists from the time when Sheikh Abdullah was the head of the state in the 1950s.

Bakula, who was a Minister and a Parliamentarian from 1953 to 1976, lamented that both the State and the Centre were equally responsible for the state of affairs in the region.

He shared the concern of the Ladakhis that the proposed step for the restoration of pre-1953 position will destroy the interests of the indigenous people.

"The Buddhists never believed in violence. But with the passage of time, we might not have full control over the young generation who are heading the movement," the Lama said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 JUN 2000

Stormy kick-off to autonomy debate

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, June 20

HT 2/16
THE MUCH-AWAITED debate on the State Autonomy Committee report, that calls for the pre-1953 autonomous status of Jammu and Kashmir, began on a stormy note in the State Assembly.

The ruling National Conference passionately backed the restoration of greater autonomy. The NC felt it was a historic "opportunity to rectify mistakes of the past".

For the Opposition, it was a "ploy to deflect from the real issues facing the State."

The Opposition slammed the ruling party for its three-and-a-half years' performance; timing of the special session and on the financial aspects of the autonomy.

As soon as the House assembled, BJP legislature party leader Shiv Charan Gupta and others were on their toes terming the autonomy debate a "farce."

"This is a moment of truth when the House should debate what mis-

Farooq lashes out



Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday said that he "saved Kashmir" for India at the time when it was about to say

goodbye to the country.

Intervening during the debate in the Assembly, Dr Abdullah asked the BJP members to recall the militancy days and told the House that "they should thank God that I rescued Kashmir for the country at that time when it was about to sound a farewell note (to India)." **Details on page 12**

takes were made and what lessons need to be learnt," he said.

"Instead we are discussing autonomy that can only fuel secessionism. And all those who support secessionism are militants," he added. The BJP members later

staged a walkout.

One of them, Ashok Khajuria, wore a black scarf to demonstrate what he called a "black day in the history of Jammu and Kashmir".

Moulvi Iftikhar Hussain Ansari, who recently joined the National Conference, said: "East India company go back."

Congress MLAs also staged a walkout for different reasons. They said that the NC-BJP combine was in alliance at the Centre and here they were "staging a drama of opposing each other".

The tone for the debate was set by Housing and Urban Development Minister Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Shah, who headed the State Autonomy Committee panel that submitted the report in April last.

"Had the constitutional arrangement stayed in tact, the situation would not have come to such a pass today," he said and highlighted why it was important for the state to have greater autonomy to save Kashmir that had rejected the two-nation theory in 1947.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUN 20 1987

BJP, CONGRESS(I) PROTEST NC DEMAND

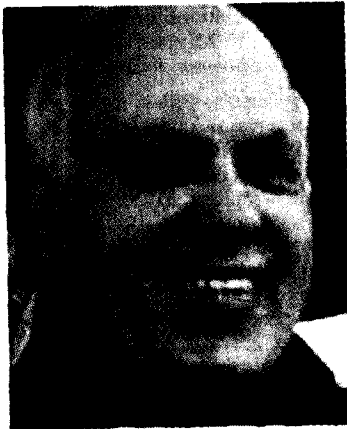
Restoring autonomy only solution, says Farooq

By Shujaat Bukhari 40-1

SRINAGAR, JUNE 20. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, today strongly opposed the division of the State "on communal lines" saying it would lead to national disintegration. Pointing out that autonomy was the only solution to the State's problems, he said it was not aimed at weakening the country but was proposed only to strengthen State's relations with the Union. 9-8-56K

Speaking during the discussion on the report of the State Autonomy Committee in the Assembly, he said, "Farooq Abdullah and the National Conference will never support any division of the State". Enraged at the remarks of the BJP's Mr. Bali Bhagat that the NC planned to divide the State into eight parts, the Chief Minister pointing towards the BJP and Congress(I) members said, "you want to divide the State into four parts". "I am talking about converting the existing Line of Control into an International Border but you will make Chenab the International Border and you cannot stop India from disintegrating by doing so," he charged.

"For 50 years control of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir has not been regained and no State Government has stopped the Centre from doing so," he said. "During the Kargil war you (the Centre) could have liberated PoK and nobody would have stopped you," he told the BJP members.



Reiterating that autonomy was the only solution to the Kashmir imbroglio, he said the NC would take every section of the population into confidence on the issue. On the charges of discrimination by his Government against the Jammu and Ladakh regions, he said during the seven years of President's rule in the State Kashmiris were crushed and no one uttered a word.

Earlier, the discussion on the resolution moved by the Law Minister, Mr. R. L. Handoo, during the budget session on April 8 was initiated by the Housing Minister, Mr. Mohiuddin Shah. Contrary to expectations there was little resistance barring a symbolic walkout by members of the BJP and the Congress(I) when the Speaker asked Mr. Shah to speak on the issue.

During his speech, Mr. Shah dwelt on the historical back-

ground of the Kashmir problem, erosion of autonomy and non-fulfillment of promises made by the Centre. Seeking autonomy was not akin to seeking separation from India, he said.

The Food Minister, Mr. Ajay Sadhotra, said the NC under Dr. Farooq Abdullah enjoyed absolute majority in the House. "The demand for restoration of autonomy is not new. It has been in our poll manifesto since long," he said.

The Congress(I) Chief Whip, Mr. Ashok Sharma, wanted to know why the NC had ignored the issue for 21 years. Accusing the ruling party of having failed to deliver the goods in the State and attempting to divert the people's attention, he said it was time to restore peace. He charged that the NC was responsible for erosion of autonomy as during its rule 37 central laws were extended to the State. Mr. Som Nath of the Bahujan Samaj Party said the BJP and the NC were using the issue for their own political interests.

The BJP's Mr. Ashok Khajuria and Mr. Bali Bhagat opposed the resolution saying the ruling National Conference Government had no mandate to demand greater autonomy. Mr. Khajuria said the ruling party was indirectly supporting the plan of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence to convert the Ladakh and Jammu regions into Muslim-majority areas.

Left against division of J & K: Page 13

21/6 Left against division of J&K 4912

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 20. The Left parties today joined the debate on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir saying that while they favoured "maximum" autonomy for the State within the ambit of Article 370, they would oppose any move to divide the region on "communal" lines.

They criticised the BJP for advocating abolition of Article 370 and said it was this sort of "hawkish" talk which had "alienated" the people of Kashmir. There were several areas where the autonomy envisaged under Article 370 had been eroded, resulting in bitterness, and it was important to undo that and win back the

confidence of the people.

The CPI(M) said it had consistently taken the position that there was scope for greater autonomy within the framework of Article 370, and specific areas of autonomy could be discussed. As for autonomy for various regions within the State, the party's politburo member, Mr. Prakash Karat, said this could be considered within the parameters of the overall State autonomy.

He explained that the first step should be to restore to the State the autonomy that had been "whittled down" over the years, and then move on to regional autonomy within the overall framework of State autonomy. His party was opposed to any move to split

up the state on the basis of religion in the name of regional autonomy.

The CPI(M-L) also came out strongly against any communal fragmentation of the State but supported enhanced autonomy to Jammu and Ladakh. The party general secretary, Mr. Dipankar Bhattacharya, said the systematic dilution of Article 370 by successive Governments and the BJP's "shrill campaign" for its abolition were responsible for the alienation.

The CPI national secretary, Mr. D.Raja, said the accord between Sheikh Abdullah and Indira Gandhi could form the basis for giving greater autonomy to the State.

THE HINDU

21 JUN 2000

Tumult as NC tables autonomy report, Srinagar quiet

By YUSUF JAMEEL

Srinagar, June 20: People seem to be indifferent. Politicians are in a disarray. Secessionists are unimpressed. Amidst chaos and utter confusion over the pungent issue, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature on Tuesday began formal discussions on whether to seek for restoration of greater autonomy for the state or not.

The week-long special session of the Legislature will exclusively discuss the report prepared by the State Autonomy Committee placed on the table of the House by law and parliamentary affairs minister Piyarelal Handoo in April 1999.

Recently, the Farooq Abdullah Cabinet endorsed the recommendations in the report which ask for repealing almost all those Central laws made applicable to the state and other constitutional changes effected after the dismissal and detention of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah in August 1953.

The restoration of the "greater autonomy" to the state was the main plank of the now ruling National Conference in September 1996 Assembly elections.

The report has also been sent to the Centre with the request to set up a ministerial committee in order to initiate a dialogue on the issue.

The Assembly discussion started with a protest walkout by the BJP members who accused chief minister Farooq

Abdullah and his party of diverting peoples' attention from the real issues facing them. Instead, the Opposition party wanted the House to discuss what it called much more important issue of militancy and its fallout. One of the BJP members while walking out of the House even remarked: "Those who support the idea of greater autonomy are themselves militants."

Former minister and Shia cleric-politician, Maulvi Iftekhar Hussain Ansari (a rebel Congress member) retorted: "Do you (the BJP members) represent modern day East India Company in Kashmir?"

The House witnessed noisy scenes for a while but Speaker Abdul Ahad Vakil, adamant to see the dignity of the House was maintained, advised the agitating members and others: "Anyone of you can go out if he or she does not want to listen to others in a democratic fashion." He pledged not to allow the House turn into "an orchestra."

Within half a minute of their protest walkout, all the six BJP members were back in their seats. But it was now the turn of the Congress members to rise and lodge a protest. Soon they also walked out of the House but returned even hurriedly than their BJP counterparts to participate in the discussion which to the Speaker was a "healthy sign."

Opening the discussion, works minister Gulam Mohiuddin Shah, the senior-most member of the Abdullah govern-

ment, asserted that he and his colleagues were there in the House to play a "historical role."

He recalled how Sheikh Abdullah had become instrumental in its accession with the Indian Union on certain conditions laid down in the Constitution and worked out from time to time through mutual agreements. He asserted that had not this relationship of trust and understanding been tempered with after the Sheikh and his colleagues were imprisoned in 1953, the situation now prevailing in the state would not have been there.

Replying to the argument that Buddhists of Ladakh, Kashmiri pandits, Dogras of Jammu and some other ethnic groups within the state were not in favour of the restoration of "greater autonomy," Mr Shah said: "We in the NC have always fought for the equal rights and opportunities for all the three regions forming the state and are not suffering from any religious, ethnic or regional bias."

Mr Shah said that his party did not want to undermine the sovereignty and integrity of the country as some would wrongly feel but to strengthen it further which was possible only when the confidence of the people of the state shattered by various steps taken during the past fifty years was restored. "We did not accede to the might of India but it were

the shared values that made us to reject the Muslim League's two-nation theory and join the Indian Union despite being a Muslim-majority state," he added. However, the accession was conditional and only defence, foreign affairs and communications were the subjects on which the Centre would have the sovereign control, he said.

Mr Shah, after reading out relevant sections of the Constitution and correspondence between Indian leaders and their Kashmiri counterparts, insisted that no amendments in the Constitution could be made unless approved by the state Constituent Assembly. He added

that we want to restore country's lost honour," he said, adding: "India's head is lowering in Kashmir today because of its own mistakes committed in the past and we want that it walks conceitedly again."

Referring to the Article 370 of the Constitution which guarantees a special status for Jammu and Kashmir, Mr Shah said that it could neither be abrogated nor amended. He told the BJP members that heavens would not fall if greater autonomy was restored to the state.

While discussing the parameters of the Partition, Mr Shah said that the people of the state could have opted for Pakistan in 1947 and nobody on earth would have stopped them

from doing that. Feeling jittery, BJP's Ashok Khajuria retorted: "You can do it now if you so please." But Mr Shah reiterated that his party did not want confrontation with the Centre and wanted the issue be resolved amicably. Elaborating, he said that with the absolute majority in the House, the NC could have got the bill on the restoration of pre-1953 constitutional status passed easily but it decided that a discussion must be started in and outside the House. It was also planning to initiate a dialogue with the Centre on the recommendations of the committee report. The Farooq Cabinet has also decided to send a ministerial committee to Delhi and various

state capitals for interaction and also to convene an all-party meeting in Srinagar later this month to discuss the issue threadbare.

Mr Shah asserted that some of the Kashmiri youth might have taken up the gun after realising how India betrayed the trust of the people of the state. Even Sheikh Abdullah and other architects of the Constitution would not have visualised the arbitrary changes made there-to later on against the wishes and aspiration of the people of the state, he added.

But Mr Ashok Sharma of the Congress disagreed with Mr Shah and said that the NC was raking up the issue to cover its own failures on all fronts. He said that the Kashmiri Muslims had rejected Jinnah's two-nation theory and "we all have to carry on with that doctrine." He asked why the NC was asking for the greater autonomy now despite being in power for almost two decades now. He added that during the NC rule itself as many as 37 Central laws, were made applicable to the state and the charge that the Congress was responsible for the erosion in so-called greater autonomy to the state was false and misleading. He accused Dr Abdullah and his colleagues of betraying the Sheikh's principles. "You want to be free of any accountability. You don't want Election Commission here because you want to rig the elections. You want to go scot-free on other matters also," he alleged.

To Mr Sharma, the real issues facing

the state pertain to growing unemployment, lawlessness, and similar other hardships. He said that the militancy had spread to Poonch and Rajouri districts where there were hardly any militants around prior to Dr Abdullah's return to power in 1996. He insisted that the NC had got only 5 per cent of the polled votes; hence could not decide on crucial issues such as greater autonomy.

Mr Khajuria, the firebrand member of the BJP, described the Tehrik-e-Hurriyat (the struggle launched by Sheikh Abdullah and others against the autocratic Dogra Maharaja in 1931) as "Muslim communal movement." He said that the Sheikh was dismissed and detained in 1953, probably because he wanted to jeopardise state's relationship with rest of the country.

Mr Khajuria who was wearing a black scarf on his head, said that the people of the state had voted in the September 1996 Assembly elections for the restoration of democracy and not for greater autonomy as is being claimed by the NC. He insisted that not only Jammu's Hindu, Kashmiri pandits and Ladakh's Buddhists were against the move but the Gujjars, Paharis, Shias and Kashmiri nationalist Muslims were opposing the idea. He vowed that his party would not allow the sacrifice made by Shayama Prasad Mukerjee, "who died for Kashmir," to go in waste.

Several other MLAs also spoke on the issue.

J&K ASSEMBLY SPECIAL SESSION

that this Assembly lost its representative character with the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and most other members although it continued to be there until 1957. "Whatever was done later on is illegal and unconstitutional and it is these mistakes that we want to rectify in the interest of the country," he said.

He rejected as misgivings the reports suggesting that the NC government would use its brute majority in the Assembly to enforce certain restrictions on the travel into Jammu and Kashmir of non-state subjects and do away with the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. "All these are rumours spread by vested interests whereas the matter of the fact is

THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 2000

RESTORING CONFIDENCE?

IT IS REGRETTABLE that the question of autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, so vital for reversing the alienation of its people, should continue to be clouded by narrow, partisan and ideologically sectarian considerations, as the trend of the ongoing debate in the State Assembly suggests. If the sudden surge in Dr. Farooq Abdullah's enthusiasm in getting the Legislature to deliberate on and endorse the more-than-a-year-old report of the State Autonomy Committee was coloured by his political and electoral calculations, the negative response of parties like the Congress(I) and the ruling National Conference's ally (at the Centre), the BJP, has been no less motivated by similar factors. And the result: the politicisation of such a vital debate and an acrimonious exchange of accusations between the main players which preempted serious and rational discussion on the substantive autonomy-related issues in the light of the SAC panel's report.

