

10-10
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TUESDAY, MAY 29, 2001

THE MYSTIQUE OF A SUMMIT

MANAGING DELICATE EXPECTATIONS quite well, India and Pakistan have so far succeeded in enhancing the political lustre of an anticipated summit between their leaders. By all accounts, official Pakistan is pleased with the friendly tone of India's initiative for the summit. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, may have, on purpose, eschewed the diplomatic basics of indicating or identifying an agenda while formally inviting Pakistan's Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for bilateral parleys. The caution seems designed to diminish the scope for pre-summit squabbles over the semantics and substance of any divisive issue. By extending an effusively warm invitation, laced with the poetic language of coexistence, he has implicitly drawn attention to the utter fragility of ties between the peoples of the two countries. However, the parlous state of the bilateral relationship calls for a definitive dialogue with a well prepared agenda. Yet, if Islamabad has at this stage welcomed the soothing words of goodwill from Mr. Vajpayee the reason can perhaps be traced to a matching sense of caution in Pakistan. As New Delhi awaits the fine print of Gen. Musharraf's formal acceptance of the summit offer, the diplomatic spotlight rests for the present on the mood itself, given especially an assurance by Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, that Mr. Vajpayee's invitation will be suitably reciprocated.

In the absence of any effort by the Vajpayee administration to outline the reasons why it suddenly decided to try and engage Gen. Musharraf himself in talks, the pre-summit mood can easily be vitiated if due care is not exercised by either side. What requires to be followed through diligently is Mr. Vajpayee's attempt to stir an evocative idealism about the need for India and Pakistan to traverse the high road to peace in joint adventure. Islamabad is reported to have noted with satisfaction that New Delhi's message does not bristle with any references that

could cause pain to or irritate Pakistan. While this itself is a positive response in view of the historically hostile bilateral ambience, sighs of relief will not suffice for a salutary summit. So, Pakistan can be expected to initiate the process of delineating an agenda for the anticipated meeting through suitable consultations. Yet, it is a reassuring sign that the Pakistan Foreign Minister has spoken of the futility of getting bogged down over sketching out a dialogue architecture in minute detail. The immediate task is to harmonise New Delhi's preference for a composite dialogue with Islamabad's compulsions to keep the Kashmir dispute in prime focus.

Mr. Sattar's reported comments cover the entire gamut of issues at stake. According to him, Pakistan is willing to abide by all agreements and resolutions which it had accepted with reference to India either in a bilateral context or within the framework of the United Nations. This translates into a commitment to honour not only the Shimla Accord and the Lahore Declaration but also the U.N. resolutions of a bygone era. While this should not surprise India, Mr. Sattar has made a dialogue-facilitatory remark about the relative irrelevance of the external influences, if any, behind New Delhi's current mood and methods. By seeking to dissuade Pakistanis from conjuring up any Camp-David style process as a possible spin-off effect of the present realities, he appears to commend a compass of pragmatism. For now, Islamabad has also kept the tricky question of a tripartite dialogue, involving not only India and Pakistan but also the 'Kashmiris', in a state of masterly ambivalence. While Gen. Musharraf will need to carry conviction in respect of motley groups thriving on religious extremism besides the Pakistan-based Kashmiri separatists, the Vajpayee administration too cannot ignore the sense and sensibilities of India's political parties on the nuances of the planned dialogue with Islamabad.

THE HINDU

Kashmir not negotiable at talks: Jaswant

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 28

INDIA TODAY brushed aside Pakistan's description of Kashmir as the "core issue" and sent a firm signal to Islamabad that India's sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir was not negotiable at the coming Vajpayee-Musharraf summit.

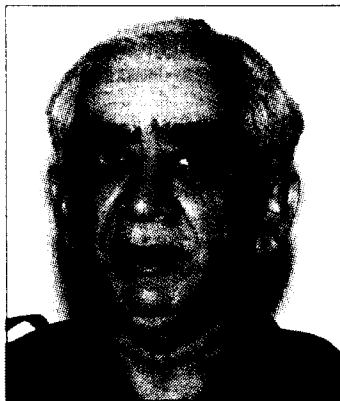
Breaking his silence after five days of constant Pakistani posturing over issues it would like on the table, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said New Delhi was opposed to "denominational nationalism" which lay at the heart of Pakistan's claim over Kashmir.

"What they call the core issue is at the core of our nationalism", Singh told a crowded press meet, his first since the May 23 announcement of the Government decision to end the J&K ceasefire and invite Gen Musharraf for talks.

He was careful nevertheless not to queer the pitch for the summit by countering the Pakistanis point for point. "Our position is not absolutist, and we are not in the game of defining bottom lines. The Prime Minister, in his invitation to Musharraf has already said we have to pick up the threads from Lahore and Shimla," he said.

"India is quite clear on what kind of long-term relationship it wants with Pakistan. Now it is up to Pakistan to spell out what would constitute its idea of a long-term relationship with India". He stressed that the "blue print" for the dialogue had been set by the Prime Minister when he said in his letter, "Let us take the high road to peace".

"In the Composite Dialogue Process initiated in 1998 we had put Kashmir and Confidence



Building Measures as two of the eight points on the agenda. This means we are ready for a dialogue over Kashmir", the External Affairs Minister said.

Singh however ruled out the question of a plebiscite in Kashmir, which the Pakistani High Commissioner raked up as an issue predominant from Islamabad's point of view.

The Minister also described the question of including the Hurriyat in the talks as a "non-issue". "The invitation is to General Musharraf for a summit", he clarified. Singh defended the Government's decision to call off the Non-Initiation of Combat Operations (NICO) or "cease fire".

There was a contradiction in that, reporters pointed out. The minister said while on the one hand NICO had not served its purpose as there was no let-up in terrorist activity, on the other the government was satisfied over cessation of cross border firing along the Line of Control (LoC). Deftly avoiding a debate on that, the minister took refuge under the government's privilege to draw its own conclusions.

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Jaswant to showcase summit case

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, May 26: The Prime Minister has assigned foreign minister Jaswant Singh the task of explaining to the domestic and overseas audiences the rationale behind the turnaround on holding talks with Pervez Musharraf.

Singh will also outline the policy India wants to pursue in Kashmir, which will top the summit agenda.

Singh is scheduled to address Indian as well as foreign media based in Delhi on Monday to clarify the government's stand vis-à-vis Pakistan and explain why the ceasefire in Kashmir had to be called off after six months.

On Wednesday, it was Singh who was made to announce the government's decision to invite Musharraf and answer a few questions at an impromptu press conference.

But South Block feels that the government's stand has not been fully "clarified and understood" by the people and different interpretations are being offered by commentators.

The government had been maintaining over the past two years that it would not return to the negotiating table and revive the political dialogue with Pakistan unless it gave up active support to Kashmiri militants based on its soil.

One of the main tasks of Singh would be to explain whether any categorical assurance had been given by the Pakistani military regime that it would no longer support the militants and whether the ground situation in Kashmir had changed, which warranted India's invitation to Musharraf.

While South Block has been citing "relative peace" along the Line of Control as the main reason, officials in the ministry pointed out that the delay also had to do with getting a proper assessment whether Musharraf was in control in Pakistan.

Diplomatic circles are also discussing the possibility of a

meeting between Indian foreign secretary Chokila Iyer and her Pakistani counterpart Inamul Haq on the sidelines of a Saarc conference in Colombo next month.

The meeting is scheduled to take place between June 7 and 8, but the focus now would be on the interaction between the two foreign secretaries.

Indian officials said it was not unusual for foreign secretaries of two countries to interact with each other during regional and multilateral meetings.

But they pointed out that no formal request has so far been made by Pakistan for such a meeting.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 MAY 2001

28 MAY 2001

Islamabad hails Atal's gesture as 'courageous' Pak smiles, RSS scowls at Vajpayee

FROM RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN AND AGENCIES

New Delhi, May 26: On a day Pakistan hailed Atal Bihari Vajpayee's invitation to Pervez Musharraf as a "courageous decision", hints were dropped on this side of the border that the Indian initiative has not gone down well with the RSS.

"I think it's a courageous decision," the spokesman for Pakistan's military government, Major General Rashid Qureshi, told Reuters Television.

Qureshi, who was in command on the Kashmir front, added: "I think it's a right decision by the Indian government and by the Prime Minister, Mr Vajpayee, and one sincerely hopes that both countries can sincerely work toward the resolution of this crisis." He said both sides needed to show flexibility to solve the Kashmir dispute.