The demand for autonomy in the case of Jammu and Kashmir has to be placed in the context of the nation's categorical commitment to a special status for the State under the Instrument of Accession, the spirit of which is symbolised in part by Article 370, and the progressive dilution the special Constitutional guarantees have suffered over the years for various reasons. In essence, the recommendations of the SAC seek to restore, by and large, the pre-1953 position. Specifically, it wants *inter alia* Parliament's law-making powers to be restricted to Defence, External Affairs and Communications as also subjects related or ancillary to them, the State to have its own list of 'fundamental rights' formulated and incorporated in its Constitution and the declaration of emergency to be subject to the concurrence of the State Government which, in turn, will be contingent upon approval by the legislature within a timeframe. It is nobody's case that the report merits unqualified endorsement, and there is a strong view that the 1975 (Sheikh Abdullah-Indira Gandhi) agreement should be the basis for any autonomy package. Given the organic na-

ture of Centre-State relations in a federal system, it would obviously be foolhardy to stick to any particular cutoff year dogmatically for the restoration of *status quo ante*. To be realistic, any autonomy package has to be a modern or updated version of the 1952 or 1975 accord — one that, while respecting the unique political heritage of the State, recognises the ground realities and coheres with the evolving federal system. No less imperative is that 'autonomy' for the State is seen as part of the decentralisation process, with the long neglected regional and sub-regional interests getting a slice of the development cake and securing participation in governance. It is here that the (truncated) Regional Autonomy Committee report which seeks to redraw the district boundaries on communal lines portends danger, posing as it does a serious threat to the State's secular and democratic fibre. It was just as well that Dr. Abdullah came out strongly against any division of the State on "communal lines".

What needs to be realised is that the main objective of restoring autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir as originally envisaged in the Constitution is to restore the confidence of its people who now stand alienated. This means 'autonomy' initiatives should be consistent with and complementary to the Centre's calibrated moves to engage the Hurriyat leadership in negotiations for a possible political solution. Given the commonality of objectives, it is as much the responsibility of the BJP-led NDA regime at the Centre as of the Farooq Abdullah Government to ensure cohesion and coherence in the policy framework (comprising these two components) aimed at ending the alienation; after all, Dr. Abdullah's National Conference is a constituent of the NDA. As long as the BJP continues to swear by its 'ideological' commitment to the abrogation of Article 370 — something that has in fact heightened the Kashmiris' sense of alienation — the sincerity of the NDA regime's initiatives designed to win them over, and, in an extended sense, find a political solution is bound to be viewed with scepticism.

THE HINDU

22 JUN 2000

Responsible autonomy

Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah is clearly on a collision course with the Bharatiya Janata Party. The ingredients of the state autonomy committee's report, presently under the consideration of Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, predictably have the BJP up in arms with its functionaries declaring that they will oppose "tooth and nail" any efforts to divide the state. The state autonomy report does not propose a division of the state. Instead it speaks for more autonomy, suggesting a special and not temporary status for Article 370 and a reversal of the old formula whereby the centre has jurisdiction on the state only in matters of external affairs, defence and communications. This has invited a strong reaction from the BJP which has always stood for the abrogation of Article 370. Interestingly the state autonomy report is not a bad document. It provides for a return to a pre-1952 special status which is as close as a government within India can get to the demand for independence. If it had been prepared and introduced shortly after the National Conference came to power in the state, Jammu and Kashmir might have steered a different course altogether. Unfortunately Dr Abdullah sat on the report even after it was submitted with the result that its sudden emergence on the scene has raised doubts about his intent. Perhaps the one obvious fault with the report is the tendency to view state history from the National Conference point of view. And to make recommendations that will really facilitate the establishment of a virtually authoritarian regime in the state. But this is not reason enough to throw the suggestions out of the window as even the Congress and other political parties seem to be doing, but to actually sit across the table and amend the report to a point where its recommendations make for responsible and democratic autonomy. Unfortunately in their desire to score a political point the Congress and other parties have refused to even look at the document, and have sent out an impression that like the BJP they too are not particularly keen to see an autonomous Jammu and Kashmir. Significantly both Dr Abdullah and the BJP have spoken out against the trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. However, the National Conference has got together a regional autonomy report which suggests precisely this. Prepared hastily to negate detailed work done on the subject by the official committee under Mr Balraj Puri, this brief report basically endorses the setting up of separate regions within Jammu and Kashmir based on religious affiliations. It recommends the division of Ladakh and Jammu along religious lines completely setting aside earlier recommendations that the economically backward criteria should be followed to set up autonomous zones with a view to getting these more financial aid. The RSS on its own has admitted to not being averse to the religious division of Jammu and Kashmir. And it is these pronouncements that are sinister and dangerous, for the real partition will not come from autonomy but through religious autonomy. Alongside a study by a US-based think tank, the Kashmir Study group is also floating in the Valley to suggest similar religious based division of the state to the point where it also proposes migration of population where necessary. The BJP, however, seems to have set its sights only on the first state autonomy report which is well within the parameters of the Indian Constitution. And for some reason has chosen not to react to the second report which has been circulated to the members of the Assembly and others. Obviously those participating in the discussion in Srinagar these days have either not bothered to inform themselves about the issues at stake, or have deliberately decided to use selective information to perpetuate their own vested interests.

THE ASIAN AGE

JUN 2000

Farooq seeks national debate

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 21. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, today said the National Conference wanted a national debate on the issue of restoring autonomy to the State.

Speaking in the Assembly on the second day of the discussion on the State Autonomy Committee report, he said, "we can pass the resolution right now as we have absolute majority in the House but we want a thorough discussion over it so that everybody can have his viewpoint."

To a remark by an Opposition member, the Chief Minister said, "we are not anti-Indian. We are far better citizens than you." Dr. Abdullah told the Opposition members, "if you feel our argument is wrong, you are free to tell us." Mr. Abdur Raheem Rather, a senior NC member and State Minister, said the party was ready to make any sacrifice for restoration of greater autonomy.

"Even if the Centre stops funds to the State we will continue to demand for the restoration of autonomy in order to uphold the dignity and honour of the people," he said.

Seeking to allay fears on the issue, which he alleged, were being spread by parties such as the BJP and the Congress(I), Mr. Rather



The J&K Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah (right), reacts to protests from Congress(I) MLAs (left) in the Assembly over the autonomy resolution on Wednesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

said, "it is not for the first time the NC is demanding autonomy. It has always been top priority."

On not including any Opposition party member in the SAC, Mr. Rather said, "it was the demand of the NC. How could we accommodate a member who would oppose the demand and not allow its completion?" The Information Minister, Mr. Ajatshatru Singh, grandson of the late Maharaja Hari Singh who signed the instrument of accession with the Indian Union, said, "my grandfather wanted J&K to be an independent State but it could not be due to the invasion of Pakistani tribals in 1947."

The Minister of State for Agriculture, Mr. T. Namgayal, who

represents Nobra (Leh) segment in the Assembly, said Ladakhis supported the demand for autonomy and that those talking about separation were doing it for their "petty vested interests".

The NC's Mr. Mohammad Shafi Bhat pointed out that Jawaharlal Nehru had assured the Kashmiris that they would be allowed to decide their future and also took the issue to the United Nations. His colleague, Mr. G. M. Bawan, also supported the demand.

Though supporting autonomy, the People's Democratic Party legislator, Mr. A. R. Veeri, said it was better to have a dialogue with the alienated people as violence in the State had assumed alarming proportions. "If the State and

Central Governments are sincere they should extend a formal invitation to the Hurriyat Conference leaders to discuss the issue," he said. Chowdary Piara Singh and Mr. Hans Raj Dogra of the BJP, Mr. T. Dorjey of the Congress (I) and the Awami League's Mr. Kukka Parrey were among those who opposed the resolution.

'Questionable goals'

UNI reports from Washington:

The Indo-American Kashmir Forum, an organisation of U.S.-based Kashmiri Pandits, has expressed alarm at the Jammu and Kashmir Government's move to adopt a resolution seeking restoration of autonomy.

BJP, NC contradictions come to the fore — Page 13

'ASSEMBLY MAY NOT PASS RESOLUTION RIGHT NOW'

Farooq meets PM, seeks ministerial committee

By Harish Khare

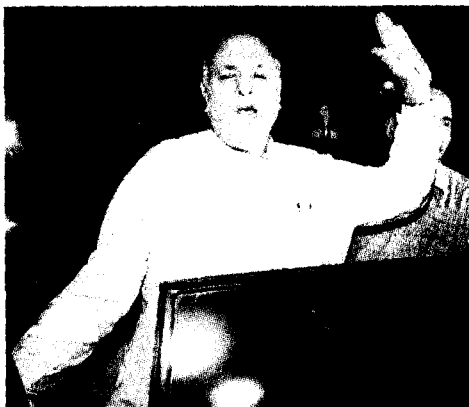
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229/6

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, met the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, today and apprised him with the course of the "autonomy debate" in the State Assembly. Though there has been no official word on as to what transpired between the two during the one-to-one meeting, it is believed that the Centre had not rejected out of hand the Chief Minister's suggestion that perhaps a group of Central Ministers could be formed to examine the "autonomy" demand. 9-87 SJK

However, later talking to reporters outside the Prime Minister's residence, the Chief Minister was vocal and assertive in defending the National Conference's demand for "autonomy". At the same time, Dr. Abdullah hinted that the Assembly may not pass a resolution, as of now, even though the Assembly is to continue its debate till Monday.

"We have asked the Centre to form a ministerial committee to discuss the pros and cons of the resolution besides holding discussion with other State Governments," Dr. Abdullah observed. He made out a general case for a more federal structure and pointed out that almost all the States wanted greater say in their affairs, political and financial.

The Vajpayee Government, so far, has not opted to take a hostile view of the autonomy debate. Unlike the BJP, the Government is not unmindful of Dr. Abdullah's political compulsions. As it is, a section of the bureaucracy dealing with Jammu and Kashmir is inclined to believe that the Centre should have no difficulty in agreeing to the Chief Minister's expectation. This section is mindful that the Centre, especially during the Narasimha Rao regime, did talk of autonomy, and that was one of the reasons that persuaded the National Conference to participate in the Assembly elections in 1996. Earlier speaking at a function to mark the inauguration of a zonal office of the Jammu and Kashmir Bank here, Dr. Abdullah as-



The J&K Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, outside the Prime Minister's residence after meeting him in New Delhi on Thursday. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

serted that autonomy was the only solution, and he was confident that there would no "disastrous" outcome of this demand.

Perhaps unwittingly, Dr. Abdullah revealed his political strategy when he sought to justify the autonomy demand in terms of the Centre's newly-declared willingness to talk about the future of Jammu and Kashmir with "our own people". His argument was that if the Centre could think in terms of opening a dialogue with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, which had been openly calling for secession, and with other leaders such as Mr. Yasin Malik, who had been asking for "azadi" (freedom), why could not his party demand autonomy. He asserted that the demand was not to be at the cost of "national integration".

'NC not scuttling talks with separatists'

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 22. The ruling National Conference (NC) today gave a new twist to the ongoing debate in the State Assembly on the

autonomy issue, saying the proposed dialogue of the Centre with separatists was aimed at sabotaging the party's move to get greater autonomy restored.

The party leadership was unanimous that in case the Centre wanted to negotiate on "azadi" (freedom) with the separatists, it had no objection. One of the leaders even justified armed struggle, saying "where the verdict of the ballot is rejected, there is no option without the gun".

The Agriculture Minister, Chowdary Mohammad Ramzan, rejected the theory that the NC was demanding autonomy to scuttle the proposed dialogue with separatists, including the Hurriyat Conference.

He said "dialogue with the Hurriyat is aimed at sabotaging autonomy for which the people have given a clear verdict in 1996 by returning the NC to power with absolute majority".

Attacking previous Central governments as also the present BJP-led Government, Mr. Ramzan wanted to know "what was going on behind the scenes". When the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, talks about trifurcation, and one Hurriyat leader echoes these views, there seems to be something behind the scenes, he implied.

"If you have plans to divide the State on ethnic and religious bases, we will fight it tooth and nail," Mr. Ramzan told the BJP members. Mr. Ramzan said the present session is of extraordinary importance and will change the subcontinent's political face.

The Education Minister, Mohammad Shafi, said: "Where the verdict of the ballot is rejected, there is no option without the gun." Justifying militancy, he said democratic demands cannot be suppressed by force.

Mr. Shafi said it is a question of credibility of the Indian nation as "three Prime Ministers have promised autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir in the last 10 years".

More reports on Page 13

THE HINDU

23 JUN 2000

'Autonomy will internationalise Kashmir issue'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 22. The Congress (I) today said that the way in which the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and the Centre were handling the autonomy issue "could lead to the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue".

Accusing the Centre and Dr. Abdullah of being totally at odds on such a sensitive matter, the party spokesman, Mr. Anil Shastri, urged the Prime Minister to come forward and spell out the Government's stand.

Mr. Shastri criticised the NDA for totally being "out of sync" not only the Kashmir issue, but also on Dr. Abdullah's suggestion of a debate on the autonomy.

"They are partners in the Government. Yet both the parties have adopted different stand," he said.

Mr. Shastri urged the NDA allies to spell out their stand on Dr. Abdullah's suggestion of greater autonomy to the States.

"The nation must know the Government's stand. So far only one unit has reacted," Mr. Shastri said, referring to the opposition of the Statr unit of the BJP to the autonomy package.

Restore autonomy and confidence: NC

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 22. Firebrand National Conference leader and the Agriculture Minister in the Farooq Abdullah Cabinet, Chowdary Mohammad Ramzan, today rejected allegations that rigging in the 1987 elections was the cause for the present turmoil in the State, saying the Kashmir problem has been there for the last 47 years. He held constitutional bungle responsible for the unrest.

Participating in the third day's debate on the autonomy issue in the Assembly, he said NC workers are being killed just because they want to be part of India and still "our credentials are doubted".

Responding to Opposition members on controlling militancy, Mr. Ramzan said it is the Army and BSF which were responsible for militancy; for, how else could militants infiltrate from Pakistan and anti-aircraft guns be recovered near Kupwara helipad. Autonomy needs to be restored in order to restore confidence in the Indian democratic system. "We shall have to roll back to the 1953 status in order to fulfill the aspirations of the people," he said.

The Education Minister, Mohammad Shafi, said in the 21st century "internal conflicts are be-

ing resolved through federal and confederal means". He wanted Article 370 to be restored in letter and spirit and "we have started the process of reconciliation through autonomy".

Mr. Sadiq Ali, also of the NC, told the BJP and Congress(I) members, "You are Indians by compulsion we are Indian by choice." He said there are still resolutions about Kashmir in the United Nations which the United States could use to blackmail any time; so "it is better to restore autonomy — the only workable solution".

Panther's Party member, Mr. Harsh Dev Singh, described the State Autonomy Committee (SAC) report as the "most controversial document of the century". He termed it a threat to the sovereignty of India.

Session extended

According to the Secretary of the Assembly, Mr. Iqbal Ganai, the special Assembly session has been extended till Monday. He said the session may be further extended till Tuesday to continue the discussions on the SAC report. As per the earlier schedule the session was to be adjourned on Saturday.

THE HINDU

20 JUN 2002

55-6 WAY FORWARD 28/6

Abdullah and battle for Kashmiri minds

THE proposals put forward for greater autonomy for Kashmir are misconceived. They send out wrong signals to militants about the will of the Indian state to fight subversive activities. By asking for special status it seeks to further alienate Kashmir from the national mainstream. It is Farooq Abdullah's duty as head of a constitutionally elected government, to assist integration. What he has done, on the contrary, is to fan the autonomy issue by debating it in the assembly, and then calling for a national debate. His objective seems to be to entrench his personal position, which on his performance, is undeserved. The Kashmir issue is not only about security, important though it is. Militancy must be met uncompromisingly, and Pakistan's attempts at internationalising the issue must be marginalised. Given the international climate India is not badly placed to get its point across. But meeting militancy and isolating Pakistan is not enough. What lies beyond that is winning the battle for the mind of Kashmir.

There are differing perceptions about how far and in what numbers Kashmiris are alienated from the national political establishment. But it is clear that there is some disaffection, which must be addressed. Those who represent Kashmiri public opinion are best placed to do that. Not people in Delhi. But Farooq Abdullah who should be in a position to facilitate a political process has other ideas concerned with his own interests. Questions of identity and emotional belonging within political structures are complex. Community affiliation is one of the axes that frame these. But it should be remembered that many Kashmiris probably understand the benefits of being with a liberal democracy, however flawed, rather than be with a country where personal liberty and economic opportunity are constricted. Unfortunately, Abdullah keeps harping on the autonomy issue to scuttle the prospects of a dialogue between the Hurriyat and the Centre. But all parties have a role, Abdullah must be made to realise that.

THE HINDU

1990

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22/6

APHC against division on communal lines

By Our Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR, JUNE 22. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today rejected the proposal of United States-based Kashmir Study Group (KSG) as one of the solutions to the problem and dismissed autonomy as a non-issue for Kashmiris. Senior APHC executive member, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, said that KSG proposal which is for a division of the State on communal lines with river Chenab as border is not acceptable to the Hurriyat. Though Mr. Lone said that the architect of the proposal, Mr. Farooq Kathwari, a US-based businessman had three meetings with him, the proposal did not come up for discussions with the APHC. HD-13

"Many proposals come up but we are only for tripartite talks between India, Pakistan and Kashmiris first. Only then can the proposals be discussed. We are not going to give any solution till a dialogue takes place between all the three parties," he told a news conference here today. DK

Blaming the Central Government for adopting double standards, he said on one hand the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, is talking about dialogue, and on the other, the pro-active policy is being pursued to "kill the innocent people of Kashmir".

Mr. Lone denied that he had any meeting with Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, nor any other senior level official in Delhi recently.

THE HINDU

1991

Centre not against autonomy to J&K

sr 1
28/6

hold the key to the fortunes of major political parties as does the Calcutta Municipal Corporation poll this time around. This city has been the protagonist of much drama and once again it is poised to play a similar role come Sunday.

For Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, the CMC poll is the dress rehearsal for the assembly elections slated for next year — as if a victory here gives her the passport to rule the state.

State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas affirms that the poll has a twofold significance — national and local. "Calcutta is the biggest municipal corporation in the country, with about 12

million voters, and the election to the civic board will have national repercussions. The Left Front will fight the poll on political and development issues. This time its local significance stems from the fact that after a long time the Trinamul Congress is out to use terror as its main electoral tactic," he says.

Until now, the battle for Calcutta has been between the two traditional rivals — the Left Front and the Congress — with the former pipping the opposition at the post because of its superior organisational skill and much better performance than that of previous Congress boards when the Corporation became synonymous with downright thievery. It then earned the sobriquet of *chorporation*.

The inclusion of 41 wards from the semi-developed municipal areas of Jadavpur and Garden Reach helped the Left Front consolidate its position, as a sizable number of voters of the city proper have displayed an allergy towards Left ideology. But the emergence of Miss Banerjee, who split the Congress and formed her own

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, June 22. — The Centre is not against giving autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir, the Union home minister said here today.

Mr LK Advani said the J&K chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, had discussed the issue with him before he left for Israel, France and Britain.

"We've received a report on the autonomy. The matter is being debated in the state assembly. When we consider the report, the Assembly's view will be kept in mind," he said.

"Today India is a highly centralised state. There's a case for devolution of power to the states. Our government is not against the autonomy demand as J&K is already enjoying a special status. Whatever decision is taken by the Centre should lead to establishment of peace in the state," Mr Advani said.

Replying to questions, he said the dialogue with Hurriyat leaders hadn't been put on the back burner. "We're willing to discuss grievances of the people, whether they are in J&K, the North-east, or Assam provided they give up arms ...," he said.

Asked about the Bofors case, he said the CBI was "pursuing" it. "We're hopeful that something will come out of it."

Farooq: Earlier in Delhi, Dr Abdullah said his demand was essentially for economic autonomy. It was within the constitution's framework, adds.SNS.

"I'm not the first to make the demand," he said. "Mr Jyoti Basu was the first who talked about more powers to the state." Even the NDA's manifesto had promised more powers to states, Dr Abdullah said.

His statements came after he

met Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee for half an hour at the Prime Minister's home in Delhi. Dr Abdullah said the J&K House would debate the autonomy committee's report but would n't vote on its recommendations.

He iterated his demand for a national debate on autonomy and insisted the press had no been reporting developments in J&K accurately.

"I'll be the last man and the National Conference the last party to stop the democratic process," he said, clarifying that the autonomy debate was not in response to the Centre's efforts to talk to Hurriyat leaders.

"To say that the NC was trying to stall the proposed talks is wrong. It's for the government of India to decide who it wished to talk to, why and how."

Dr Abdullah declared J&K will remain part of India — with or without autonomy.

The autonomy committee recommendations are:

- Matters in the Union list not connected with defence, external affairs and communication and/or ancillary thereto but made applicable, should be excluded from application to the state.

- All modifications made in Article 246 regarding the state subsequent to the 1950 order should be rescinded.

- Articles 248, 249, 250 and 251 should be omitted in relation to the state.

- As in 1950 and 1954, the State and Concurrent Lists should not be applicable to the state.

- Article 254 should be restored to its pre-1954 position with regard to J&K.

■ See AUTONOMY: page 8

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J&K cannot be divided, says Hurriyat leader

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, June 22

ALL PARTIES Hurriyat Conference senior leader Abdul Ghani Lone on Thursday claimed that the party had an "ideal solution to the Kashmir crisis, but wouldn't reveal it till three parties — India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat — sit across the table."

That situation can emerge only if the Government of India concedes that Kashmir is a disputed territory and agrees to tripartite talks.

While addressing a Press conference, Mr Lone said the Hurriyat did not support any move to trifurcate state and again rejected autonomy as a solution to Kashmir.

Regarding any dialogue with the Centre, Mr Lone denied that there was any communication between the two sides. He said that the dialogue offer appeared to be a sham and a cover to "the continuing custodial killings".

He also announced that the Hurriyat may call an indefinite general strike or organise a people's march to protest against these custodial deaths.

Mr Lone said that the Hurriyat had prevailed upon Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik to postpone his indefinite hunger strike till July 13.

Mr Lone said that for the Hurriyat, Jammu and Kashmir was a single entity and could not be divided.

He said that autonomy was never an issue with the people of Kashmir.

He said the current "freedom struggle" started in 1988, a time when substantial amount of autonomy already existed. This explained why autonomy was a

non-issue for the Kashmiris, he added. But he disagreed that the "erosion of autonomy led to the current turmoil in the Kashmir Valley".

Mr Lone said that the Hurriyat's stand was clear: Kashmir was a disputed territory. It was neither part of India nor Pakistan.

To him, the talks within the limits of the Indian Constitution meant "denial of dialogue, for our whole struggle is against the Constitution of India".

Noisy scenes in House: acrimonious scenes were witnessed in the Assembly today as Opposition BJP and ruling National Conference leaders were involved in heated exchanges forcing the chair to adjourn the assembly before schedule close.

"When ballots are not respected, then guns start booming and this is what we are seeing today", said Education Minister Mohammad Shafi Uri, who wanted India to utilise the "window of opportunity" by restoring autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.

While Shafi presented the horrors of non-fulfilment of promises in the course of his arguments for the early restoration of greater autonomy to win hearts of the people, Panthers Party leader Harsh Dev Singh tore apart all arguments in defence of autonomy playing on his legal knowledge and rhetoric. He described the State Autonomy Committee report as "the most controversial document of the century".

Mr Singh wondered for whom the National Conference was asking for autonomy when the people in none of the regions were supporting the idea.

"If you call yourselves Indians", he asked of the Treasury Benches, "why don't you seek full integration of India. The country holds best hope for all the faiths".

Debate on J-K autonomy

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUN 2000

Who gets pieces of the pie?

✓
A good autonomy package should give more power to the people at the grassroots level irrespective of ethnic and regional distinctions, argues M.K. TIKKU ✓

A CHARMING fallacy, variously packaged and promoted, is currently making the rounds of the political marketplace. Greater autonomy. This is being touted as a one-shot solution to the Kashmir conundrum.

This means that violence will end, militancy will disappear and everything will be honky dory once the State has received a high degree of constitutional autonomy. Indeed, nothing could be farther from the truth.

To question this view is not an argument against the merits of greater devolution and more autonomy *per se*. All one can say is: By all means, take it. But do subject it to two basic considerations. First, don't let the autonomy debate be used to cover up the other factors (read failures) that have contributed in the build-up to the mess in Kashmir. Second, before buying a particular autonomy package, put it to the Gandhian test by asking how and to what extent it would benefit the State's population.

The State Autonomy Report, which is currently the subject of heated arguments in the Assembly and agitated articulations in two of the three regions of the State, does not make the grade on either count. One major limitation of the report is that it is too much of a party document, tailor-made to suit the National Conference's own pursuit of power. That should not be surprising. The birth-marks of the report would have made that predictable.

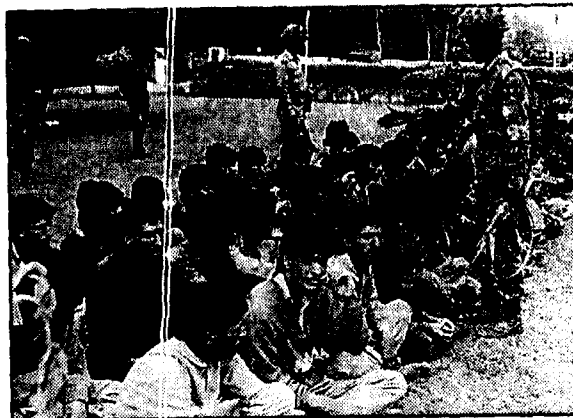
The report was prepared under the supervision of a senior party colleague of Farooq Abdullah after the chairman of the autonomy panel had resigned mid-way. It was prepared with a minimum level of consultation with various segments of the State's population — and remained little debated until the special session of the State Assembly this week.

What is surprising is how could a report of this nature be so insensitive — as the outburst of protests this week have demonstrated — to the concerns of significant segments of the State's population, north and south of the Valley? There is some validity in the argument that the report is meant to

KASHMIR

serve as a bargaining factor with the Centre. In fact, the report almost remained untalked about for a whole year, when it was suddenly taken out of the closet as talks with the Hurriyat leaders began to appear as a distinct possibility early this year.

For some, this might revive an old memory: for instance, the manner in which V. P. Singh instantly retrieved the Mandal Commission Report once he found himself caught in a tight corner. Thus, the auto-



my report has since been sought to be put on top of the agenda with a fresh sense of urgency.

It would be useful to recall that when Sheikh Abdullah insisted on going back to the pre-1953 constitutional position as the basic premise for talks with the Centre in the early Seventies, he had an important personal point to make. Since he had been removed from power in 1953, he insisted on reverting to that year as a defining landmark for a settlement with the Centre.

The Sheikh was soon persuaded to comprehend the argument that everything that had happened in the State in the intervening years need not be seen as evil. Instead, he should take a fresh look, and cull out whatever he found was not acceptable. It was thus that G. Parthasarathy and Mirza

Afzal Beg spent months poring over various laws and enactments, and arguing over them back and forth before the Accord of 1975 was hammered out.

It is understandable if the Hurriyat groups seek to run down the Accord, but it is amazing that the Sheikh's own party and "successor regime" should turn away from it on the specious plea that it has not worked. What has not worked is that successive governments in their pursuit of power and its perpetuation have simply forgotten about giving the people a caring and clean administration, a transparent government with adequate space for political dissent and fair elections.

This is not to suggest that the problem in Kashmir is all about electoral rigging, administrative corruption and misgovernance. But these have been hugely contributing factors in the current crises. And over the decades, the Centre is seen as a passive party in the misfeasance.

To pretend that the problems of good governance would disappear once the governor has been replaced by a Sadar-i-Riyasat, or the Election Commission robbed of its jurisdiction to conduct the elections, or the Supreme Court barred from hearing a Kashmiri's petition, is worse than missing the wood for trees. Critics of the autonomy report have a point

when they say that it is not about empowering the people; it would end up empowering those who are already in power.

They fear that it would diminish localised accountability even further, narrow the space for democratic dissent, and entrench those in power. In the past, democratic debate and dissent have almost always been hostage to the ruling elite in the State, especially in the Valley.

A good autonomy package should provide a formula for giving more power to people at the grassroots cutting across ethnic and regional distinctions. What the report seems to have done is to deepen fears of further concentration in fewer hands in one region. Perhaps, the Abdullah Government must attempt a better draft than the one he is trying to push.

The answer lies in free elections, democratic decentralisation and wider autonomy

Freedom and its discontents

16-13 24/6
THE KASHMIR question has been one of India's major domestic, security and diplomatic concerns since Independence. The Maharaja's accession on October 26, 1947 followed the tribal invasion of the State with Pakistan's full support and legitimised India's military intervention. The ensuing war ended on January 1, 1949 virtually partitioning the State along a ceasefire line that left a third of both the population and territory under the control of Pakistan.

India's acceptance of the Instrument of Accession was complete in every respect. Yet, in his letter to the Maharaja, the Governor-General said that "it is my Government's wish that, as soon as law and order have been restored and the soil cleared of the invader, the question of the State's accession should be settled by a reference to the people".

However, the governing resolution of the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan of August 13, 1948, calling for a ceasefire and truce to be followed by a reference to the people, was not honoured by the latter. The elaborate terms of the truce, an essential precondition to a plebiscite, were not merely not implemented by Pakistan but were also openly flouted by it. Ten years later, the UN Representative, Gunnar Jarring, opined that the passage of time and changing circumstances had rendered the UN resolutions obsolete. This had been the Indian view.

Two wars and two proxy wars later, the situation remains unchanged. Pakistan has failed to annex the State which remains divided and bruised. While a secessionist group continues to seek self-determination through union with Pakistan, others seek independence for all of J&K on both sides of the LoC. Neither is feasible. Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of the Indian Union and there will be no second Partition. The perfectly fair elections held in 1977, after Sheikh Abdullah's restoration, and in 1983, and yet again in 1996, provide popular endorsement of this position.

There has undeniably been discontent and alienation in the Valley, especially in the wake of the maladroit political management of the State between 1952 and 1975 and between 1984 and 1987. The latter gave birth to armed insurgency with sustained cross-border support. This only brought more grief. Nevertheless, the use of arms has once again clearly failed. While nationalist

forces have rallied, significant sections among those alienated from the Indian state have come to adopt the more realisable and practical objective of seeking greater autonomy, self-determination or *azadi* within India.

The Government of India too has stated its willingness to consider greater internal autonomy for J&K. The term 'autonomy', so widely used, essentially implies an adjustment in Centre-State relations. The use of symbols such as a State flag and nomenclatures like Sadar-i-Riyasat and Mazir-e-Azam in place of Prime Minister or Chief Minister are really subsidiary issues. Their figurative connotation of higher precedence or importance is without any real additionality in terms of substantive content. Nevertheless, symbols are supremely important when dealing with a people's psyche.

It would be useful to lay to rest a popular muddle that has entrapped highly placed minds. This is that more autonomy means less 'integration' with India and vice versa and that 'full integration' will be achieved by abrogating Article 370 of the Constitution. The fact is that Article 370 has nothing to do with integration which is governed by Article 1 and the First Schedule.

Article 1 posits that India shall be a Union of States as specified in the First Schedule which lists J&K along with Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and all the rest. No distinction is made between States and Union Territories in terms of the quality or extent of 'integration' which is full and complete in each and every case.

The Maharaja of J&K acceded to India under the standard Instrument of Accession, adapted from the 1935 Act, which was applicable to all the princely states alike. There was no special or separate dispensation with regard to Kashmir. The Instrument of Accession transferred responsibility for three items to the Union, namely, defence, foreign affairs and communications, no more. Article

370 was the mechanism written into the Indian Constitution to regulate Centre-State relations with J&K.

Prior to the division of the State, Jammu was only a little less populous than Kashmir but more influential on account of Dogra rule and a certain Hindu weightage in the administration. The drawing of a ceasefire line created new jurisdictions and a new political demography following the loss of the Muslim-dominant areas to Pakistan. The ending of the monarchy, the abolition of large landed estates without compensation, and the primacy of the National Conference resulted in an internal 'transfer of power' from Jammu to Srinagar.

Ever since the Afghan conquest the Kashmir Valley had sought to reassert its independence. The rise of Kashmiri nationalism in the 1930s led to the formation of the Muslim Conference which Sheikh Abdullah shortly thereafter converted into the secular and progressive National Conference. The Sheikh's logic was that the struggle was not one of Muslim against Hindu but of the common people, whatever their faith, against the feudal tyranny of Dogra rule.