A PTI report quoted an anonymous official as saying that Pakistan was satisfied with Vajpayee's letter which had "no painful references or irritants".

The RSS, too, was euphoric initially but for a different reason — the termination of the Kashmir ceasefire. But disenchantment set in soon as the Sangh felt that the "advantage" the BJP could have gained by calling off the ceasefire has been "cancelled" by the invitation to Musharraf.

There is also a perception among a section of the Sangh that the government was "arm-twist-

ed" by the US to initiate a dialogue with Pakistan without enforcing conditions.

"It was common knowledge that the ceasefire was not yielding the desired results and the killings were only making our voters resentful. We could have gone back to them, saying 'look we have called off the whole thing'. But the move has been overshadowed by the invitation to Musharraf," an RSS source said.

He also wondered whether it was a "mere coincidence" that the invitation was extended within weeks of US deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage's visit to India. "We went to town talking about Pakistan's treachery in the wake of the bus trip to Lahore and the Kargil intrusions. Now, how are we going to rationalise the decision to start talks and that, too, without conditions?" a leader asked.

Sources said the decision to withdraw the ceasefire was neither entirely home minister L.K. Advani's nor the Sangh's. "The decision was based on the feedback given by officials at all levels," a source said.

But asked if the invitation to Musharraf would reopen the "leadership" debate, Sangh insiders replied in the negative.

"There is no second thoughts on who would lead the government. It is only Atalji and no one else. If he himself expresses a wish to relinquish the post for Advani, it is another matter," a Sangh leader said.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 MAY 2001

Sikhs turn to PM for Pak gurdwara access

Jagmohan Singh
Dera Baba Nanak, May 27

CLOSE ON the heels of the Sikh devotees performing an *ardas* (prayer) at the no-man's-land on the Indo-Pak border, seeking free access to Gurdwara Kartarpur in Pakistan, a committee has been formed under the presidency of Kuldip Singh Wadala to deliberate the issue with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

According to sources, Wadala is shortly leaving for Delhi to hold talks with Vajpayee in the wake of the possibility of Pakistan Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf visiting India for bilateral talks, on the invitation of the Indian Government. Wadala is scheduled to meet the Pakistani High Commissioner for arranging his appointment with General Musharraf on his visit here.

The residents of Dera Baba Nanak, meanwhile, are positive that their demand for a free access to Gurdwara Kartarpur in Pakistan will come through.

Talking to *Hindustan Times*, Wadala said: "In 1997, the then Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral had written to his counterpart, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, for providing unrestricted corridor to the historic religious places in Pakistan for Sikhs living in India. Nawaz Sharif did not respond to the proposal."

Later on, when the Sharif Government was toppled and General Pervez Musharraf took over, the proposal came up for reconsideration on the request of some Indian Sikhs in UK. On November 22, 2000, the Pakistan Government announced its readiness to provide a "safe and unrestricted corridor" in a

response to Gujral's letter.

Wadala said if New Delhi cleared the proposal of the Pakistan Government, no visas would be required to visit Gurdwara Kartarpur in Pakistan, even by the foreigners.

On being contacted, Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee secretary Gurbachan Singh Bachan said the SGPC had not received any written intimation from any of the Governments.

However, in the event of both the countries agreeing, the SGPC would welcome such a decision, he said.

"Wakf Board chairman Lieutenant-General Javed Nasik (ret'd) made an announcement, in my presence, when a jatha recently visited Pakistan on Baisakhi, that they would provide a free passage to Sikh devotees," he added.

Bachan said Sikhs also have a desire for unrestricted access to Panja Sahib and Nankana Sahib at Lahore.

It is also reliably learnt that the Pakistan Government is ready to bear all the expenses relating to the construction of a bridge over River Ravi to join Kartarpur and Dera Baba Nanak, which had been destroyed during the 1965 Indo-Pak war.

Meanwhile, *Hindustan Times* found most of the inhabitants of the town keenly awaiting the response of the Indian Government in this regard, as they feel a visit to the Dera Baba Nanak gurdwara is never complete without paying obeisance at the Kartarpur Gurdwara. In view of the restriction, the devotees would just have a glimpse of the Kartarpur Gurdwara from the uppermost storey of the Dera Baba Nanak gurdwara.



Kashmiri Sikh youths shout slogans during a demonstration against police harassment in Srinagar on Sunday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 2001

India shrugs off plebiscite call

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 27

INDIA IS not overly concerned with the Pakistan's stance on the coming Vajpayee-Musharraf summit.

The Pakistani high commissioner in India, Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, yesterday iterated the Pakistani demand for plebiscite.

Many see this as another bid by the Musharraf Government to placate jihadi groups. A senior MEA official saw an "element of gamesmanship" in the statement. But Qazi had initially said that Pakistan is ready for talks without preconditions.

The run-up to the summit, expected to take place in July, may see many more such statements reflective of Pakistan's maximalist position.

The Musharraf Government has made it clear that it will consult the hardline religious and

FIRST INDO-PAK SOCIAL SCIENTISTS' MEET

INDIAN AND Pakistani social scientists will be meeting for the first time in a bilateral conference in New Delhi on the sidelines of the Vajpayee-Musharraf summit. Chairman of the Indian Council of Social Science Research, Prof M L Sondhi said here while Prime Minister A B Vajpayee had endorsed the proposed India-Pakistan Social Science Forum, Pakistani Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar had expressed his Government's support for building social science links between the two neighbouring countries. Sattar said this was a challenge for Indian and Pakistani social scientists.

Detailed report on Page 9

jihadi groups on the stance it is to adopt at the summit and in the Composite Dialogue Process which may resume after the Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting.

India has "budgeted" for demands of the kind voiced by the Pakistani high commissioner while planning the summit.

General Musharraf had been shouting atop from every available rooftop over the past year his readiness for talks "anytime, anywhere", but the final mile to a summit would be strewn with

broken glass left by the jihadi groups. "They were expected to make huge demands and they have lived up to their reputation," an official said.

As for the demand for including the Hurriyat in the negotiations, it is clear from Qazi's admission that Pakistan is not going to be obsessed with the shape of the table right now. To get the summit done with is the present concern of both sides, but neither can be expected to do away with their traditional stances.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 MAY 2001

Pak objects to ban on Hurriyat leaders meeting Musharraf

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday said India's refusal to allow Hurriyat Conference leaders to meet its chief executive, Gen Pervez Musharraf, during his visit to New Delhi would have a "negative impact" on the efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue.



Foreign minister Abdul Sattar was quoted as saying that Gen Musharraf had planned to meet members of the Hurriyat Conference executive council and the denial of permission for the meeting would have a negative impact on the efforts to resolve the issue. He said Pakistani authorities had so far met Hurriyat leaders individually but had never had an opportunity to meet them as a delegation. Mr Sattar made it clear that Kashmir was likely to figure prominently during the proposed summit meeting between Gen Musharraf and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Maintaining that the dates of the Pakistani leader's visit were still to be finalised, he said there would, however, be no unnecessary delay in Pakistan's response to Mr Vajpayee's invitation. Speaking about the Kashmir issue, he denied that Pakistan was planning to settle it ignoring the demands of Kashmiris and their leadership.

According to the foreign minister, India had invited Gen Musharraf due to pressure from the world community. He said the fact that India had "unconditionally accepted" Pakistan's offer for talks on the issue was a success for the military government. "We have reinvigorated the Kashmir issue and made India accept Pakistan's stand for a dialogue on the

vital issue. That India has unconditionally accepted our offer for talks is a success for us as India had, in the past, set terms for holding discussions," he stated.

Claiming that Kashmir "was not an integral part of India" and "there was no territorial dispute" between the neighbours, Mr Sattar said it was an issue of the right of self-determination of Kashmir. He said while India wanted to talk on "selective matters", Pakistan had made it clear that it was against selectivity. Mr Sattar also maintained that the forthcoming talks would not include any confidence-building measures.

Confirming the visit at New Delhi, Pakistan's high commissioner to India Ashraf Jehangir Qazi said Gen Musharraf was making the trip despite opposition to Indo-Pak talks from hardline militant groups, like the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Hizbul Mujahideen. "May be, some groups have expressed skepticism with regard to the outcome of the talks. But we have already made it clear that our response will be positive," Mr Qazi said.

"The fact is that we adhere and subscribe to all agreements between India and Pakistan in our history, and that includes Lahore and Simla.. but we will even say that includes the UN resolutions that both India and Pakistan signed.. but then, India went back on them," he said.