The National Conference was largely confined to the Valley and the cry of Quit Kashmir in 1946 was addressed to the Maharaja. Kashmiri nationalism was thus exclusively ranged against Dogra rule. It was Nehru's friendship with and influence over the Sheikh that made Abdullah see the larger dimension of the Indian freedom struggle to which he was soon attracted. The National Conference joined the Indian States Peoples Conference in 1941, making Kashmir's nationalist struggle part of the wider Indian independence movement.

The National Conference's Naya Kashmir manifesto of 1944 also drew inspiration from the progressive economic thinking of the Congress. Abdullah was later to say that Kashmiris could be good Muslims in India and yet be partners in its

democratic, secular and modernising economic development enterprise.

In endorsing the Maharaja's decision to accede to India, when the tribal raiders were at the gates of Srinagar, and in negotiating Article 370 and the Delhi Agreement, the Sheikh opted for autonomy or self-determination within India. He subsequently wavered on sensing certain negative trends, but returned to his original moorings after 1975.

In 1995, Narasimha Rao announced that the Union Government would be prepared to consider autonomy 'short of independence' for J&K. Welcoming this on behalf of the National Conference, Farooq Abdullah asked the Union Government to issue an order under Article 370(1)(d) to restore the State's autonomy in terms of the Delhi Agreement of 1952. When this did not happen, the NC boycotted the parliamentary poll. In 1996, Mr Deva Gowda, as Prime Minister, offered J&K 'maximum autonomy' which persuaded Dr Abdullah to participate in the Assembly elections. His demand was to go back to 1952.

Autonomy is the key and there is little to fear. Regional autonomy is best achieved by amending the old J&K Panchayat Act to bring it in line with the 72nd and 73rd Amendment and then perhaps invest the *zila parishads* with more power and then allow any two or more contiguous *zila parishads* to group together within the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh as presently defined. This will obviate any new line-drawing and charges of 'communalism' which are somewhat misplaced.

In fact, free elections, democratic decentralisation and wider autonomy for J&K within India could also electrify both 'Azad' J&K and the northern areas. There is little doubt that an internal settlement in J&K will have a transforming effect on the Kashmir dimension of Indo-Pak relations.

Nothing is lost by viewing the State's demands with sympathy, as the essential problem is more a crisis of confidence than anything else. Once people in J&K know that autonomy under several heads is being repatriated, local and regional opinion might well favour continuation of many aspects of the existing dispensation. Even otherwise, J&K is constitutionally different and there need be no excessive fear of a domino effect on the rest of the country (Excerpted from the monograph Jammu and Kashmir: An agenda for the future by Delhi Policy Group)



FAROOQ AUTONOMY

Some hard thinking on the Hurriyat necessary

THIS is not the first time that Farooq Abdullah has sought to divert attention from his absentee chief ministership by voicing the demand for autonomy. Kashmir already gets very special treatment among the states of the Indian Union, its special position is well recognised and not without great cost to the rest of the nation. To suggest, as he does that the title *Sadar-i-Riasat* be reintroduced in place of the more common Governor is without substance but not without significance. It is not a secret that Farooq has been very uneasy about the reported dialogue with the Hurriyat leaders, something this newspaper has welcomed. The contacts have not progressed because of Farooq's rearguard action. His National Conference is losing ground largely because it is seen as inactive and somewhat corrupt and therefore increasingly removed from the concerns of the people of Kashmir which should be at the centre of the picture, not the position or convenience of Kashmir's politicians. Having succeeded in putting the wind up the Government by organising a debate on the question of autonomy in the local assembly, Farooq is content to withdraw saying the debate will not end in a vote. His concern is clearly to draw attention to his nuisance value as he simultaneously offers himself for talks with the central Government. He is mostly in Delhi anyway so he will not have the inconvenience of travelling great distances for the occasion.

Farooq, for want of a better comparison, is beginning to resemble Subhas Ghisingh in Darjeeling who with the help of the chief minister of West Bengal, keeps raising the demand for Gorkhaland, sometimes wanting even more funds outside audit or accountability, sometimes questioning Darjeeling's status as part of India. In return Jyoti Basu uses Ghisingh's influence to get CPI-M people elected, instead of helping the Centre to face down the obvious blackmail. In the central Government, the home minister sees the issues posed by Farooq Abdullah for what they are, more clearly than other Cabinet colleagues. He should trust his judgment and start talks with the Hurriyat without Farooq's distracting presence. Again a comparison with Ghisingh is apt. The wily Gorkha leader sent a second ranking delegation to Delhi keeping himself back for the time when serious issues have to be thrashed out like more money. Twice it is announced that Advani has promised that he will include Gorkhaland as a separate state at the same time as the Bill setting up Jharkhand and other areas is tabled. In the first place, Advani is not so simple as to concede such a demand without anything in return and in any case not to the second ranking leadership. But the reports persist no doubt to wild applause from Ghisingh. Farooq is indulging in similar tactics, which have the attribute of blackmail. His great fear is that if the talks with the Hurriyat succeed, he will be knocked off his perch. This may be an oversimplification but substantially true.

The Government must assess these tactics for what they are, pressures to be ignored and bluffs to be called. Where will Farooq go? His hold in the Valley is now hardly felt, and we must make alternative arrangements. It is rapidly coming round to the situation that with Farooq around, no progress can be made in integrating Kashmir into the Indian nation and more important in instilling a sense of confidence that the central Government is prepared to sacrifice that particular dynasty in the interests of the Kashmiri people.

24 JUN 2000

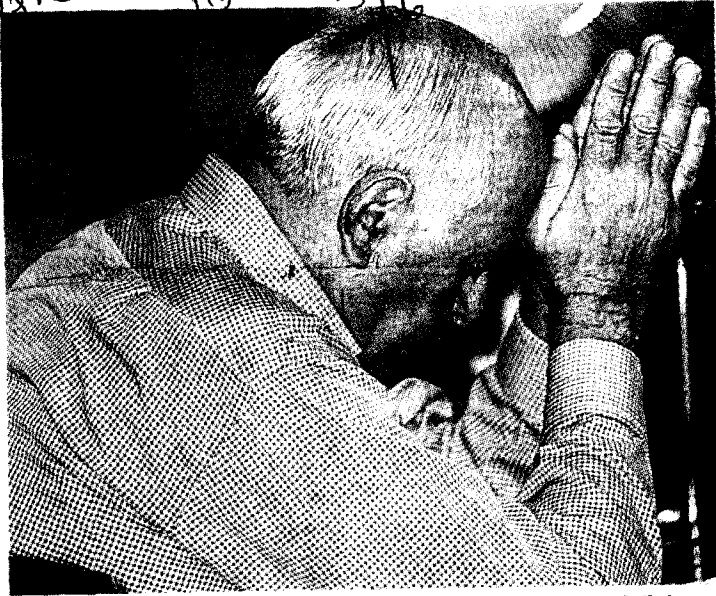
National Conference firm on autonomy

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 24. The ongoing debate on the report of the State Autonomy Committee (SAC) continued to be dominated by the ruling National Conference (NC) stand reiterating that it would not give up the demand for autonomy under any circumstances. Its leaders alleged that both India and Pakistan were working against the NC and that "security forces were being used as a political tool in the State."

The NC's PWD Minister, Mr. Ali Mohammad Sagar, warned the Centre of dangerous consequences in case the demand for greater autonomy was not conceded and if the conspiracies against the NC were not put to an end. Coming down heavily on successive Governments in Delhi, Mr. Sagar said that it was Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah who acceded to secular India but the gesture was responded with "arrests, humiliation and other sinister plans." "We should not make autonomy an issue of Muslim versus Hindu and Buddhist versus Muslim but it is the question of fulfilling constitutional commitments," Mr. Sagar said.

The Shia leader, Moulvi Iftikhar Ansari, said that the Hurriyat Conference was a creation of Delhi. "Delhi gave birth to Hurriyat and those who are talking about



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, during a debate on the State Autonomy Report in the Legislative Assembly in Srinagar on Saturday. —Photo: Nissar Ahamad

dialogue with them, are only doing so to groom them against us" he said. The Moulvi challenged

Hurriyat's representative character to talk on behalf of Kashmiris. The Industries Minister, Dr.

Mustafa Kamal, called for an end to "anti-people policies of security forces" so that people live peacefully. He said that it was time for the Centre to restore the constitutional position the State enjoyed before 1953 which, he said was the only solution.

The Health Minister, Mian Altaf Ahmed, said that only Mr. Abdullah was capable of running the State. The people have given mandate to him on autonomy in 1996 and only after the Centre gave assurances the NC fought the elections, he said.

The Doda MLA, Mr. Khalid Suhrawardy, said that the NC wanted "peace in the State and BJP wants pieces of the State by talking about trifurcation."

Mr. Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami (CPI-M) called upon both India and Pakistan to shun the path of confrontation and find a peaceful solution to the problems. "We have to win this (autonomy) battle for the people and the future of India."

Ladakhis' caution: Page 8

THE HINDU

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2 JUN 2000

Talks if militants give up violence, says Advani

NEW DELHI, JUNE 24. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani has said the Government was ready to hold talks with Kashmir militant groups provided they accept the Indian constitution and abjure the path of violence and terrorism.

"If they accept the Indian constitution and leave the path of violence and terrorism, any issue can be discussed. So far, no talks have taken place and therefore we cannot disclose our views or stand on the issues involved," he told the pro-RSS journal, 'Panchajanya' in London.

He said the issue of autonomy had been raised in Kashmir while the NDA election manifesto favoured more powers to the States.

The report on autonomy was being considered by the Centre, a release from the journal quoted him as having said. — PTI

Autonomy dream not to weaken country: Farooq

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

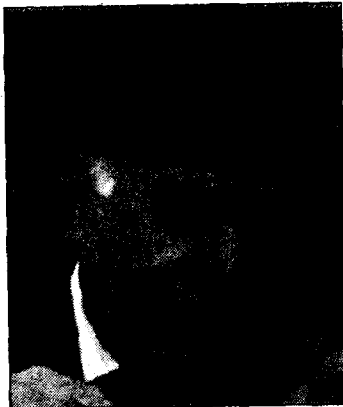
JAMMU, June 24. — Autonomy is an urge of the people of Jammu and Kashmir but "we won't take any step that may weaken the country," Dr Farooq Abdullah said in the Assembly today.

Advising restraint against sweeping remarks, the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister hoped that MLAs would base their arguments on facts.

Dr Abdullah urged them to differentiate between the demand for restoring autonomy and tackling militancy in the state.

It is unfair to blame the Centre for everything, he said, "if we introspect, it will be clear that people from amongst us ... eroded Article 370 ... if they had not betrayed the people, the Centre could not have done any thing."

Dialogue is encouraged in our country, Dr Abdullah said, "here lies the difference between India and Pakistan ... here we can discuss and debate while in the neighbouring country even Prime Ministers



Dr Farooq Abdullah

are taken to gallows."

On a minister's comment about the alleged excesses of security forces combating terrorism in the state, he said the wrongs of a few individuals do not reflect the character of the entire force. The forces always taken action against erring personnel.

"Why blame others, some of our own officials and personnel in state forces are maligning the government by their high-handedness," Dr Abdullah said.

Citing an instance, he said a

family was yesterday harassed by some task force personnel. They were threatened with dire consequences if they did not hand over their car.

"I summoned the officer, removed his rank and belt, ordered his suspension and subsequent dismissal", Dr Abdullah said, "but how many people have access to the chief minister's office?"

The chief minister said his government would never allow excesses on the people and regretted that some officials are prejudiced against members of the minority community. But most members of the army and security forces are sensitive to the difficulties of the common man.

The state is passing through a difficult phase and everyone has to act responsibly, Dr Abdullah said.

On the release of militants to secure safe release of hostages on board the IC 814, he said the government was forced to make this move owing to pressure created by relatives of the hostages.

THE STATESMAN

25 JUN 2001

Autonomy report to be made public'

Srinagar, June 25 ^{HF-10} ^{2/6/6}

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has said the regional autonomy committee report, now under consideration, will take care of aspirations of the people of all regions of the State.

The regional autonomy committee report when finalised would be made public for enlisting views of public and its representatives, he said.

Abdullah said this while intervening in the debate on the autonomy committee report in the Legislative Council yesterday.

Meanwhile, Legislative Council chairman Abdul Rashid Dar said the demand for autonomy for the state was well within the parameters of Indian Constitution and the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir.

Former Jammu varsity Vice-Chancellor R Malhotra, participating in the discussion on autonomy committee report in the council, pleaded for restoration of autonomous character of the state to ensure speedy development.

Housing and Urban Development Minister Koshak



Togdan Rinpochey said the people of Ladakh are fully behind the Chief Minister on the issue.

Autonomy is not a new proposal but a question of restoration of constitutional rights taken away from the people of the State, he said.

Sagar said promises given by the Centre to the people of the state from time to time needed to be fulfilled.

Sheikh Mustafa Kamaal, Minister for Industries and Commerce and younger brother of Farooq, said concrete steps were needed to regain confidence of the people.

NC leader Faqir Mohammad Khan said the need of the hour was greater autonomy for the state and any delay in this regard would only help Hurriyat leaders. He called for restoration of pre-1953 status of the state.

Khalid Najeab Suherwardhy, another party leader, said granting of autonomy to the state was the only way to solve the Kashmir problem.

He said trifurcation of the state was no solution to the Kashmir problem which is purely a political issue and needs a political solution.

(PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUN 200

HR 132/56 Snap the barbed wires

The 'fourth option' to the prolonged impasse is not another war or more 'proxy warring', but a zone of peace across both sides of a soft border, writes B.G. VERGHESE

THERE IS little doubt that an internal settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir question will have a transforming effect on the Kashmir dimension of Indo-Pakistan relations. Pakistan has always gained a handle from gross political mismanagement of the situation in Kashmir by the Indian state. The current episode stems from the culpable folly inherent in what transpired in the State between 1953 and 1975 and more particularly between 1984 and 1987. A new generation of Kashmiris, hopeful of a fresh beginning after the Abdullah restoration of 1975 and the indubitably free elections of 1977 and 1983, was made to feel that the people of J&K had once again been betrayed and robbed of their democratic rights and civil liberties.

The country is painfully emerging out of that quagmire after a period of trauma and grief. This is not sufficient. Like J&K, 'Azad' J&K and Northern Areas too must and can win *azadi* or self-determination within Pakistan. Time is running out for Pakistan.

India must be able to live in peace and friendship with Pakistan. This is a vital necessity for people in J&K, a section of whom have also suffered emotionally and materially from the fact of a divided State, however artificial that construct in some ways. There is a dispute with Pakistan over J&K; and it is futile and foolish to wish away that fact. What is at issue is not the fact of the dispute but its nature. India can hold Pakistan at bay; but J&K may never be fully at peace in the absence of an enveloping Indo-Pakistan accord.

The two countries have totally divergent perceptions of the genesis of the Kashmir question and the subsequent sequence of events. Both lay claim to all of undivided J&K, India with far greater legitimacy even under the now dead UN resolutions. Neither country is going to walk away from J&K. Yet, the alternative to the prolonged impasse is not another war or more proxy warring, which would be ruinous to both sides and certainly for the people of J&K, but talks.

Other factors have intervened to create a hiatus and relations have deteriorated with the Ghauri missile firing and the nuclear tests and some of the unfortunate and wholly avoidable rhetoric accompanying these events on either side. Subsequent missile-nuclear developments have not essentially altered this situation and, once euphoria and flag-waving rhetoric have faded, the process of dialogue can and must be resumed. A nuclear arms race is unnecessary and must be avoided.

Rather than chase a chimera, Indo-Pakistan discourse should more productively focus on realisable objectives based on ground realities and the

KASHMIR

changing international environment. This would suggest accepting the status quo and then proceeding to better it for all concerned through a series of adjustments.

First and foremost, there must be an end to violence and cross-border intervention in J&K. The people on both sides of the LoC must be accorded a wide measure of autonomy that guarantees their democratic rights and promotes economic and social progress in an environment of peace and security.

The process could start with a resolution of the Siachen issue by following the unambiguous directions of the still extant Karachi Military



Agreement of 1949 delineating the cease fire line. This was drawn on large-scale maps with grid references up to four decimal points and signed by the Indian and Pakistani military commands as well as by a representative of the UN Military Observer Group.

A redrawn or adjusted Line now proposed would demarcate two distinct sovereignties in J&K, even while remaining a Line of Control, pending the putting into place of other elements by mutual consent. These would include agreed withdrawals from the LoC so as to avoid further military eyeball-to-eyeball confrontations, redeployment and thinning down of forces, leading to planned demilitarisation in stages.

The Pandits must be enabled to return to their homes in safety and honour, a task rendered more difficult by the brutal targeted massacres of Hindus in the Valley and Udhampur in the past.

Having drawn this new Line, or even otherwise, it could be rendered porous, thus made a soft border admitting of easy passage to and from through

designated police/customs checkpoints of State subjects belonging to either side. This could be done without the paraphernalia of formal travel documents and visas or elaborate currency controls (as between India and Nepal). Normal travel, trade, pilgrimage, tourism and student or other people-to-people exchanges could be facilitated to everybody's benefit.

Oversight of such arrangements would be necessary. Matters of common concern would include trade, tourism, border management and crime control, environmental cooperation and cultural and educational exchanges. The highly successful 1960 Indus Treaty allocated the water of the six rivers but did not exploit their huge energy and water storage potential in J&K except to a very limited extent. This offers scope for negotiating a second phase of the Indus Treaty which could enrich both parts of J&K as well as both countries.

Informal confabulation could mature into more formal joint meetings of legislators and professionals from the two sides in Srinagar/Jammu/Leh and Muzaffarabad/Gilgit/Skardu and the establishment in due course of certain joint pan-J&K bodies with consultative and even executive status. The kind of cross border institutional development envisaged under the Anglo-Irish Agreement of April 1998 is illustrative of a somewhat similar process with regard to Ulster.

J&K, so long the apple of discord, could well become the fulcrum of a new and positive Indo-Pakistan relationship. Borders and sovereignties will begin to matter less, as elsewhere around the world, as civil society comes centre stage and people, commerce, culture and ideas flow freely across national boundaries. As the two parts of J&K draw closer in this new environment, they could be declared a zone of peace, jointly defended by India and Pakistan.

The Kashmir question has thus far been tossed around only within a framework of three options: the status quo, secession or independence. None can bring lasting peace. There is a fourth option that offers the people of J&K a means of realising *azadi* or self-determination on both sides without unravelling either India or Pakistan. Such an unfolding would bring these two neighbours together in friendship and progress as the 1947 Partition Plan essentially intended. Fifty years on, it is not too late to endeavour to realise a vision that offers peace with honour to these estranged neighbours.

(Excerpted from the monograph *Jammu and Kashmir: An agenda for the future* by Delhi Policy Group)

OPPOSITION STAGES WALKOUT

J&K Assembly passes autonomy resolution

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JUNE 26. In a historic move, the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly today adopted by voice vote a resolution accepting the report of the State Autonomy Committee (SAC), recommending greater autonomy to the State. The entire Opposition staged a walkout. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, expressing confidence that it would be implemented stressed on a nationwide debate on the issue.

On the last day of the special session convened on June 19 to discuss the SAC report, which recommended sweeping changes in Centre-State relations, the substitute resolution moved by the Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. P. L. Handoo, was passed amid opposition from members of the Congress(I), the BJP and the Panthers Party.

Moving the resolution, Mr. Handoo said, "I propose to move the following as a substitute motion for the two motions moved on April 8, along with the amendments proposed by Mr. Sadiq Ali, Mr. Mohammad Shafi Bhat and Mr. G. M. Bawan (all NC MLAs)."

"This House having discussed the report of the SAC, tabled on April 13, 1999, records its approval of the same and its acceptance of the recommendations made" and "demands that the Centre and the Government of Jammu and Kashmir take positive steps for implementing the same".



NC legislators jubilant after the resolution on State Autonomy was passed in Srinagar on Monday. — Photo: Nissar Ahamad

"This (special session) was a good beginning towards achieving what we promised our people in 1996," Dr. Abdullah said adding that no one, including the National Conference, was ready to take up the challenge of the elections then. "But, we were assured by the people in New Delhi on autonomy so we jumped into the elections at the risk of not only our lives but the lives of lakhs of people."

Taking strong exception to the Union Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie's statement that the NC was

begging for autonomy, Dr. Abdullah said, "it is not a question of begging but the restoration of rights".

He also took a dig at the national media, which he said was misleading the nation on autonomy through "malicious editorials and by not reporting the issue in the right perspective". "The Hindu was the only paper which had written positively in this direction and deserves appreciation" he said.

On the implementation of the SAC report, he said, "I am confi-

dent, otherwise I would not have brought in the resolution."

Blaming the Centre for its follies, Dr. Abdullah said it was Jawaharlal Nehru who had taken the case to the U.N. saying, "the final authority on the accession will be the people of the State", though Sheikh Abdullah authorised him (Nehru) to take a final decision.

Dr. Abdullah repeatedly said "we do not want Pakistan. We are Indians and want something within the Constitution." Pointing to the BJP members, he said "you can never make India a Hindu Rashtra. It is a secular country and will remain so."

Earlier, the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Sheikh Abdur Rehman, supported the autonomy demand but said "it should be based on sincerity and should help in decentralisation of power to the grassroot level".

'Discussion after PM returns'

NEW DELHI, JUNE 26. The Union Cabinet will discuss the autonomy resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly today after the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, returns from his two-nation tour.

Asked to comment on the autonomy resolution adopted by the State Assembly today, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, said the Cabinet would take a decision on it. — UNI

Parties' reactions: Page 13

THE HINDU

27 JUN 2000

BJP calls autonomy move retrograde

9/18/54

85-6
27/6

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 26. — While the government was caught in a quandary over the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, the BJP opposed the move with the party president, Mr Kushabhau Thakre, describing it as a "retrograde step" and calling upon the "people to reject it".

To wriggle the government out of the crisis, the Union Cabinet is slated to meet after the Prime Minister, Mr AB Vajpayee, returns from his Rome-Lisbon tour.

Not even the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, was ready to offer his reaction. He said it was not proper for him to react as the state Assembly had passed a resolution. He said the Union Cabinet will take up the issue after Mr Vajpayee's return.

Some other ministers were privately angry with the J&K



Dr Farooq Abdullah addresses the Assembly on Monday. — PTI

chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, that he had put the autonomy resolution to vote despite his assurances to Mr Vajpayee that he was only interested in a discussion. After the meeting between Dr Abdullah and Mr Vajpayee, it

was understood that the National Conference would not take any stand that could embarrass the NDA coalition, one of them said.

However, none of them concluded that this could lead to

The compulsions of coalition politics would not give much elbow room to Mr Vajpayee, they said.

A statement issued by Mr Kushabhau Thakre stated that the passing of the resolution was not unexpected. It added, "The intention of the Farooq government is to take back J&K to the situation that prevailed in 1952. The flow of time and river cannot be reversed. Similarly the country will have to move forward and not backward."

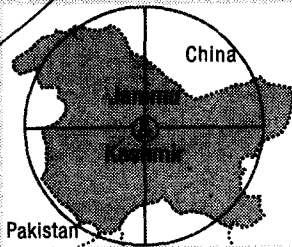
Mr Thakre said, "The BJP rejects the attempt to go back to 1952 as it will totally nullify all the steps taken during the past 50 years to integrate J&K with the rest of the country. The party will continue to take further steps to completely integrate the state with the rest of the country. The BJP considers passing of the resolution as a retrograde step and calls upon the people of India to reject the government for

THE STATESMAN

JUN 26 1954

DEBATE

ISSUES

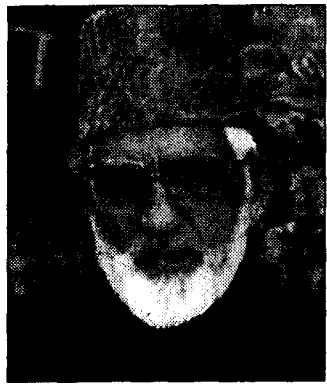


- Will implementing Art. 370 bring peace to Kashmir?
- What should be New Delhi's agenda in the ongoing talks?
- Shouldn't the people of Kashmir be allowed to choose their political future democratically?
- Should J&K be divided into three ethnic regions?

Syed Ali Shah Geelani
Chairman, All Parties Hurriyet Conference

With India and Pakistan having acquired nuclear capabilities many say: "Peace in the South-Asian region is more imperiled today than ever before." The most potent cause of bellicosity between the two countries is the fifty-two year old Kashmir dispute.

The dispute in essence is very simple. But it has been the attitude of the Government of India in the past that has made it the most complex global issue today. It is not a border dispute. It is not a dispute over sharing of waters or other resources. It is an issue of a brother separated from brother for five decades by a bloody line. It is an issue of granting of right to self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. India,



Pakistan and the United Nations are committed to grant this right to fifteen million people of the state living in two parts of Kashmir. Granting of internal autonomy within the framework of Indian constitution is not and cannot be an alternative. The question of autonomy revolves around the assumption that the state of Jammu and Kashmir has acceded to the Union of India. But, this premise is legally, historically and morally wrong. First, the accession was legally invalid, as it was in violation of the standstill agreement of 1947. United Nations endorsed this contention beyond any shadow of doubt. Second the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh has no relevance as on that date i.e. October 26/27, 1947, he had been overthrown by his subjects. And a Hindu ruler whose authority had been challenged the people had no legal or moral right to decide about the future of state that was predominately Muslim. In the case of Junagarh the GoI had ruled that its accession to Pakistan was invalid as a Muslim ruler had no right to determine the fate of his Hindu subjects.

Third, in response to the application moved by India in the UN, the august body adopted two resolutions granting right of self-determination to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and promising holding of a plebiscite in the state under the its auspices. Both India and Pakistan are committed to these resolutions. But, GoI has not only back tracked from its own commitments but has been adopting all possible oppressive measures to suppress the ongoing movement for self-determination.

Fourth, in support of the accession theory, the GoI has been quoting the so-called Constituent Assembly as having ratified it. The Constituent

Assembly or its subsequent progeny the State Legislature had no legal or moral right to decide about the future of the state. The UN resolution (S/3779) adopted by the Security Council meeting on January 24, 1957 has made amply clear: "Convening of the Constituent Assembly have never been recommended by the General Council

of the All Jammu and Kashmir National Conference and any action that Assembly may have taken or might attempt to take to determine the future shape and affiliation of the entire state or any part thereof or action by the parties concerned in support of any action by the Assembly, would not constitute disposition of the above principles." (i. e. self-determination.)

Autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir within the frame work of Indian Constitution does not dispose of the Kashmir dispute. Talking in terms of autonomy as a solution to the problem and bringing lasting peace to the State is a pipe dream. A permanent solution to the problem can only emerge once GoI adheres to its previous commitments and sheds its unbending and unrealistic attitude. There could be no better democratic method of eliciting peoples' opinion other than holding of plebiscite in the state under the auspices of the United Nations. Another way for finding a solution to the problem is holding purposeful dialogue based on the principle of natural justice between India and Pakistan.

Kashmir: Is autonomy a solution?

The vexed problem of Kashmir is being sought to be solved by granting the state autonomy. But will this bring peace to the state? Will it answer the legitimate aspirations of the people? We present our readers with three learned viewpoints:

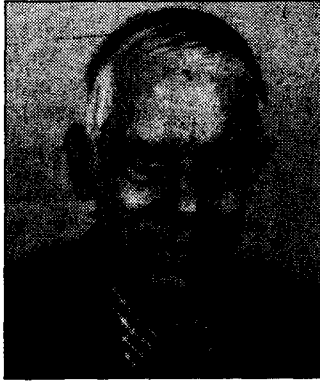
Professor C P Bhambhri
Former Dean, School of Social Sciences, JNU

The GoI and various state governments of J&K have experienced an extremely uneasy relationship. The Congress Party at the centre did not have conflict-free relationships with the National Conference. This is not the first time that the issue of autonomy for J&K has been discussed. In spite of the fact that the Indian Constitution has special provisions for maintaining special status for J&K within the Indian Republic, neither the centre nor the state have been able to provide peace.

A few facts may be mentioned to properly situate the problem of Kashmir within the context of a triangular relationship between India, Pakistan and Kashmir. First, India-Pakistan relationships have never been smooth and the biggest dispute is over J&K. Second, the GoI has taken extra care of J&K because any disturbances in that state can create a security problem for the whole of India. Third, India and Pakistan have fought wars over Kashmir four times already. If Pakistan is not involved in a direct military war with India it encourages militancy and insurgency in the Kashmir valley. The 1990s have witnessed low intensity war between Indian and Pakistan in the valley and a full fledged war in Kargil. Fourth, many organisations in J&K are involved in a struggle for independent state status and they want minimum linkage with the Indian State on the basis of the instrument of accession. Politics of gun has assumed a special significance in the body politic of J&K because Pakistan is openly helping the Jihadis and the Indian army is quite active in confronting those who want secession.

The nuclearisation of India and Pakistan has made the US worried and Bill Clinton impressed on the Indian leadership to open negotiations with dissatisfied leaders of J&K as represented by Hurriyet, JKLF etc.

The BJP was always opposed to the special status the state enjoyed and Dr. S P Mukerjee had launched a movement against special autonomy for J&K. M S Golwalkar of the RSS maintained that India should be 'one country, one state, one legislature and one executive'. BJP is a party of the Unitarian Hindu State and it is not genuinely interested in granting any autonomy. L K Advani added a rider while releasing the Hurriyet Leaders that 'any negotiations should be conducted under the Indian constitution'. The BJP does not agree even with Article 370 and it is impossible for its leadership to accept Farooq Abdullah's demand for pre-1953 status. The Sangh Parivar and the BJP leadership have always viewed the Kashmir problem as a Hindu-Muslim problem. Further J&K state has three distinct regions: the Valley, Ladakh and Jammu. Farooq Abdullah's autonomy proposals are not acceptable to the Ladakhis and the people of Jammu.



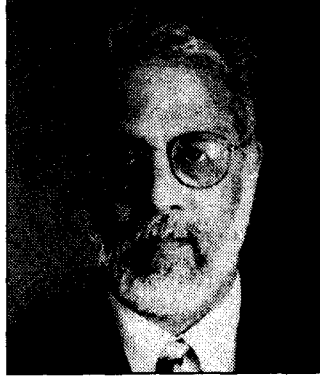
Ladakh and Jammu regional leadership does not trust Kashmir Valley leadership and in any new arrangement Jammu and Ladakh sub-regions want their own autonomous governments. Political class of J&K is completely divided and fragmented and the result is that Kashmiri political leadership cannot arrive at a consensus on autonomy.

The GoI should take the bull by its horns and hold a meeting with all Kashmiri groups, including militants, on the basis of P V Narasimha Rao's statement that for autonomy for J&K 'sky is the limit'. If the GoI and the multiple Kashmiri groups can arrive at a package, the GoI should negotiate with Parvesh Musharaff of Pakistan. Pakistan has got a clear message from its past experience that it cannot win a war against India. Military solutions have failed and can never succeed. The ongoing bleeding process of J&K can be stopped by dialogue and negotiations with the spirit of give and take on all sides. This is the only lasting solution and present efforts are inadequate. No patch-work solution will deliver the goods.

Manoj Joshi
Political Editor, The Times of India

Neither more autonomy nor *azadi* are solutions to the Kashmir tangle. These are the demands of a very small portion, albeit the most heavily populated part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Indeed, when the Ladakhis and Jammu-wallahs speak of autonomy, they usually mean freedom from Srinagar. The Kashmiri-speaking Muslim of the Valley may have a big grouse against India, but the Ladakhi Buddhists, the Hindus of Jammu, the Shias of Kargil and other non-Kashmiri speaking Muslims gripe at the Valley's dominance.