Speaking on the Kashmir issue, he made it clear that in the event of a plebiscite, the outcome would certainly not be to stay with India. "The UN resolutions only offer India and Pakistan as the two options. If there is a third one, the charter has to be amended. But what is important is that the wishes of the people will have to be respected." (PTI)

Pant visiting J&K today

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: K.C. Pant, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission and the Centre's chief interlocutor on Kashmir, will begin a six-day visit to the state on Monday to ascertain the views of a cross-section of people on the problems faced by the state. Mr Pant will visit various parts of the trouble-torn state during his stay.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 MAR 2001



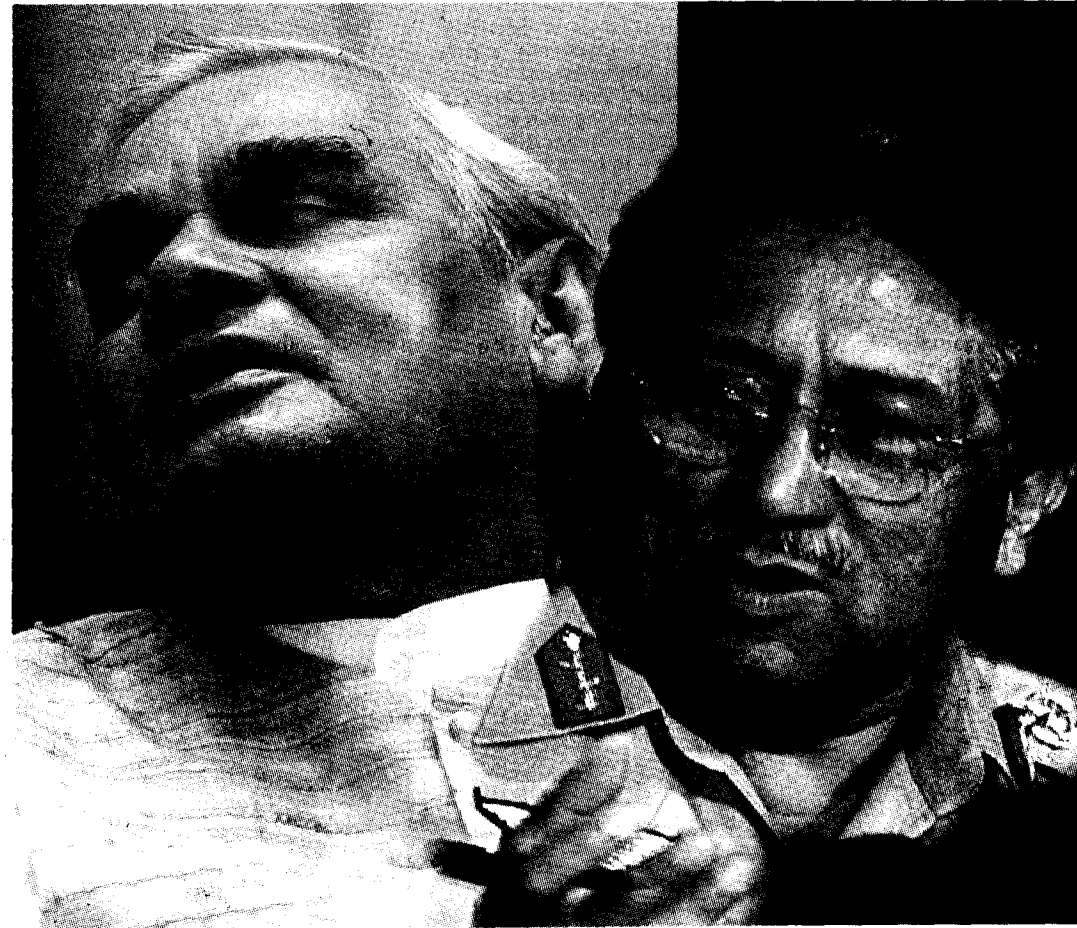
GUEST COLUMN | G Parthasarathy

Caution, mines ahead

The invitation to Pakistan should not raise undue expectations

RIGHTLY OR wrongly, the Vajpayee Government has invited Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf to visit India. Given the compulsions and imperatives of both sides, it is likely that this visit will take place around the middle of July. Having been perhaps the only Indian to be a member of the Indian delegation both during the visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Pakistan in 1989 and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Lahore Bus Yatra in 1999, I have learnt one cardinal principle that needs to be observed in such visits. This is that we should guard against raising undue expectations about such visits leading to a state of Nirvana in our relations with Pakistan. There was a tendency in 1989 amongst those who are incorrigibly naive about Pakistan's internal politics, to suggest that as both Rajiv and Benazir belonged to a post-partition generation, they would somehow produce a magic wand to mend fences. (Rajiv was too realistic to share this euphoria.) Within a few months of this visit, a near hysterical Benazir was screaming abuses against India as insurgency in Kashmir picked up momentum. Likewise, within two months of Vajpayee's Lahore Bus Yatra, General Musharraf's men were violating the sanctity of the Line of Control and scaling the peaks of Kargil.

What sort of person is General Musharraf, and what are his imperatives as he prepares to visit New Delhi? Like most members of the Pakistan military establishment, Musharraf has strong views and prejudices about India. One cannot forget that he chose to absent himself



Talks with General Musharraf involves dealing with his problems and compulsions

from the welcoming ceremony for Vajpayee at Wagah. It is no secret in Islamabad that he did so because he did not want to be seen saluting the Prime Minister of what he regarded an "enemy country". In April 1998, shortly after the Vajpayee visit, Musharraf had proclaimed that the Lahore Declaration signed by Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif was a lot of "hot air". He went on to state that India is a "hegemonic" power, and low-intensity conflict with India would continue even if the Kashmir issue were resolved.

Musharraf is also the first Pakistan ruler to proclaim that it is

the duty of all Muslims to support the *jihad* in Kashmir. In all this, he was reflecting the view of the person who is acknowledged to be his ideological guru — former ISI chief Lt Gen Hamid Gul. Musharraf's Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, too is a close associate of General Gul. Sattar has been a member of the "Tehriq-e-Insaf" party nominally led by cricketer Imran Khan, of which Gul is the spiritual and ideological mentor. Gul believes that it is possible to bring about the disintegration of a secular and pluralistic India by "bleeding" it in Kashmir and elsewhere — an objective he

advocates Pakistan should actively pursue. Musharraf, like many of his army colleagues, evidently shares this view.

Financial hole

MUSHARRAF has innumerable domestic problems to deal with. The Pakistan economy is in the doldrums. With an anticipated 2.8% economic growth in the present financial year, alongside a 2.75% rate of population growth, unemployment is spreading amidst IMF-supported price rises. Further, it is obvious that at least for the next decade, Musharraf's Pakistan cannot meet its international debt

repayment obligations, and will have to go the chanceries of the western world, begging bowl in hand. As investment on education declines and the madrassas produce youth trained only in the rituals of *jihad*, Pakistan is becoming the hotbed for destabilisation and religious extremism — not just in Kashmir, but also across Central Asia and the Caucasus. The mutually reinforcing links between the ISI and the Taliban add to Pakistan's growing international isolation.

We are, therefore, dealing with a military ruler who is isolated from his own country's mainstream political parties, who is dependent on the *jihadis* and who has inevitably to proclaim his loyalty and belief in the *jihad* that his army colleagues are promoting in Kashmir. Given his Presidential ambitions, Musharraf cannot afford to stray from or alienate either mainstream thinking in the Army establishment, or the *jihadis*, with whom the ISI has a mutually reinforcing nexus.

In these circumstances, we should recognise we are dealing with an ambitious leader who is seeking both domestic and international legitimacy and acceptance. He heads a military establishment that is compulsively hostile to us. We should have no illusions on this score. We also have to recognise that Pakistan's blunders and our diplomatic efforts have led to the isolation of that country from mainstream international public opinion. Thus, we can enter into negotiations with Musharraf confident of our standing and acceptance as a major player in the Indian Ocean Region. No power in its right senses will today undertake measures that earn the antagonism of an economically resurgent and democratically vibrant India, merely to please a dysfunctional and bankrupt Pakistan. But, we should not use this to shy away from bilateral problems that have bedeviled our relationship.