This said, we must accept that Kashmir became part of the Indian Union under special circumstances. As much was implied in our Constitution when it



came into force in 1950. Article I affirmed that Jammu and Kashmir was a state of the Indian Union, even while Article 370 provided the tool to fashion its relationship with the rest of the country. The problem arose in August 1953 when Sheikh Abdullah, who had guided this process via a state constituent assembly, was arrested. While many in New Delhi charged that the Sheikh was working to make his state independent of India, the actual fact may have been that he was trying to extract the maximum for himself and his National Conference. In other words, he wanted a relationship where the Indian Army would protect his state against Pakistan, but not interfere with his supremacy in the Valley.

It has been argued that with the National Conference split and the Sheikh in jail, the outcome of the Constituent Assembly's deliberations manifested in the state constitution of 1956 lacked credibility. Even the Beg-Parthasarthy Accord of 1975 that paved the way for the return of the Sheikh did not redress this grievance. One reason for this was Mrs Indira

Gandhi's determination to make the Congress a player in Kashmiri politics in the early 1980s.

Despite this the state was largely peaceful between 1950-1989. The affairs of the state were largely in the hands of Valley Kashmiri Muslims, even if the Sheikh was out of the picture till 1975. This was the reason that the August 1965 effort by Pakistan to set off an armed rebellion against India by sending more than 10,000 armed guerrillas did not succeed.

The votaries of *azadi* have put forward their emotive demand, but they are fuzzy on the details. They want independence to be guaranteed by the goodness of India and Pakistan's heart. In international relations, good feelings alone have never been the basis of a relationship. Pakistan's claim on Kashmir may rest on grounds of commonality of religion, but its actions seem to have been based on greed for territory as evidenced by their military attacks of 1947

and 1965. For fifty-four years, it has been the Indian Army that has stood between Pakistan and the Valley. Just how long an independent Valley of Kashmir will last were the Indian Army withdrawn is anybody's guess.

But what does *azadi* really mean? Look at it hard and you will see that *azadi* advocates are talking about political sovereignty. But, even with tourist and handicraft income, the Valley can never become a self-sustaining entity. Political sovereignty without economic viability is fiction, just as any *azadi* with Pakistani consent will be.

We must address the sentiment behind the search for autonomy or *azadi*: to go behind these words to find out what the Kashmiri is lacking. Are they being deprived of the right to practice their faith? Are the state-centre fiscal relations against the interests of J&K? Is India deliberately swamping Kashmiri culture? Has economic development or political democracy been stunted by Kashmir's relationship to India? If the answers to these questions are distilled with some honesty, we can begin to arrive at a solution to the Kashmir problem.

► RAGHU KRISHNAN

A silver jubilee remembrance

June 26 is the 25th anniversary of the day India woke up to the Emergency. It is, however, the response in March 1977 to the authoritarianism of the subsequent government which is significant.

The largest-cum-poorest democracy in the world proved in March 1977 that it totally disapproved of authoritarianism. The return of Indira Gandhi in the next election campaign in the winter of 1979 proved that the electorate equally disapproved of instability, incoherence and ineffective governance of a kind where a senior minister argued against a no-confidence motion on one day and then walked out of the government the next day!

Which left some political pundits who had praised the maturity of the Indian electorate in March 1977 and talked about the end of the Dynasty wondering where they had got things wrong some 33 months later. Others took comfort in the adage that democracy was all about opting for the lesser evil at a given point of time. Ergo that the electorate had demonstrated that it was totally against authoritarianism in March 1977 and reiterated that it was also against chaotic instability 33 months later. Some senior journalists reacted to all this by talking in almost Buddhist terms of following the middle path. Ergo, that you could not go wrong if you had not swung from one extreme to the other!

However, setting aside the analysis or the lack of it, it is the Emergency images which will remain. Images of DTC buses carrying slogans on their back saying "Discipline Makes A Nation Great" though some would have preferred to spell it as GRATE! Images of Establishment hoardings crowing "Adhikar apke haath mein" though many would have preferred the adhikar to be somewhere else! Images, reinforced by photographs, of Congress posters of cow and calf being swept away by municipal sweepers the morning after the March 1977 election results were out.

And the memories. Memories of the crowds milling around the newspaper bulletin boards on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Barakhamba Road and Kasturba Gandhi Marg on that mad March day, greeting the news of each Congress defeat with loud cheers. Memories of waking up the morning after to my landlord's voice telling the landlady "Janaki, Indira Gandhi haar gayee!"

The 70s will always be remembered as the most turbulent decade in Indian politics. Inevitably, much of the turbulence will be associated with the overwhelming personality of Indira Gandhi moving from the triumph of Bangladesh to the disaster of the Emergency but returning from the ashes just before the decade was out. The counterpoint to the only 'man' in the Congress was the frail figure of Jayaprakash Narayan who, despite his failing health, was able to concretise the opposition to authoritarianism in the world's most populous democracy.

Elsewhere in the world, an Allende was being assassinated, a Nixon being removed from power not for subverting an elected government in Chile but for covering up a third-rate burglary in Washington DC and a Brezhnev was preparing for Russia's Vietnam in Afghanistan even while the images of the last GI fleeing in the last helicopter from the roof of the US embassy in Saigon was still fresh in everyone's mind! That was the 70s!

J&K Assembly adopts motion on autonomy

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, June 26

THE JAMMU and Kashmir Assembly today adopted the recommendations of the State Autonomy Committee (SEC) and demanded that the Centre and the State Government take "positive and effective steps for its implementation". The motion was adopted amid a protest walkout by Opposition parties.

State Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah said the motion's approval was aimed at removing "blots of mistrust created due to erosion in the State's special status in the past".

During his 100-minute speech, Dr Abdullah appealed to those opposed to the greater autonomy demand not to "push us to the wall" and made light of the Ladakh Buddhist Association's apprehension over conversion to Islam, saying a single instance of conversion was a case of "love affair".

"We are Indians. We are not Pakistanis," the Chief Minister asserted, urging the Opposition parties to "see things in the right perspective".

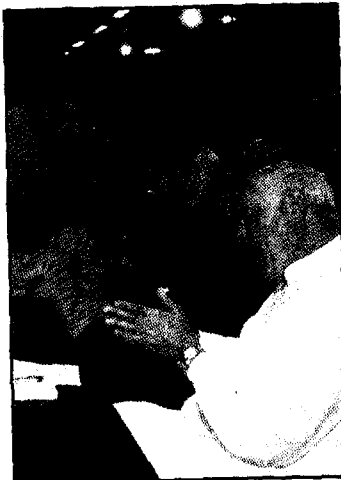
The adoption of the autonomy report -- which was moved by Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister P L Handoo this morning -- was greeted with joy by treasury benches as the BJP, Janata Dal (United) and a lone member of Jammu and Kashmir Awami League staged a walkout. The Congress, CPI-M and BSP, however, did not join the protestors.

Tomorrow, the motion would be put to vote in the Upper House of the Assembly, where the ruling party enjoys a brutal majority. There is only one BJP member in

the Opposition.

Initially, the National Conference had limited the scope of discussion on the autonomy report and the resolution's passage was considered a remote possibility. But mounting pressure forced the ruling party's hand and it decided last evening to carry it through the Assembly with a voice vote.

Earlier in the day, the entire



Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah argues with an Opposition MLA at the State Assembly on Monday. Photo: AP

Opposition had staged a walkout protesting a remark attributed to National Conference MLA Mohammed Shafi Bhat who allegedly had said: "Burn the Indian Constitution". The Chief Minister was forced to intervene in the matter and take Mr Bhat to task to pacify the agitated Opposition.

Speaking in the autonomy motion's favour, Dr Abdullah said:

"It was our commitment to the people at the time of elections that we would restore their dignity and honour."

The autonomy report demands that the State be given control over all subjects of governance except foreign affairs, communications and defence. It also seeks restoration of the titles of "Sadar-e-Riyasat" for head of the State and "Wazir-e-Azam" or Prime Minister for head of the State Government.

The Chief Minister also hinted he had the backing of Prime Minister AB Vajpayee over the issue. "Vajpayee is a democrat beyond his imagination despite being an RSS man," he said, adding that the media had wrongly speculated that the Prime Minister had asked him not to go ahead with the motion.

The weeklong high voltage debate on the motion had veered around two main points. While the NC wailed over Centre's "broken promises" with some speakers going to the extent of saying that had tribal raiders not invaded Kashmir the State would not have acceded to India, the Opposition described the autonomy move a step towards secession and a crude attempt by the ruling party to deflect attention of the people from the "real" issues.

BJP Legislature Party Leader Shiv Charan Gupta opposed the motion and alleged that the ruling party had launched "an anti-India and anti-security forces" campaign while debating on the issue.

However, Congress Legislature Party leader Tara Chand saw it as "a drama being enacted by the BJP and NC to arouse communal passions for vote politics".

Related report on Page 12

Method acting in the Valley

Farooq Abdullah's demand for granting autonomy to Kashmir is nothing but a gimmick. His rule has left the people bitter and disillusioned, writes D.R. GOYAL

FAROOQ ABDULLAH'S rather unseemly haste in convening a special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly to discuss an autonomy report betrays immaturity of political thinking. Prompt declaration that the week-long discussion will not lead to any verdict further underlines that it was no more than a piece of gimmickry on the part of a Chief Minister in a tight corner.

What has he achieved? No more than a patronising comment from Home Minister L.K. Advani that the Assembly's opinion will be kept in mind when the Centre enters into discussion with Kashmir leaders. Mr Abdullah's long-standing plea that a ministerial committee be set up to discuss the autonomy report submitted by him remains in cold storage. Even the receipt of the report was not formally acknowledged by Mr Advani. Repetition of the plea with the Prime Minister has also met with cold silence.

The party with which he has the coziest relations at the Centre has condemned the move in the severest terms. It mocks the political clout that he claims to possess in New Delhi's political configuration. Indeed his support to the BJP-led coalition since 1998 calls into question his sincerity about the special status for the State. He had extended support to it at a time when the BJP had not even adopted the posture of keeping in abeyance its opposition to Article 370. To ingratiate himself with BJP bosses he had expelled his closest associate Saifuddin Soz from the National Conference.

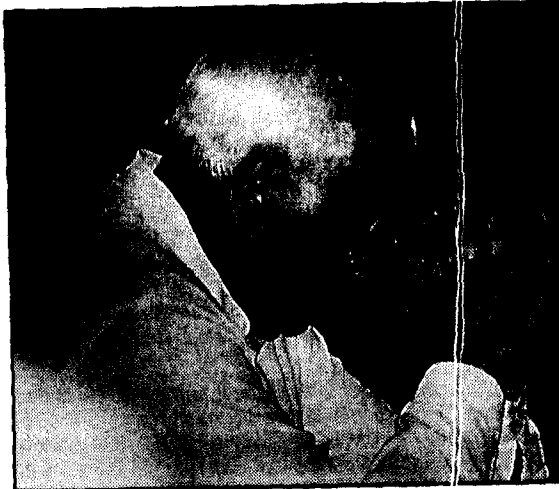
Sheikh Abdullah's plea for special status was understandable on two counts. First, he had struggled and suffered to liberate the people from a feudal tyranny. Second, he wanted to bring about radical reforms in the agricultural sector to which the Constitution of India would have been a hurdle. Laws for distribution of land would not stand the test of fundamental rights provided in the Constitution. It was thus a plea based on principles of democracy and social justice.

The Sheikh had also earned respect for his consistent opposition to the two-nation theory and effective handling of the communal situation in the dark days of Partition. He did not, however, fail to appreciate the change with time. When discussing the 1975

KASHMIR

accord, the Sheikh conceded that the wheel of time could not be put back. He had agreed that application of only those Central laws to J&K should be reversed which could be a hindrance to the process of democratic development.

Does Farooq Abdullah have the same political background and sensitivity as his father did? He has held power in the State for nearly a decade, most of the time having cordial relations with the powers that be in New Delhi. When he decided to support the Vajpayee coalition he had declared that the



interest of the State demanded good rapport with New Delhi. Even though he says now that it was a part of his 1996 manifesto, there was no plea for autonomy. At no time has he complained that any measure of relief or welfare of people was ever thwarted by the Centre (except that financial support was inadequate, and in that respect J&K is no exception).

Has Mr Abdullah delivered the goods? Did the economy flourish under his leadership? Did more employment avenues open for the youth of the State? Have the relations among the diverse religious and ethnic communities improved? Is the administration less corrupt and more efficient than before? Has the destruction of forests, the wealth of the State, shown any reduction? Was he able to curb or control militancy?

Mr Abdullah's government was dismissed and the Assembly dissolved in 1990 on the charge that it had failed to control militancy and that the Assembly was unrepresentative having been elected through large-scale rigging. People were caught in the cross-fire of Jagmohan's tyrannical rule. Did Mr Abdullah stand and suffer with the people as his father had done earlier? He preferred the safe haven of London to the Valley.

Mr Abdullah's claim to have saved the state from breaking off from the rest of India is ridiculous. The end of that particular dark period was signalled by P.V. Narasimha Rao when he launched a process of wide-ranging discussions with the State's alienated people. Mr Abdullah is less than honest when he says the Rao declaration was a response to his or his party's demand. It was a response to the gesture of several militant groups to participate in the parliamentary process.

Mr Abdullah was then even shy of elections and kept himself and his party out of the Parliament elections held in 1996. It was only after seeing that the election could be held that he decided to join the fray. The National Conference got a majority because others were too disorganised and the Hurriyat Conference had decided to boycott the elections. The abysmally low percentage of votes cast — especially in the Valley — negates Mr Abdullah's claim to be the sole voice of Kashmir.

People are skeptical of the autonomy demand pressed by him at this juncture because his four-year rule in the state left them further disillusioned and alienated. The graph of killings has again risen and there is no visible change in the social-economic situation. What is more important is that Abdullah is seen as being hand in glove with anti-minority forces.

The report on internal autonomy, circulated with the autonomy report, envisages the administrative division of the State on communal lines, something that may pave the way for partition. That plan was commended by the then Jana Sangh president and has now been revised by the Kashmir Study Group, a US think-tank. Such a division may suit only the advocates of a Hindu *rashtra*. Is Abdullah in league with those who eagerly look forward to such a scenario?

Govt 'doublespeak' on J&K resolution draws Cong flak

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 27

THE CONGRESS today rapped the Union Government for what it termed its 'doublespeak' on the J&K Assembly resolution for greater autonomy for the border State.

Talking to reporters, Congress spokesperson Ajit Jogi drew attention to the BJP opposition on the autonomy resolution and Home Minister L K Advani's statement that it (the resolution) would be considered by a committee of secretaries. "This dichotomy can only be explained by the lust for power exhibited by the PM and Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah. Both will go to any extent to remain in power," he alleged.

Stating that the party was not against giving more powers to the states, Mr Jogi said it was only opposed to the autonomy package

in its present form. Moreover, this was not the right time to raise the issue of autonomy. Instead the State Government and the Centre should give priority to curbing cross-border terrorism and restoring normalcy in the state, he added.

Expressing fears that the autonomy resolution would lead to the communal division of J&K, Mr Jogi said: "In view of large-scale terrorism, the need is to keep the people together but this resolution proposes to divide them on communal lines."

He said the right course of action for the NDA Government was to dissuade Mr Abdullah from harping on the autonomy issue at such a crucial juncture. When asked as to what kind of autonomy package would be acceptable to the party, Mr Jogi replied: "Autonomy should be based on a national consensus. Any package, which is pro-

posed should be in the interest of J&K and the rest of the country."

Meanwhile, Venerable Lama Lobzang, Ladakhi leaders and member of National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, has expressed "deep anguish" over the greater autonomy resolution adopted by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

This development will have very serious repercussions on the entire region of Ladakh which would never agree to remain part of J&K, if the Centre even partially conceded the demand of the National Conference Government for greater autonomy.