We have made it clear that we look forward to discussions with Musharraf that would be based on the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. We have stressed the need for the creation of conditions that could lead to the resumption of the composite dialogue process agreed upon during the Lahore Bus Yatra. Yet it is quite obvious that Musharraf will not agree to the end of support for cross-border terrorism unless we are able to give him something with

which he can claim victory at home. New Delhi should indicate that it is prepared to reduce its troop levels in Kashmir and even to reopen the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar road link for bus traffic, if cross-border terrorism ends.

Encourage friendly exchanges

WE should work towards creating conditions to facilitate travel across LoC in a manner in which it makes it as easy for a person from Pakistan or Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir to visit Srinagar, as it would be for an Indian to visit Muzaffarabad, Gilgit or Skardu. The aim should be to make it clear that while we will not agree to the reopening of any questions of sovereignty of any part of India, we would be happy to work towards making Kashmir an area that unites, rather than divides us. At the same time, it would be useful to finalise and agree on confidence-building measures that would enhance and improve contacts between the foreign offices, armies, navies and air forces of the two countries and reduce the risk of conflict, accidental or otherwise.

The SAARC Vision Statement that was commended during the Lahore Summit provides the framework for India, Pakistan and other SAARC members to develop regional economic prosperity through a South Asian Free Trade Area. Given Pakistan's aversion to develop bilateral trade and economic ties with us, we should find out if they are prepared to immediately undertake such an effort. If the answer is in the negative — or made conditional on settlement of the Kashmir issue — we would have no alternative but to tell our other neighbors that it would perhaps be best to wind down SAARC activities. There is little purpose in having a regional grouping that fights shy of economic integration and cooperation.

In short, while we should be prepared to extend the hand of peace, reconciliation and cooperation to Musharraf, we should also leave him in no doubt that should he choose to proceed on his present path, he would find that our patience is not unlimited. He should be made to understand that should the need arise, we would be prepared to raise the costs diplomatically and otherwise for the country he has decided to lead in the coming years.

The writer is a former high commissioner to Pakistan

India, Pak may have a date in July

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, May 26. — The proposed summit between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and General Pervez Musharraf is likely to be held in early July, senior officials said today.

The Prime Minister will undergo a knee surgery on 7 June and may take a week to recover, hence the talks in all probability will be held in early July, the officials said.

Pakistan today expressed satisfaction at the tone and tenor of Mr Vajpayee's letter to Gen. Musharraf, saying it had no "painful references or irritants". A report from Islamabad says Gen. Musharraf, who met senior officials and advisers after the letter was delivered yesterday, ordered officials to consult anti-talks hardline religious and *jihadi* groups on issues that ought to be discussed during the summit.

A Pakistani information ministry spokesman had said last night that a reply to the letter was being drafted at the highest level and would be delivered to India in two to three days.

He said the Pakistani government gave top priority to the Indian initiative as Gen. Musharraf presided over the meeting of senior officials and advisers to scrutinise the contents of the letter and prepare a "fitting and appropriate" response at the earliest.

Besides drafting the response, Gen. Musharraf instructed his senior officials to start consulting leaders of various religious parties, militant groups as well as 'Centre-Right' intellectuals and senior journalists about the broad agenda that could form part of the framework of his talks with Mr Vajpayee, the official said.

The consultation format, however, is yet to be decided, he said. "Structure of the consultations could be formal or informal." The decision to begin consultations with the various

shades of opinions, including the *jihadis* doggedly opposed to the talks, was considered to be significant, for Gen. Musharraf wanted a broad consensus for his first summit with Mr Vajpayee.

Religious parties like Jamat-e-Islami have welcomed India's invitation for talks. But it wasn't clear if officials would discuss the issue with mainstream political parties, which have welcomed the invitation.

But almost all militant groups, including the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, have opposed Gen. Musharraf's visit to India, saying the invitation was a "trap" and Pakistan shouldn't enter it.

A Pakistani military government spokesman today praised the "courageous" Indian decision to hold a summit and said both sides needed to show flexibility to solve the Kashmir

issue. "There are stated positions on both sides which over the years have hardened," Maj.-Gen. Rashid Qureshi said in an interview to Reuters TV.

"One expects that there needs to be a little flexibility and effort on both sides to come close and to get to any area which is acceptable to the people of Pakistan, for the government of India, for the people of Kashmir," he said.

Though Maj.-Gen. Qureshi, who commanded on the Kashmir front, iterated Pakistan's position that India should honour a UN call for Kashmiris to vote on their future, he said it was too early to take a position on the ultimate solution.

"I think it's a courageous decision," Maj.-Gen. Qureshi said, speaking at Gen. Musharraf's headquarters in the complex traditionally used by Pakistani Prime Ministers.

In New Delhi, the British high commissioner to India, Sir Rob Young, called on Mr LK Advani and praised India's offer of talks to Pakistan to ease tension between the two countries.



A soldier atop a mobile bunker in Srinagar on Saturday. The Army stepped up vigil after a militant threw a grenade, injuring two civilians — AP/PTI

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THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 2001

Pakistan is satisfied with Vajpayee's letter

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Saturday expressed satisfaction at the tone and tenor of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's letter to military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf, inviting him to New Delhi for talks, saying it had no "painful references or irritants."

Gen Musharraf, who met senior officials and advisors soon after the letter was delivered to foreign secretary Inamul Haq by acting Indian high commissioner Sudhir Vyas on Friday, ordered officials to initiate consultations with hardline religious and 'Jehadi' groups opposed to the talks on issues that may be discussed during his summit with Mr Vajpayee. A highly-placed official said Pakistan was very much satisfied with the way the Indian letter of invitation was drafted.

"There is a general sense of satisfaction about the way the letter is drafted as it has no painful references or irritants," he said. A spokesman of the Pakistan information ministry had said on Friday that a reply to the letter was being drafted at the highest level and it would be delivered to In-

dia in two or three days.

He said the Pakistan government accorded top priority to the Indian initiative as Gen Musharraf himself presided over the meeting of senior officials and advisors to scrutinise the contents of the letter and prepare a "fitting and appropriate" response at the earliest.

Besides drafting the response, Gen Musharraf also instructed his senior officials to begin consultations with leaders of various religious parties, militant groups as well as 'centre-right' intellectuals and senior journalists about the broad agenda that could form part of the framework of his talks with Mr Vajpayee, the official said.

The format of the consultations is, however, yet to be decided, he said, adding the "structure of the consultations could be formal or informal."

However, almost all militant groups, including the Lasker-e-Toiba, have expressed firm opposition to Gen Musharraf visiting India saying the invitation was a "trap" and Pakistan should not enter it. (Agencies)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 MAY 2001

Turning to Musharraf

By Balraj Puri

India has realised that Pakistan matters in the response of the secessionists to its peace moves in J&K. But did it have to take this long?

40-10
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THE UNILATERAL ceasefire announced by the Centre in Jammu and Kashmir had fizzled out and its final termination by May-end is only a formal recognition of the reality. For, it failed in its primary objective of building a constituency of peace. Neither could the security forces prevent killings of civilians nor could custodial deaths and firings on demonstrations be stopped.

According to official estimates, the militants killed over 420 civilians since the ceasefire began. No firm figures can be cited for those killed in custody and firings. But rallies against human rights violations were bigger and more widespread in the Valley than in years, possibly also because these violations followed the high expectations raised by the peace process. In the Jammu region, the peace process and reopening of the issue of the State's status raised fears which found expression in a spate of strikes, demonstrations and police action not witnessed for years. The reactions against killings of innocents were also divided along communal lines. Killings of Hindus and Sikhs were, for instance, described by most of the dissident leaders as the work of the security forces "to defame the ongoing freedom movement". Thus the net effect of the unilateral ceasefire was a widening of the communal and regional gulf in the State.

At this stage, the Union Government designated Mr. K. C. Pant to talk to all sections of the people of the State. The Hurriyat Conference which had been projected by the Governments of India and Pakistan as the vital group in Kashmir rejected the offer of Mr. Pant for talks on a number of grounds. Mr. Shabir Shah, another prominent dissident leader, raised almost similar objections to the offer. Despite the media hype over his decision to send two emissaries with a letter to Mr. Pant seeking explanations, it was clear that Mr. Shah could not ignore Pakistan's reaction. This was amply borne out when he deputed the same emissaries to send an epistle to Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, through its High Commission in New Delhi. In any case, there was no hope for a major breakthrough in Mr. Pant's talk with the secessionist camp in Kashmir.

As the unilateral ceasefire misfired and the talks did not seem to be taking off, the Government of India decided to invite Mr.