In its reaction to the autonomy move, the VHP today urged the Centre dismiss the Farooq Abdullah Ministry for getting the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly adopt a motion demanding greater autonomy for the State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUN 2000

Centre for 'playing down' autonomy issue

By Alok Mukherjee

LISBON, JUNE 27. Faced with a *fait accompli* in terms of the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, the Government seems keen on playing down the whole issue. As of now, the Government's inclination seems to be to treat the resolution as a 'proposal' for a dialogue between the Jammu and Kashmir Government and the Centre and nothing more.

"After all, every State wants more autonomy. The resolution passed by the J&K Assembly hardly has any legal sanction in terms of the Constitution of India. All that it wants is a dialogue with the Centre, and Indian democracy is strong enough to take care of such instances," a member of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's entourage to Lisbon told the accompanying media delegation.

There is clearly some disquiet in the Prime Ministerial entourage about the passage of the resolution. Much had been set by what the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Con-

ference leader, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, had told the media last week before meeting Mr. Vajpayee in New Delhi. Dr. Abdullah had avoided any substantive comment to the media by feigning that he had no clue to any resolution seeking autonomy. "What resolution?" was his response to media queries last Thursday. It was just a debate, he had made out. An impression had also been created that the Assembly would merely debate the resolution and that would be the end of it. There would be no insistence on getting the resolution passed, was the general impression in New Delhi.

The subsequent passage of the resolution on Monday came as a bit of a surprise to the Prime Minister's entourage, then still in Rome. Today, there is a feeling among some in the entourage whether Dr. Abdullah had a complete hold on his entire flock in the National Conference, though most believe that he still wields considerable influence over his party.

The expected welcome reaction in Pakistan to the resolution was also dismissed with the comment

that it was on expected lines. But it was also pointed out that the initial reaction available from the Hurriyat leadership was of "rejection" of the resolution. The view was that every section in Jammu and Kashmir was interested in creating space for itself in any dialogue with the Centre, including the National Conference and the Hurriyat.

At the official level, no comment was forthcoming from the officials travelling with the Prime Minister. No one was willing to "guess" the end-reaction of the Government and all queries were met with the standard response that if any comment was to be made, it would be made by the Prime Minister himself.

Though a large media delegation is travelling with Mr. Vajpayee on his Lisbon visit, proximity to the Prime Minister was not possible and hence no official reaction of the Government could be obtained. The idea is to keep Kashmir on the back-burner while India holds its first important summit with the European Union.

THE HINDU

28 JUN 77

Advani lobs autonomy ball to Parliament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 27. — Mr LK Advani played down the Jammu and Kashmir House's autonomy resolution today, saying the last word will be Parliament's, whose "composition is well known".

The BJP has already described the move as a "retrograde step" and some leaders have criticised Dr Farooq Abdullah for putting the resolution to vote despite having assured the Prime Minister he would not.

Most other major parties in Parliament too are expected to oppose any move to allow further autonomy to J&K.

The home minister hinted the fate of the resolution was uncertain: "Whatever has to be done has to be done by Parliament. Everyone knows the composition of Parliament and the views of those who constitute it."

What is the Centre's position? "I presume the report will be forwarded to the Centre," Mr Advani said. "Let the government take a considered view." But the Centre's opinion would have to wait till Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee returns from Europe, and the Cabinet meets.

Mr Advani was tightlipped over Dr Farooq Abdullah's reported remark that Mr Vajpayee had backed the autonomy move when the two met recently. "If anything has to be said, the

Prime Minister will say it," Mr Advani said.

But the passage of the House resolution yesterday had not embarrassed the Centre, Mr Advani insisted. The National Conference remains part of the NDA, which always supports greater devolution of powers to the states. In fact, when the state had forwarded the report on greater autonomy to the Centre last year, the Centre had said it would be considered.

Mr Advani allayed fears that the move would spark similar demands from other states. Demands for greater powers have been made by several states in the past, he said — the Inter-State Council has discussed these demands.

Not anti-India: Dr Farooq Abdullah declared the National Conference's move was not aimed at "weakening the territorial integrity of India", and that he would send ministers to New Delhi and to all state capitals to dispel any "unfounded apprehensions" that parties or governments may have on autonomy, adds SNS Jammu.

"We want to assure the nation that we don't want to go away from India. Our future ties are in India and not in Pakistan. Nobody should nurture this impression that we are anti-Indians."

■ More reports on page 8

Politics of autonomy

THE UNSEEMLY haste with which the autonomy report has been rushed through the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly is suggestive yet again of how political compulsions continue to play an unfortunate role in matters of crucial national importance. The autonomy of the kind which Farooq Abdullah can now claim is being sought by the State is not something which can be obtained through such aggressive tactics. A recommendation which, among other things, leaves only external affairs, defence and communications in the hands of the Centre and redesignates the Chief Minister as Prime Minister (as before Independence) obviously concerns a matter on which a national consensus has to be evolved. Any attempt to force the issue can only be counter-productive not least because it will result in a hardening of attitudes on all sides. 9.8.51 - HCB

From that standpoint, the impetuous Dr Abdullah may have made a mistake because it is extremely unlikely that the proposal will receive wide endorsement in the rest of the country. As a result, the very move towards autonomy may suffer a setback although no one will deny that nowhere is the need for it more urgent than in Kashmir. In fact, a patient evaluation of the situation might have yielded agreement on a status not substantially different from what is now being sought. Yet, now that the demand has been presented in such stark terms, resistance is inevitable. The outcome will be an increasingly acrimonious debate which will be of no little solace to India's detractors who will interpret the expected adverse comments as signifying New Delhi's reluctance to grant greater 'freedom' to the state.

Apart from this disservice to the very cause which he is claiming to uphold, Dr Abdullah can also be faulted for the timing of the measure. Clearly, just a year after Kargil which has seen an aggravation of the security situation in the State, this is not the best of times for such a controversial measure. What is worse, it is not difficult to discern a political motive. Since Dr Abdullah's has not been the most successful of stints in power in recent times, it is possible that his resort to the dramatic measure is a desperate attempt to boost his sagging political fortunes. The timing is also significant in the context of the Centre's recent decision to renew the dialogue with the Hurriyat, implying the existence of political forces nearly as important as the National Conference in the Valley. Whatever the move, all that the Chief Minister has really achieved is to bring the autonomy question to the forefront again with a specific set of proposals. As before, they can be discussed, but there is no question of accepting all of them, including highly contentious ones like a separate civil service and the exclusion of the Election Commission's jurisdiction.

FILE INDUC

AUTISM IN KASHMIR

The chief minister of Kashmir, Mr Farooq Abdullah, is in dire political straits. Hence his decision to gamble on a high risk confrontation with the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre. His National Conference partymen easily passed a resolution accepting the state autonomy committee report. But in doing so they have done nothing to legally buttress Kashmir's chances of autonomy. However, he has seriously embarrassed the government of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. He may also be able to force a larger debate on the issue of Kashmiri autonomy. Perhaps most importantly for the embattled chief minister, the passage of the resolution may revive his flagging credibility in the Kashmir valley. New Delhi has maintained the official equivalent of a stony silence. This may be its best policy. At a time when it is holding parleys with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the last thing the Centre would like to do is spell out an official stance on Kashmiri autonomy. Yet that is exactly what Mr Abdullah wants to provoke.

The Kashmir chief minister is walking a political tightrope. He came to power in an election characterized by record low turnouts and tainted by accounts of army coercion. His present regime in Srinagar has been widely perceived as corrupt and maladministered. The state's finances are a mess. Mr Abdullah has barely begun the task of rebuilding the state. The National Conference, by all accounts, is deeply unpopular even in its valley stronghold. The strongest evidence of Mr Abdullah's eroded credibility are signs that Kashmiri youth are once again flocking to the banner of militancy — a job that had increasingly been filled by imported mercenaries. Mr Abdullah has long complained that the Centre has cut his feet from under him. He had campaigned on the single platform of autonomy but New Delhi has refused to let anybody, let alone Parliament, discuss the matter. What has driven Mr Abdullah to pass the assembly resolution seems to be the Vajpayee regime's negotiations with Hurriyat Conference leaders. There was an implicit message in such a move. Namely, New Delhi is prepared to consider an autonomy package for Kashmir. It would be pointless to talk with the Hurriyat Conference if it was not. However, it will not waste such a package on an unpopular Kashmiri leader. Clearly, the Centre believes Mr Abdullah is such a leader.

In any political drama regarding Kashmir, the actors speak in half-truths and the plot is filled with gaps and contradictions. The present autonomy debate is no exception. New Delhi is keeping mum. It is likely to stay mealy-mouthed for fear of reducing its negotiating options when it comes to the Hurriyat Conference. Mr Abdullah is likely to continue to talk loudly about autonomy — he now plans to debate the second state autonomy committee report which is about regional autonomy for the valley, Jammu and Ladakh. He will now hope the cynical inhabitants of his state will suddenly see him in a more positive light. If they do not, Mr Abdullah will have emptied his quiver of political gimmicks. The Hurriyat Conference will continue to speak with forked tongues as well — loudly demanding *azadi* while holding talks that can only have autonomy as their ultimate goal. Amid all this are the long suffering people of Kashmir. Unfortunately, no one is more uncertain and divided about the future of the state than they.

THE DILEMMA ON KASHMIR

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah has — pardon the cliché — really set the cat amongst the pigeons. His autonomy resolution has created panic in Delhi with political parties suddenly discovering their nationalistic credentials. From the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to the CPI(M), the entire spectrum is opposed to the resolution suggesting a return to the pre-1953 status for Jammu and Kashmir. But for reasons that have less to do with the concerned state and more to do with their own limited understanding of the problem that is threatening to acquire dimensions beyond Delhi's control.

Dr Abdullah has in the past four years managed to place himself and his government outside the mainstream in Jammu and Kashmir. In that his indifference and preoccupation with matters other than governance alienated the people who, once again disillusioned with the elected government, began looking towards militancy and the extremists for a redressal of their accumulated grievances. Elected on the plank of autonomy he decided, instead, to make common cause with the government at the centre led by a party which stood for the abrogation of Article 370.

The political message to the state was clear: the state government was not interested in pursuing autonomy. In the process organisations like the All Parties Hurriyet Conference revived. In that the call for *azadi* again began sounding attractive to those living in the state. The US became active in preparing reports on what was their think tank's solution to Kashmir. These went on to suggest communal division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The international community, after the nuclear tests and Kargil, made Kashmir its busi-

ness and began exerting pressure on both India and Pakistan for a solution. In the process Kashmir became internationalised. And the US established its position as an interested facilitator, to use White House phraseology. The Indian political parties left Kashmir to its destiny, with the BJP and the Congress concentrating only on Jammu and Ladakh where they were able to find a foothold through communal politics. The BJP, in particular, spent the time in strengthening the divide between the "Muslim" Valley and "Hindu" Jammu with frequent attacks by Pakistan sponsored terrorists reinforcing its arguments.

The central government, after some US prodding, decided to grapple with the problem that it was trying, along with Dr Abdullah, to wish away. Arrested Hurriyet leaders, regarded by the BJP as terrorists till the other day, were released and it was made known that the centre was keen to hold talks with them. For weeks the media reported the BJP-led government's intention to start a dialogue for the solution of Kashmir, and faithfully recorded the Hurriyet stance that yes, while it was open for talks it wanted a permanent solution to the problem which could come only through a trilateral dialogue between Delhi, Islamabad and Srinagar.

The government spoke of the Indian Constitution. The Hurriyet rejected the "condition". The government made it clear that there was no question of a discussion, at this stage, with Pakistan. The Hurriyet was equally categorical that it was not prepared to waste its time in a futile dialogue, and would consider sitting across the table only if it felt that a solution was possible. And this could be possible only if both India and Pakistan were party to the discussions. In the process the government remained stuck on determining

the five days he was very much in tune with the rest of his people in the National Conference. There was no backing off, with starved National Conference legislators finally giving against their strong feelings against the centre, against terrorism, and against human rights violations. The debate was almost like a catharsis for many concerned, with the chief minister also using the occasion to give vent to long pent up views against the centre, political parties, Pakistan and of course, the media. There has clearly been no deal, mainly because the autonomy resolution does not work to the advantage of the BJP at the centre.

The resolution has put the central government in a bind. It cannot accept the resolution, even though it knows that the final rejection by Parliament will further alienate the people of Jammu and Kashmir. And drive them more towards those who do not have the interests of India at heart. It will also jeopardise the proposed talks with the Hurriyet, which is demanding a solution outside the framework of the Indian Constitution. If it agrees, the resolution will open the way for others, like Punjab and the Northeast, to make similar claims which the centre can ill afford at this stage. It will also completely alienate the BJP's constituency and decimate the party in its strongholds.

In effect Dr Abdullah has ensured that the talks between the centre and the Hurriyet do not really materialise. He has, through the resolution, clearly shown that the proposed dialogue can end only in disaster. For if Delhi is not prepared to concede autonomy within the parameters of the Constitution, it definitely cannot be expected to concede *azadi* outside it. Also if the government and political parties in Delhi are seriously interested in a solution for

the simple reason that the autonomy resolution has put the BJP-led government in Delhi under pressure. It has to sort out Kashmir to appease the US-led international community. But the options are running out with the demand for independence on one side, and greater autonomy on the other.

The BJP's only hope lies in Farooq Abdullah. He has still not declared political autonomy in that he has not severed ties with the NDA government at the centre despite the rather virulent attack on him by the BJP. This card, he has said, will remain close to his chest. A political chameleon he can justify a change in heart with appealing passion. But then this time he too has been caught in a vice: the resolution for state autonomy discussed, passed and duly stamped by his own government and Assembly.

Jammu and Kashmir, it is unlikely that they can now offer anything less than the pre-1953 status.

Simply because the only political party in Jammu and Kashmir which can claim some support, namely the National Conference, has now gone many steps away from Delhi. Despite being part of the NDA government where the chief minister's son is holding the commerce portfolio for the government of India, the National Conference is not prepared to accept imposed definitions of autonomy. And as the debate itself showed, the legislators from this party are no longer willing to accept just Article 370 as the "crumb" of appreciation from the centre and have spelt out their demands through the resolution. The legislators include the chief minister's brother who really took the lead in voicing sentiments that have been heard in the state Assembly after a long time. And is obviously a man to be watched.

There is no deal. For the simple reason that the autonomy resolution has put the BJP-led government in Delhi under pressure. It has to sort out Kashmir to appease the US-led international community. But the options are running out with the demand for independence on one side, and greater autonomy on the other.

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Chief minister of J&K, Farooq Abdullah, sits with other party members inside the state Assembly in Srinagar on June 26 when the Assembly voted to approve the autonomy plan. (AP)

Farooq Abdullah could not have brought in a resolution that offered anything less. He called a special session of the state Assembly and despite some pressure from the centre, went ahead to introduce and pass a resolution legitimising the report. In the midst of an environment where groups are talking of nothing short of *azadi*, the autonomy resolution concedes a lot and yet keeps the state within the Indian Union. It is an important document for Jammu and Kashmir, and will remain so, even if it is rejected by Parliament.

There are reports that the chief minister has had a deal with the centre, and recent developments are nothing but a gimmick. The facts do not seem to support this contention. Dr Abdullah might have started the Assembly session with some compromise in mind, but by the end of

BARC allays fears over radiation belt in coastal Kerala

Mr. A. P. Jayaraman, Head Media Relation, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai, writes: This has reference to your editorial *The Hindu*, June 21. In this connection we would like to inform you as follows:

It has been known for a long time that the background radiation levels in the monazite sand belt in coastal Kerala (including Karunagappally Taluk) are higher than those found elsewhere and hence this region has been categorised as Natural High Background Radiation Area (HBRA).

Other such areas are the monazite sand deposits along the Atlantic Coast in Brazil, hot springs of Ramsar and Mahallat in Iran, high grade ore and mining areas in Saxony and the neighbouring state of Thuringen in Germany, hot springs and geological deposits of radioactive minerals in China, Japan, Austria, USA and Canada.

The radiation levels in Kerala are more or less similar to those found in HBRA of Brazil and China. There are also some areas in the world where the radiation levels are much higher than those observed in Kerala.

The population living in the HBRA of Kerala is one of the largest found in HBRA. These people have been living there for hundreds of years.