Musharraf to New Delhi for talks. That means it has realised that Pakistan matters in the response of the militants and secessionists to India's peace overtures. Did it have to go through a six-month-long exercise to understand these elementary reality? And was it necessary to pay the price it did in terms of weakening the State's political and secular fabric?

A lot of behind-the-scenes and back-channel work must have preceded the initiative the Government took six months back. The Hurriyat leaders had agreed to start bilateral talks with New Delhi in the first stage to be followed by talks with Islamabad culminating in some sort of trilateral agreement on the State's future. For this purpose, a unilateral ceasefire was not relevant. But having taken this decision, its logic should have been followed. It was addressed to the militants and not to the Hurriyat. For they alone were in direct armed conflict with the Indian forces. After they rejected it, the only other party that should have been contacted to control them or persuade them to respond was the Government of Pakistan.

If the objective was to consolidate the ceasefire as a first stage, the next alternative was to use the good offices of the Hurriyat which had offered to try to convince the Pakistan Government and the militants of the political and diplomatic benefits of accepting India's peace offer. It sought permission to send a delegation to Pakistan. At that stage, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, known for his hard line, was isolated in the seven-member Hurriyat committee which asked the Jamaat-e-Islami, which he represented, to replace him with another nominee. But the Centre's prolonged indecision over issuing passports and indications from Pakistan and militants based there that the Hurriyat would not be welcome without Mr. Geelani, encouraged him to assert himself. He gave a call, for the first time, in his individual capacity, bypassing the Hurriyat, for a Statewide bandh by the Muslims which was responded to. Thus the State's politics drifted to extremism due to the actions or lack of

action of the Government of India.

The controversy over the representative capacity of the Hurriyat misses the point that it alone was in a position to talk to Pakistan and militants on the issue of ending violence in the State. Having recognised it as a representative of the State's people, Pakistan could not have easily turned down its plea. If peace was the main or first objective, the cooperation of the Hurriyat was vital. But when it declares that it is not for peace for the sake of peace and talks for the sake of talks, it presumes that peace and talks imply reconciliation to the status quo and rules out the efficacy of peaceful methods to alter it. If total solution is the sole condition to end militant struggle, the Hurriyat's claim to being the sole representative of all the people of the State becomes too presumptuous.

It cannot deny that there is not a single representative in it from Jammu and Ladakh and from the non-Kashmiri speaking communities in the Valley. Even in the Kashmiri-speaking community, its representative character is challenged not only by nationalist forces, whatever be their number, but also by rival secessionist groups. Confident of its majority, its president, Mr. Abdul Ghani Bhat, offers to accept the verdict of 51 per cent whether they vote for India or Pakistan. The spirit of democracy demands that the interests of the minorities should be accommodated to the extent possible. For majoritarianism is a negation of democracy. In Canada, which constitutionally recognises the right of provinces to secede, the federal court held that this right would be valid only if it was supported by a substantial majority (though it was not defined). The argument behind this judgment was that the change of mood of a marginal population should not bind the fate of the whole population forever. Even in Kashmir, the popular mood has fluctuated between being overwhelmingly for India to against India.

Many of Pakistan's leaders are on record as having conceded that in the early years of Independence, it would have lost a plebiscite in Kashmir. Why should the ver-

dict of the people in 2001 carry more sanctity than that of, say, in 1948, 1975 or 2010? Sheikh Abdullah was closest in Kashmir's modern political history to being the sole leader of his people. But with all his greatness and unparalleled popularity, his intolerance for dissent has made no mean contribution to preventing democracy taking root in Kashmir. Some of our present misfortunes are due to that unfortunate legacy. However, despite the blind faith of the people in him, even he had the practical sense to seek broadbased consensus on the future of the State in what was called the J&K People's Convention at Srinagar in 1968. My formulation that future status of the State should keep in view the interests of its three regions and ensure regional autonomy with further devolution of power at district, block and panchayat levels was unanimously accepted as the basis for a dialogue with both India and Pakistan.

The Hurriyat president is willing to talk with the Centre if it alone is invited. In that case it cannot avoid the onus of building a broadbased consensus within the State about inter-regional and intra-regional relations. If consultation with Pakistan and non-Kashmiri people of the State on the other side of the LoC is important, no less important should be consultations with people across the Pir Panchal in Jammu and across the Zoji La pass in Ladakh.

Otherwise, even if the Centre enters into any agreement with the Hurriyat, it will not be possible for it to implement it. Nor can the Hurriyat object to the Centre's decision to have the widest consultations with people of all regions, communities and parties within the State. At some stage it must consult national parties also. The Hurriyat can maintain its status and serve the interests of the people of Kashmir Valley, its principal constituency, by trying to understand view points of those with whom it does not agree in Kashmir as also other regions and communities.

In no case is it justified in insisting that the Centre's representative should not talk to anyone else and that it alone should be recognised as the representative of the State. The claim is a patent defiance of reality. If and when it becomes a reality, it will be a totalitarian and regimented state and not a civilised, free and plural state which it ought to be.

INVITATION DELIVERED TO MUSHARRAF

Let's walk the high road to peace: Vajpayee

By C. Raja Mohan

140-1
26/5

NEW DELHI, MAY 25. Putting aside the bitterness of Pakistan's military aggression in Kargil two years ago, the Prime Minister Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today signalled India's readiness to roll out the red carpet for Pakistan's chief executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

In a formal invitation delivered in Islamabad today, Mr. Vajpayee invited Gen. Musharraf to visit India, "pick up the threads" of the stalled bilateral dialogue, and walk the "high road" to peace and prosperity in the subcontinent.

The decks are now cleared for a summit meeting between the two leaders here in the next few weeks. Gen. Musharraf, according to informed sources, is likely to arrive here any time between the last week of June and the third week of July.

As preparations begin for the visit, a strong sense of *deja vu* hangs over the South Block here. For many officials, the hopes at Lahore and the betrayal at Kargil

are too recent to be forgotten.

While the officialdom is sceptical of Gen. Musharraf's intentions, the enthusiasm for a renewed engagement with Pakistan comes from the political level. The principal source of energy for the revival of the stalled dialogue is Mr. Vajpayee, convinced that he can make a difference to the troubled relationship with Islamabad.

Despite the venom spewed out by the Pakistan Foreign Office yesterday on India's policies in Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Vajpayee today adopted a dignified tone in inviting Gen. Musharraf.

Looking beyond the immediate squabbling on a whole range of issues between the two nations, Mr. Vajpayee declared that "our common enemy is poverty". "For the welfare of our peoples", he added, "there is no other course" but pursuing "the path of reconciliation", "engaging in productive dialogue", and "building trust and confidence".

Mr. Vajpayee recalled the trip

he made to Lahore in February 1999 "with the objective of beginning a new chapter in our bilateral relations". He reminded Gen. Musharraf of his statement in Lahore that "a stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest". "That remains our conviction," he reiterated today, suggesting that India had truly put behind the tragic memories of the Kargil aggression.

On the substance of the proposed summit, Mr. Vajpayee told Gen. Musharraf: "We have to pick up the threads again, including renewing the Composite Dialogue, so that we can put in place a stable structure of cooperation and address all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir."

There will be some speculation in both the capitals whether the Indian reference to the "Composite Dialogue" with a capital "C" and a capital "D" falls short of Pakistan's demand for a special emphasis on Jammu and Kashmir in the revived talks.

In stressing the Composite Dialogue that involves all the outstanding issues in bilateral relations, India is saying it has no intention of changing the framework of the dialogue negotiated by the two nations after considerable diplomatic labour during 1997-98.

Despite quibbling from some quarters in Pakistan, Gen. Musharraf is unlikely to make much of this in responding to Mr. Vajpayee's invitation. For him, the dialogue with Mr. Vajpayee is at the political level between the two states. The General would not want to condition his visit to New Delhi on any particular set of demands. In all likelihood he will reserve the right to squabble over the negotiating format and the shape of the table for another day.

His demands for a special focus on Kashmir and for involving the Kashmiri representatives might come up in his talks with Mr. Vajpayee. For now, the diplomatic focus is on getting the General across to New Delhi.

THE HINDU

26 MAY 2001

Musharraf to respond 'shortly'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 25. The military ruler and Chief Executive of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, would respond "shortly" to the invitation extended by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, to visit New Delhi for peace talks.

The Pakistan Foreign Ministry today announced that the invitation delivered by the acting Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Sudhir Vyas, had been received. Mr. Vyas met the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Mr. Inamul Haq, this morning and handed over Mr. Vajpayee's letter. Given the formulation of Mr. Vajpayee's letter, observers do not foresee any hitch from the Pakistani side. Indications are that the military Government is pleased with the wording of the letter.

In normal circumstances, the reference in the letter to the February 1999 Lahore Decla-

ration will not have gone down well with the military establishment. The Musharraf regime has reservations about the declaration and is of the view that the then Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, had rushed into signing on the dotted lines without adequate preparation on the domestic front. The military Government seems prepared to overlook the "generous" references to the declaration for more than one reason. To begin with, it is mightily pleased with the latest Indian initiative and considers it a diplomatic breakthrough.

The invitation for a composite dialogue on all issues of concern to both the countries, including the question of Jammu and Kashmir, gives the Pakistan Government elbow room on the domestic front vis-a-vis militant and religious outfits. The reiteration of Mr. Vajpayee's statement at Lahore — that India is committed to a stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan — in the letter will help Islamabad

address the concerns raised in various quarters.

Hizb, Lashkar unrelenting

However, Islamabad has every reason to be concerned with the reaction of the militant outfits and this is evident from the manner in which the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen today claimed responsibility for the attack on CRPF personnel in Jammu.

"Our fighters carried out the attack in Jammu on Friday killing five policemen. It is our response to the end of the so-called unilateral ceasefire by the Indian Government," the Hizb spokesman, Mr. Salim Hashmi, said.

The Lashkar-e-Taiba chief, Mr. Hafiz Sayeed, addressed a news conference in Islamabad denouncing New Delhi's invitation as yet another farce. He also threatened to intensify attacks on Indian forces and installations.

THE HINDU

26 MAY 2000

Need for innovative approach

By K. K. Katyal

10-11
2675

NEW DELHI, MAY 25. Could there be a New Delhi Declaration — or some such substantive document — when the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, and Pakistan's chief executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, meet here at the latter's "early convenience" in response to India's invitation? Such a thought may appear far-fetched and premature, given the jinx attached to India-Pakistan relations, the imponderables that could upset carefully designed plans and the determination of those interested in wrecking any peace process. (Today's blast near Jammu is a chilling reminder). It is, however, tempting to speculate on the likely case scenario. Having taken the decision, New Delhi, moved fast and the Prime Minister's invitation was despatched in less than 48 hours.

The very speed of the follow-up was considered significant. The text of the invitation was notable for its warmth and balance — there were pointed references to both the composite dialogue and Kashmir. There was, thus, no scope for complaint by Pakistan. In any case, Islamabad, it was clear, did not intend quibbling over words. The summit in early July, well after Mr. Vajpayee's knee operation, seems a fair guess.

Come to think of it, New Delhi had not been the venue of a major bilateral contact in the post-Nehru era though Shimla did have this distinction. In Pakistan, too, the country's capital, Islamabad, did witness high-profile top-level meetings in 1989, but the bigger honour had to be reserved for Lahore ten years

later. New Delhi did receive the effective heads from Pakistan from time to time but not on structured bilateral missions. As against that, there had been no dearth of top-level contacts elsewhere, on the sidelines of the SAARC, Commonwealth and NAM summits or other occasions — in Harare, Male, Colombo, Dhaka, Edinburgh, New York, Paris — but the tradition of planned summits in the two capitals has yet to be established.

As seen by diplomats keeping a close watch on Indo-Pakistan affairs, there is a case for making the fullest possible use of the opportunity, provided by the Indian move, and to work for a substantive new beginning. Let this not be a "flying visit", the same-day affair, it is pointed out, but a full-fledged bilateral mission, with the two leaders addressing themselves to setting up a framework for engagement.

There is considerable curiosity on the how and why of the suddenness of the gesture. There was firm evidence that the decision to invite Gen. Musharraf was India's own — at the behest of Mr. Vajpayee — that it was a swadeshi move (Jagran Manch activists, please note). But there are perceptions to the contrary — with some sections seeing the U.S. suggestion behind New Delhi's initiative.

The visits of Pakistani heads of state here in the 1980s did produce results, modest though. On November 1, 1982, for instance, the military ruler of the day, Gen. Zia-ul-Haq, made use of his transit, during a journey back home from a trip of South-East Asia, for talks with the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi. They agreed to set up a joint commission, apart

from continuing the on-going discussions on the draft agreement on peace, friendship and non-aggression. In March 1983, Gen. Zia came here for the NAM summit — and the agreement on the joint commission was signed by officials in the presence of the two leaders.

In May 1991, the then Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, in a friendly gesture, came here to attend the funeral of Rajiv Gandhi (the Opposition Leader, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, too, made a similar gesture through a personal visit). Mr. Sharif showed interest in a substantive one-to-one meeting with the Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, after a courtesy call.

According to the account of Mr. J. N. Dixit, former Foreign Secretary, in his book on Indo-Pakistan relations, Mr. Sharif made the following proposal on Kashmir — India and Pakistan should move back from claiming total jurisdiction over the entire territory of the former princely State, that India could keep Jammu and Ladakh and Pakistan retain the area under its control and that the Valley could either go to Pakistan or its future could be decided through a plebiscite. Mr. Chandra Shekhar rejected it forthwith. (Earlier, in 1972, during discussions on the Shimla Agreement, Pakistan's boss, Z.A. Bhutto, accepted in principle the conversion of the LoC into the international border but pleaded with Indira Gandhi for time to prepare the domestic opinion. He later went back on it).

Could the two sides now try an innovative approach on Kashmir? Could they address other matters even as the "core issue" is given priority?

THE HINDU

26 MAY 2001

Atal puts letter, agenda on table

FROM PRANAY SHARMA IN
NEW DELHI AND IDREES
BAKHTIAR IN ISLAMABAD

May 25: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today wrote to Pervez Musharraf assuring him that "a secure, stable and prosperous Pakistan" was in India's interests and seeking a commitment from the military ruler that the spirit of the Lahore Declaration would be revived.

Vajpayee told Pakistan's chief executive that he was willing to discuss all outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

He drew up these broad parameters for talks in the letter inviting Musharraf to Delhi. The letter was handed over this afternoon to Pakistan's foreign secretary Inamul Haq by the acting high commissioner in Islamabad, Sudhir Vyas.

Musharraf will shortly send a reply to the invitation, the Pakistan foreign ministry said in a statement.

No dates have been suggested in the letter, which leaves it to the "earliest convenience" of Pakistan's chief executive to decide when he will visit India.

Pakistanis have welcomed the invitation and, despite all the cautious statements, people are looking forward to the outcome of the meeting. Several religious parties, including the hardline Jamat-e-Islami which staged a violent protest during Vajpayee's Lahore bus *yatra* two years ago, want Musharraf to accept the offer for talks.

The most interesting part of Vajpayee's letter comes in the middle. "When I visited Lahore in February 1999... I had recorded at the Minar-e-Pakistan that a stable, secure and prosperous Pak-



"Excellency, India has, through dialogue, consistently endeavoured to build a relationship of durable peace, stability and co-operative friendship with Pakistan. Our common enemy is poverty. For the welfare of our peoples, there is no other recourse but a pursuit of the path of reconciliation, of engaging in productive dialogue and by building trust and confidence. I invite you to walk this high road with us.

When I visited Lahore in February 1999, with the objective of beginning a new chapter in our bilateral relations, I had recorded at the Minar-e-Pakistan that a "stable, secure and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest", that remains our conviction.

We have to pick up the threads again, including renewing the Composite Dialogue, so that we can put in place a stable structure of cooperation and address all outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir.

I have the pleasure to extend a most cordial invitation to Begum Musharraf and you to visit India at your early convenience.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

AB Vajpayee"



istan is in India's interest, that remains our conviction."

The significance of the words lies in the fact that he wants to make it clear that his visit to Minar-e-

Pakistan was not an impulsive decision but a well-thought-out move. The tomb symbolises not only the formation of Pakistan, but also the two-nation theory.

Some of the Prime Minister's advisers had argued against his visit to the Minar. But Vajpayee went there anyway and said that whether one liked it or not, the existence of Pakistan was a reality and the sooner Indians accepted this, the better.

The Prime Minister had also argued that Pakistan did not require India's approval for its existence and that Delhi had to accept that a stable and prosperous Islamabad was in its interest.

In his letter today, he has tried to reassure the military ruler that India continues to hold this view.