Since last 30 years or so the Department of Atomic Energy has been assessing the radiation levels and conducting studies on the biological and health effects of high background radiation on this population through its own laboratories in Quilon (Kollam) and Mumbai as well as the Regional Cancer Centre in Thiruvananthapuram.

These studies include assessment of chromosomal aberrations, Down's Syndrome, congenital malformations detectable at birth and incidence of cancer. Earlier, in association with British Geneticists, studies were carried out on the chromosomal aberrations in rats and mice from these areas with the support of WHO.

The study cited in your editorial referred to above, is a part of these ongoing epidemiological programmes.

While the total radiation does is attributed to external, ingestion and inhalation doses, the study referred to is aimed at characterising

The study showed phenomenological characteristics of these gases in relation to air exchange rates in houses of different constructional types, thereby relating the inhalation dose with the types of houses. However, as far as the total radiation dose is concerned, the variability with respect to residential type is rather small.

As a result, the type of residence is not an important parameter in determining the total radiation exposure to individual persons.

In a recently published study, carried out with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the State Government of Kerala, on nearly 37,000 newborn children from this area, 98 different types of malformations have been screened for the frequency of such malformations in the live born children did not show any significant variation with the dose of external radiation. over 26,000 newborns from HBRA did not show any significantly different frequency of malformation compared with the 11,000 newborns from normal background radiation area.

The number of newborns covered till date has crossed 50,000. The frequency of malformations (1.46%) in the total newborns examined from this area was also found to be comparable with similar analysis done on nearly 72,000 newborns in Chennai (1.6%) and 95,000 newborns from New Delhi, Baroda and Mumbai (1.6% to 1.86%).

The cytogenetic studies on the newborn have been in progress since 1986. Comparison of 8493 newborns from HBRA with 1737 newborns from Normal Level Natural Radiation areas did not show any significant difference in the frequency of chromosome aberrations.

The overall frequency of constitutional chromosome anomalies was 4.95 per 1000 newborns which is comparable with the incidence reported by the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR) in its 1993 report.

In the above mentioned study from Kerala there were no significant differences in the frequencies of Down's Syndrome cases between the newborns from high and normal level radiation areas.

The Chinese studies in HBRA based on 32 disorders have not shown any increase in the

various chromosomal aberrations. An increase in the frequency of dicentric is observed as a function of age ranging from two among the newborns to 8-10 among adults to 18-20 dicentrics per 10,000 cells in the elderly.

Similar age dependent increase has been reported in the Chinese population. Our studies show no association between the incidence of chromosomal aberrations and radiation levels which range from 1-35 milli Gray/y.

The studies on rodents (rats and mice) from this area conducted by Prof. Gruneberg also did not show any genetic effects attributable to radiation exposure.

A comprehensive house-to-house survey of the population of nearly four lakhs including one lakh living in high natural radiation area of Karunagapally taluk of Kerala for assessment of radiation level, life style, socio-demographic features, occupation, housing, residence history and tobacco and alcohol used and cancer incidence rates has been conducted by the Regional Cancer Centre, Trivandrum in association with BARC.

The preliminary analysis of these data show no evidence of consistently higher occurrence of cancer due to the levels of external gamma radiation.

Epidemiological studies carried out the world over in several radiation exposed cohorts have emphasized the uncertainties in the assessment of risk of cancer at exposures below 20 milli Sievert (single exposure).

The risk is even lower when chronic exposure is involved. It is, therefore, prudent to emphasise that though the health and well being of the people living in HBRA in India is of utmost concern and scientifically important a long-term study of various aspects is required to draw definitive conclusions to put all apprehensions to rest.

The Department of Atomic Energy has always supported such a scientific assessment. In the Low-Level Radiation Research Laboratory in Kollam and the Bio-Medical and Health and Safety Groups at Trombay detailed investigations such as dose estimations, health audit, studies on genetic effects includ-

THE HINDU

JUN 20 1986



THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2000

START OF THE DEBATE

29/6
 THE ADOPTION OF the controversial State Autonomy Report by the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature, whatever the motivation of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, in embarking upon the "gimmick" as his detractors would call it, has undoubtedly served to set the stage for a national debate on an acknowledgedly critical aspect of the Kashmir problem. Given the ruling National Conference's two-thirds majority in the House, the denouement should come as no surprise, although the Chief Minister had earlier claimed that the Government had no intention of getting a formal resolution passed by the Assembly. Driven as he was by political compulsions to "demonstrate" his credentials as the champion of autonomy and to redeem his party's poll commitment, Dr. Abdullah cannot possibly be expected to deny himself the opportunity of capitalising on the SAC report to the maximum by stopping with a mere debate in the House. The tragic part of it all, however, was that the six-day debate ended as it started, with the ruling establishment and the Opposition bending all their energies to scoring political points rather than addressing the core autonomy-related issues and taking an informed position on the various proposals made by the SAC. What little substantive discussion was there threw up a sharp dichotomous divide, so to say, with one side swearing by the panel report and the other rejecting it outright.

In practical terms, the fact that the SAC report has been approved by the State Legislature does not amount to much; it is not as if the last word has been said on the autonomy package or the recommendations made by the panel have become sacrosanct. Far from it. If the idea of restricting the Union's domain to Defence, External Affairs and Communications sounds too romantic, the proposal to bar the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Election Commission, as it obtained before 1953, seems out of sync with the

ground realities. And, debatable are the panel's recommendation on 'fundamental rights' and provisions relating to the declaration of a state of emergency. For his part, Dr. Farooq Abdullah has made it known that the National Conference was not dogmatic about its stand on the SAC report and was open to a discussion. Given the history of regional and subregional rivalries/identities, any autonomy package for the State that does not envisage a viable decentralised regime at the inter-regional and intra-regional levels is unlikely to get popular support, much less deliver. In this context, the fact that the people of Jammu and Ladakh regions have not been taken into confidence and their apprehensions of a possible accentuation of neglect have not allayed by the Government before pushing for the adoption of the SAC report is a striking lapse.

Now that the 'autonomy' demand has got the State Legislature's sanction, the Centre can no longer skirt the issue. It is for the NDA regime to respond in a manner consistent with the national imperative of reversing the alienation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. After all, two Prime Ministers in the recent past have committed themselves to "maximum autonomy" within the Constitutional framework, which in itself is a recognition that the special status for the State under the Instrument of Accession has suffered progressive erosion and needs to be restored. Any credible autonomy package has to draw substantially upon the special provisions under Article 370, the one which the BJP wants to be scrapped. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's response — that Parliament would be brought into the picture — is unexceptionable. While the agenda of the ruling coalition makes no reference to abrogation of Article 370, it will be interesting to see how far the Government is prepared to go in honouring the spirit of that Article, which symbolises the nation's commitment to the State made at the time of its accession.

Parliament will reject autonomy resolution: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JUNE 28. Making clear its strong opposition to a pre-1953 type status for Jammu and Kashmir, the BJP today expressed confidence that Parliament would reject the autonomy resolution passed by the State Assembly.

"Never, never, never will we accept this if it means a return to the pre-1953 situation," the BJP general secretary, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, told reporters here.

He ruled out any autonomy that would limit the Centre's role to External Affairs, Defence and Communications. "Much water has flowed since 1953," he added.

Noting that other parties had also voiced their opposition to the autonomy proposals, Mr. Naidu said Parliament would reject the resolution. However, the BJP was not against devolution of more powers to the States. The NDA Government, by sticking to the National Agenda for Governance, was not for scrapping of Article 370 which gave a special status to Jammu and Kashmir. "Jammu and Kashmir has a special status because it has a special problem," he said.

At the same time, Mr. Naidu equated Jammu and Kashmir with other States of the country saying there was no reason why it could not move forward in the path of development with the existing Constitutional provisions when other States had done so. In this context, he also pointed out that Central assistance to Jammu and Kashmir was 14 times more than that given to Bihar and 11 times more than that given to Tamil Nadu.

Explaining why the BJP was against restoration of the pre-1953 status, he said in such a scenario, many of the Constitutional provisions would not apply to Jammu and Kashmir. The Supreme Court, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Election Commission of India would have no jurisdiction over the State, he pointed out.

Mr. Naidu did not see any need for a coordination committee meeting of the NDA on the issue. He said there was no incongruity in the National Conference (which is ruling Jammu and Kashmir) continuing to be a part of the NDA Government despite the BJP's opposition to the autonomy proposals.

Admitting that the BJP had not consulted the other NDA partners on the issue, he said this was because the stand of all parties on the issue was known.

The BJP was not against autonomy *per se*, but the scope of the autonomy needed to be defined, he said. "We must first know the anatomy of autonomy."

On the reported mediation efforts of the Puri Sanakaracharya, he said the Centre too was willing to talk to the Hurriyat leaders.

Asked about the contradictions in the NDA on the Sri Lanka issue, Mr. Naidu said all the partners of the NDA toed the Government of India line on Sri Lanka. But the individual constituents were free to have their own view on the Eelam issue. "Nobody will create problems for the NDA," he added.

On the Erode conference being organised by the MDMK, he said the resolutions to be passed at the conference would be in line with the thinking of the rest of the country.

Dismiss J&K Govt, says Thackeray

By Our Special Correspondent

MUMBAI, JUNE 28. The Shiv Sena Chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray, has appealed to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, to dismiss the Jammu and Kashmir Government headed by Dr. Farooq Abdullah "and save India."

In a strongly-worded statement carried today by his party newspaper, Saamna, Mr. Thackeray said that by passing the autonomy resolution, Dr. Abdullah had taken a step towards separation. "Why more autonomy when Jammu and Kashmir is an undivided part of India," he asked.

"The state is already enjoying more autonomy (compared to other states) and now more autonomy would strike at the root the country," Mr. Thackeray said asking, "does Dr. Abdullah think that India is a sacrificial goat?"

The Union Government should counter the move which he described as 'extremism of autonomy' with a declaration that Kashmir would be under the control of the Indian Constitution.

"If you do not act in time, history will not pardon you," Mr. Thackeray told the NDA Government of which the Shiv Sena is a partner.

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'Autonomy is not separation'

By Shujaat Bukhari

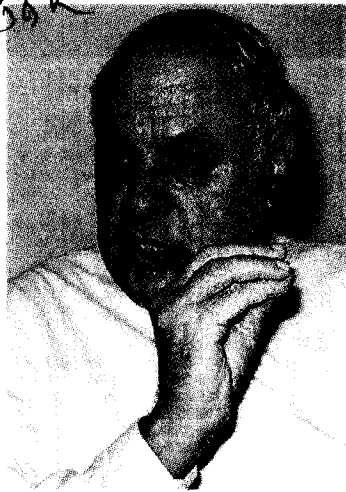
SRINAGAR, JUNE 29. There are indications that the Central Government will soon begin a dialogue with the separatists in Kashmir, particularly the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, as the decks for the talks seem to have been cleared, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said today.

In an interview to *The Hindu* here, Dr. Abdullah said, "I think the Centre is eager to talk to these groups. I think that after the Prime Minister returns from Europe, the Union Cabinet will decide about the dates and the venue for the meeting."

On his involvement in the proposed dialogue, he said, "this is strictly between the Centre and the groups" adding "let them first talk. It is only after they come to some conclusion will I be taken into confidence."

Rejecting a proposal of the United States-based Kashmir Study Group for division of the State on communal lines, Dr. Abdullah said it did not enjoy the blessings of the American Government, otherwise "the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, would have taken it up with the Prime Minister during his recent visit here."

"Mr. Farooq Kathwari, architect of the plan, met me in Jammu early this year and put forward the proposal. I did not agree then, and I don't agree now. It suggests that the Chenab river be the di-



Dr. Farooq Abdullah

viding line to bifurcate Kashmir and Jammu with an option for the people in Rajouri, Doda and Poonch to go either with Kashmir or Jammu, which will remain in India. Similarly, Leh would be part of India and Kargil would have the option of going with Kashmir or Skardu. There are many such plans being mooted by some Kashmiris, U.S. Senators and Congressmen. These are not acceptable to us," Dr. Abdullah said.

On the autonomy resolution passed by the State Assembly last week, he said, "it does not mean separation from India but is a way the people of the State can live with dignity and honour."

Rejecting the plan to have a committee headed by the Cabinet

Secretary to discuss the issue, Dr. Abdullah insisted on a ministerial committee saying, "it is a political issue and has to be discussed at the political level."

Blaming the Bharatiya Janata Party for misleading the nation on the issue, he wondered, "how can you expect support from the BJP which has been demanding even abrogation of Article 370 (which confers a special status on J&K). But it is not the view of the ruling National Democratic Alliance. I think the NDA partners will see reason and back us."

Asked how he would react if the demand was not accepted, he said, "you will see at that time. We proved those wrong who said we would not be able to pass the resolution."

The Chief Minister pointed out that protests in some pockets of Jammu and Leh did not mean everyone there was against autonomy. "Jammu division does not mean Jammu alone but comprises Udhampur, Doda, Rajouri, Poonch and Kathua. The same is the case with Ladakh, which does not consist of Leh alone. I cannot say everybody in Kashmir is with autonomy as there are some who want *azadi* (freedom). But I am sure the majority will support us," he said.

Expressing the hope that autonomy would lead to peace, he said, "it is not the only path. There is also the path of a dialogue between India and Pakistan. All these are steps in the right direction."

Let 1975 accord be the basis for solution: Gujral

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, JUNE 29. Emphatically pleading that the current debate on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's resolution on autonomy be treated as an internal affair of the country, the former Prime



Minister, Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, has suggested that the 1975 accord be made the basis of efforts for a solution. "We

are dealing with our people. There should not even be the slightest shade of suspicion about them," he said in a conversation. To drive home the point, he added: "Patriots do not live in New Delhi alone."

Equally strongly he disapproved of the idea of trifurcation of the State on communal lines (as had been suggested by the RSS). This myopic ideacut at the very root of the country's unity and implied a recognition of the two-nation theory. The unity in diversity of Jammu and Kashmir was a microcosm of the religious, ethnic and cultural composition of the country as a whole and nothing should be done to disturb it, he said.

Settle issue soon: Page 13

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Autonomy issue top on RSS agenda

Rathin Das

Gandhinagar, June 29

THE AUTONOMY resolution passed by the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly recently would be on the top of the agenda at the annual meet of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) beginning here on Saturday.

Though the original agenda of the RSS annual meet included discussions on the contentious issues like the conversions and the internal security scenario, the latest development in Jammu & Kashmir has been made a top priority at the meet.

It is not clearly known as yet whether the parent body of the Sangh Parivar would go to the extent of asking its political wing to drop the National Conference from the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and demand the dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah ministry in Jammu & Kashmir. The RSS meeting, as usual, would be a closed-door affair, but it has been learnt from reliable sources that the Vajpayee-

Leh, Jammu strike

JAMMU AND Leh observed a general strike on Thursday to protest the recently passed autonomy resolution in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

The Jammu Bar Association had given the *bandh* call. The association itself has been observing a four-day strike since Wednesday. The strike has crippled the work in courts in Jammu. Commercial activity came to a standstill in the walled city where shops and other commercial establishments remained closed. However, there was no report of any violent incident from anywhere. Other areas of the city responded partially to the *bandh*.

HTC, Srinagar

led NDA Government's economic policies might come in for heavy criticism.

It may be mentioned here that the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, another constituent of the

Sangh Parivar, has never missed an opportunity to condemn the policies of globalisation and liberalisation of the BJP-led Union Government.

The two-day meeting of the All India Executive Committee of the RSS, to be held at village Koba near here, is expected to be attended by around 230 'Prant Pracharaks' and 'Kshetriya Pracharaks' from all over the country.

Many top leaders of the RSS, including its chief K.S. Sudarshan, have already arrived here and have been holding informal discussions in small groups. Former RSS chief Rajju Bhaiya and veteran Nanaji Deshmukh would be among the notable absentees for health reasons.

This RSS annual meet was preceded by 45 training camps all over the country attended by an estimated 17,000 activists. The All India Executive Committee would also review the outcome of these training camps and chalk out the future strategy of the RSS and also the tour programmes of the leadership.