While Vajpayee made it clear that India was not shying away from discussing the Kashmir issue, he also pointed out that it would not get primacy and would be discussed along with the seven other issues identified earlier by the two sides. People in Pakistan, however, want Kashmir to be on top of Musharraf's agenda.

Musharraf will be the first Pakistani leader to visit India since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto arrived to seal the Simla Agreement in 1972. General Zia-ul Haq had visited the country as part of his cricket diplomacy but that was an unofficial trip.

Vajpayee has laid stress on reviving the spirit of the Lahore Declaration. Musharraf, who was credited with masterminding the Kargil intrusion, has been held responsible by India for scuttling the peace process. By seeking a commitment from him on reviving the Lahore spirit, Vajpayee is hinting that the military ruler should also display his seriousness about normalising relations.

India-Pakistan one-dayers on Uma's mind

SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SA 26/5



Miss Uma Bharati

NEW DELHI, May 25. — The Union sports minister, Miss Uma Bharati, plans to resume cricketing ties with Pakistan as a goodwill gesture before the arrival of Pakistan's chief executive, General Pervez Musharraf, to India.

The Union sports ministry plans to hold a special cricket series with Pakistan to complement the effort of the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, to engage Pakistan in bilateral talks. The series is likely to be announced before the arrival of General Musharraf in India. Mr Vajpayee's invitation has already been sent to him.

Miss Uma Bharati is slated to speak to Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee next week before announcing the decision, a high-placed sports ministry official told **The Statesman**. Mr Vajpayee is currently holidaying in Manali.

Miss Bharati reportedly met Mr Vajpayee's principal secretary, Mr Brajesh Mishra, today to apprise him of her plans, the official said.

Miss Bharati had created a sensation by announcing the cancellation of cricketing ties with Pakistan till it stopped abetting violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Her decision brought her in direct confrontation with the BCCI, which disagreed with the decision though it pleased hardliners in the Sangh Parivar.

She had described cricket as an expression of national sentiment and patriotism and argued that it would be difficult to play cricket with Pakistan in the present circumstances, though she had allowed India playing Pakistan in the World Cup. As a result of the decision, India couldn't participate in three-nation series at Sharjah recently.

Some officials of the sports ministry said they hoped that Pakistan would appreciate India's gesture as it would be done to create a friendly atmosphere in honour of General Musharraf. They expected Pakistan to respond positively. The current assessment in the ministry seems to be that nothing can unite the two countries better than cricket, particularly when the heads of the two countries are going to talk peace.

Pakistan last played in India in February, 1999, at Eden Gardens, recording a sensational victory. The game was held up twice following missile-throwing from the stands and the game's concluding phase was played out before empty galleries with the police cracking down on violence.

India were supposed to visit Pakistan early in 2000 but the Centre stopped the trip in view of the Kargil battle. During the conflict, however, India defeated Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup.

THE STATESMAN

26 MAY 2000

Generally speaking

Indo-Pak talks must not end up as talks about talks

WILL the good general now oblige? Will Pakistan's Chief Executive Pervez Musharraf honour his rhythmically reiterated promise to meet the Indian prime minister any time, any place? In announcing its invitation to the military ruler while terminating its six-month-old ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, the government has displayed remarkable dexterity in shuffling peace initiatives. And in doing so, it has immediately reaped twin benefits. One, its occupancy of the moral high ground, which had been under considerable threat in the dying days of its ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, has been extended. More importantly, after months and more of India's unwavering refusal to break bread with the Pakistani leadership, the chimera of an Indo-Pak summit in New Delhi has reignited hopes of a peaceful turn to proceedings in the subcontinent.

If such a summit is to actually materialise, both countries must eschew the temptation to adopt rigid postures and make participation dependent on long lists of conditionalities. Recent history is replete with evidence of how swiftly proposed negotiations between India and Pakistan — whether they be at the foreign secretary level or higher — can descend into fruitless debates on semantics, into never-ending talks about talks. Islamabad has traditionally demanded Kashmir-specific negotiations, while New Delhi has tended to lobby for a wider framework while seeking to extract a black-and-white assurance that Pakistan would forthwith stop supporting cross-border terror-

ism. Both countries would squander yet another opportunity to escape from a 54-year-old cycle of mutually deleterious rivalry and suspicion if this sad, sad dance were to be repeated once again. While announcing the new initiative on Wednesday, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh avoided voicing any conditionality. His counterparts on the other side of Radcliffe's zigzag line would do well to match his flexibility. Viable terms of engagement between the two newly nuclearised nations can only be evolved if both acknowledge the futility of acrimony. Indeed, a few signs of sincerity would be in order — continued restraint along the Line of Control, for instance.

The Pakistani press has been quick to point out the coincidence in Atal Bihari Vajpayee's invitation to Musharraf — it was exactly a decade ago, on May 24, 1991, that a Pakistani ruler last visited India. But in case, and when, Musharraf does journey to his birthplace, questions are bound to be posed on his ability to deliver. For, he boasts of little domestic political support, the jihadi establishment is predictably opposed to peace overtures, and post-Kargil it will be difficult to trust his army to refrain from misadventures in Kashmir. Yet, to carry this line of thought to its logical conclusion and stop pushing for dialogue would amount to immense folly. For now, the red carpet has been pieced together in New Delhi. Musharraf would do himself and his region great disservice if he were to RSVP in anything but the most enthusiastically affirmative.

INDIAN EXPRESS

2 MAY 2001

Musharraf must rise to the big challenge: Pak media

Islamabad, May 24

REACTING POSITIVELY to India's invitation to military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan media today saw this as the "biggest challenge" for any Pakistani leader since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto went to Shimla after the 1971 war.

While cautioning that it would be a mistake if Musharraf went to Delhi in a "triumphant mood of having forced the Indians to their knees," editorials in newspapers said Islamabad must "jump" at this opportunity as it provided a "ray of light at the end of the long dark tunnel".

The invitation was also the first opportunity for structured talks between the two countries since 1972 Shimla agreement.

However, they warned the major initiative might turn out to be a damp squib if it merely ended in agreeing to "talk about talks".

"Pakistan must jump at this opportunity and accept the invitation. Gen Musharraf has been saying for months; talks anywhere, any time, any place. At the same time our Government also needs to examine the latest development from every angle. It must ensure that talks are meaningful and substantial," *The News* said.

Another newspaper, *The Nation*, said the invitation was the first opportunity for structured talks between the two countries since the visit of late



Jawans keep vigil in Jammu on Thursday.

AFP PHOTO

Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to Shimla to meet Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after the 1972 Indo-Pakistan war.

"The offer is good for Musharraf in terms of legitimacy to his rule," former information minister Mushahid Hussain said.

Political analyst Riffat Hussain, described the Indian move as a major diplomatic breakthrough that has caught everyone by surprise. "They have

taken the Pakistani demand that there should be a dialogue," Hussain said.

Political commentator Najam Sethi was, however, skeptical about a major breakthrough on the Kashmir dispute.

"Chances of a dialogue moving beyond niceties are slim because the Indians have indicated they will take a hard line in Kashmir," he said.

PTI/AFP

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAY 1998

Musharraf will agree to talks: Pak minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD/ NEW DELHI, May 24. — Pakistan today said General Pervez Musharraf would accept India's invitation for talks in the hope of reaching a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem.

It, however, condemned India's decision to end its six-month-old unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, told a news conference that Pakistan was yet to receive Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's invitation to Gen Musharraf. "The Chief Executive will respond to the Indian Prime Minister's invitation in a positive spirit. We haven't yet received any official communication," he said.

"The summit meeting will provide an opportunity for dialogue aimed at a permanent settlement of the long-standing Kashmir issue...A settlement in conformity with the will of the Kashmiri people will bring an end to the travail of the Kashmiri people. It'll also remove the root cause of tensions that have blighted Pakistan-India relations since 1947."

A Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting will be the first Indo-Pak summit after February 1999 when Mr Vajpayee made a bus trip to Lahore and talked to his then Pakistani counterpart, Mr Nawaz Sharif. The peace process initiated by the duo then didn't yield any result because of the Kargil war.

Mr Sattar said he was shocked by India's decision to end the

ceasefire it introduced last November. "India has removed even the pretence of restraint and given its forces a carte blanche to continue state terrorism against the Kashmiri people."

It was not clear how soon the talks would be held, though the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said the invitation to Gen Musharraf would be for an early visit. Mr Sattar said he presumed India would elaborate on the timing of the talks and Pakistan would try to avoid any delay.

Does Pakistan have any objections to discuss other contentious issues besides Kashmir? Mr Sattar said the Chief Executive had never excluded discussions on any subject relevant to

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■ More reports on page 8

bilateral ties. "What he (Gen Musharraf) has said again and again is that the Kashmir question is the root cause of the conflict and should receive priority attention." He said Pakistan supports Hurriyat's demand for tripartite talks. "We suggested that at the first instance some consultations needed to be commenced. So far we have received no indications to that proposal".

He parried all questions about Kargil saying: "That controversy is now now behind us".

He claimed Pakistan respected all the accords signed with India, including the Lahore Declaration. "We respect all agreements irrespective of when they were signed and at what level. Pakistan will carry out its obli-

gations to all agreements operative..."

Hurriyat stand: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference executive council member, Mr Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, today called India's invitation to Gen Musharraf a "positive" step.

He clarified New Delhi and Islamabad could hold bilateral talks at the initial stage, but ultimately the Hurriyat has to be involved.

"This is an opportunity. Let India and Pakistan make a move and take the initiative to come closer but APHC ultimately has to be involved in talks, because earlier too talks between the two countries have failed miserably."

The Hurriyat executive council will meet in Srinagar next week to discuss the latest development. Mirwaiz called the ceasefire in the state a hoax during the last couple of months. "It was only on paper not on the ground. Extension of ceasefire was aimed at the international community and evident on the Line of Control only".

USA welcomes Delhi move: USA has welcomed Mr Vajpayee's invitation to Gen Musharraf for talks. "It's an opportunity to make real progress towards a reduction of tensions and a resolution of their differences through peaceful means," state department spokesman Mr Philip Reeker said.

Ultras killed: In separate incidents in the Valley after withdrawal of the ceasefire yesterday, security forces have killed 10 Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants, a report from Srinagar. Two ultras were arrested. A civilian was killed in a crossfire.

THE STATESMAN

25 MAY 2001

Another ploy, say militant outfits

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 24. Most Pakistan-based militant outfits have termed India's talks offer as another deceptive ploy while academics and former diplomats called it a major diplomatic offensive and urged Pakistan to pick up the gauntlet anyway. Analysing the surprise move dominated the day among the media, militants as well as official circles in Pakistan today.

Almost all the militant outfits were of the view that the announcement to end the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and the offer for talks was a ploy and India wanted to impose a war on Pakistan.

The Lashkar-e-Taiba chief, Mr. Hafiz Saeed, said by extending talks offer to Gen. Musharraf, India was once again trying to deceive Pakistan. He said India had strengthened its Army, held military exercises for an atomic war, signed defence agreements with Israel and was trying to fence the "working boundary" in the name of ceasefire. Pakistan should understand the ploy and should not get into the trap.

The Hizb-ul Mujahideen, which was silent on the invitation on Wednesday, joined other militant outfits today in expressing doubts over the outcome of such an exercise. The Hizb-ul chief, Syed Salahuddin, who is also the chairman of the United Jehadi Council, in a statement, said bilateral talks of last 53 years between India and Pakistan had not produced any positive results and Gen. Musharraf should study every angle of the Indian offer before deciding to respond positively.

The Harkat-ul Mujahideen chief, Maulana Fazlur Rehman Khalil, said the militants would not let India succeed in its designs. Another Harkat leader, Mr. Farooq Kashmiri, said the end of India's ceasefire had no impor-

tance for militants. The talks offer was a fraud and India holds talks only when it is under pressure.

The Pakistan People's Party expressed surprise over India's move asking how it could hold talks with a military dictator on such important issues. The PPP leader, Mr. Raza Rabbani, reportedly said India's talks with a dictator might be harmful to Pakistan's national interest. However, he said, the PPP had no objection to Vajpayee's offer.

The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) leader, Raja Zafrul Haq, also welcomed the talks offer saying that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had provided a good opportunity and Pakistan should go ahead in accordance with the Lahore Declaration. Another PML(N) leader, Zafar Ali Shah said the offer had fulfilled Gen. Musharraf's long-standing desire to salute Mr. Vajpayee. However, he said, talks in the absence of political parties would not be durable.

The general secretary of the

like-minded group of PML that supports the military Government, Mr. Gohar Ayub, said India had agreed to hold talks under international pressure and the military regime should go ahead to resolve the issue by taking political leaders into confidence.

Dr Riffat Hussain, an international affairs expert, said India had made the offer only to create a rift between Pakistan and Kashmiris and satisfy the U.S.

The former Foreign Secretary, Mr. Niyaz Naik, said India was facing immense pressure from the U.S., Japan and the European Union to hold talks with Pakistan while Prof. Khalid Mehmood of the Institute of Regional Studies said any talks between India and Pakistan were a good omen and should be welcomed. The former ISI chief, Mr. Hameed Gul, also said India had made the offer under U.S. pressure but it was a good sign. However, he said, it would neither stop jihad nor the activities of Kashmiri militants.

Mr. Hamid Mir, editor of an Ur-

du daily, in his column said the offer had four objectives. India wanted lifting of the U.S. sanctions imposed after the nuclear explosions in May 1998 and one can not ignore the fact that India has made the offer at a time when a delegation of U.S. Congressmen is in New Delhi. Secondly, the offer has been made to sabotage Pak. Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar's U.S. visit during which he was to criticise India's rigid attitude.

Then, India wanted to create a rift between Pakistan and Kashmiris as the same day when the offer was made, an APHC leader, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, was arrested in Srinagar. India has agreed to hold talks with Pakistan only to push the APHC into the background. And finally, the most important objective of Mr. Vajpayee's offer, he said, was that he would try his best to make Pakistan agree on the issue of internal autonomy of Kashmir. In the name of internal autonomy, the U.S. would use Kashmir for its bases and create difficulties for China. Therefore, this solution would be unacceptable not only to Kashmiris but also to Pakistan and China.

In fact, Mr. Vajpayee's offer is a major diplomatic offensive. Neither can Pakistan reject it nor can it hold talks under the Indian agenda. ... We should also understand that India has accepted a minor defeat for a major gain. India wants to stop the ongoing militancy in Kashmir through talks. Talks should be held but the militancy should not be given up, the column said.

In an editorial, the English daily *The News* urged Gen. Musharraf to grab the offer, which it said indicated India's coming to grips with reality. It warned that the talks might become another false start and "talking about the talks may bring this whole initiative to a naught".

Hizb will cooperate in peace initiative

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MAY 24. The Hizb today assured India and Pakistan that it would co-operate in the efforts taken to resolve the Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of the people of the State.

In a statement here, the Hizb Salar-e-Aala (chief commander) Abdul Majid Dar said the invitation extended by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, to the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, was a step towards accepting the reality by the Indian Government. Being the

basic and natural party to the Kashmir dispute, Pakistan cannot be ignored, he said.

Mr. Dar hoped India would soon accept the other realities and come forward for the appropriate resolution of the issue. Commenting on the unilateral ceasefire, he said at present, no significant change could be expected in the activities of the warring groups.

The Mujahideen had rejected the ceasefire and the security forces also had not ceased their operations against the militants and the people.

'CONDITIONALITIES ARE BEHIND US'

Musharraf will accept invitation, says Sattar

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 24. Ignoring counsel from most of the militant organisations based on its soil, Pakistan today declared that the military ruler and chief executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, would respond to the invitation extended by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to visit New Delhi for peace talks.

The announcement, made by the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, at a crowded press conference, had two significant elements that demonstrated the "flexibility" of the military Government in engaging New Delhi.

A noteworthy shift in Pakistan's stance noticeable during the twice-delayed press conference of Mr. Sattar — not to insist on a focussed dialogue on Kashmir to the exclusion of all other subjects of concern between India and Pakistan and more, important, not to make an issue of the involvement of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) as a third party to the Kashmir dispute.

To a specific question, Mr. Sattar was at pains to emphasise that Gen. Musharraf had never excluded the relevance of all issues of concern between India and Pakis-



tan in any dialogue. "What he has emphasised again and again is that the Kashmir question has to get priority," the Minister said in reply to a question on the repeated stand of Gen. Musharraf that Kashmir had to be the centre of any talks with India.

On Pakistan's "insistence" on tripartite talks involving the Hurriyat, Pakistan and India, the Minister sought to "clarify" that tripartite dialogue was an idea floated by the Hurriyat. "Our formulation of December 2 implicitly supports the suggestion of the APHC. In our formulation, we suggested commencement of dialogue with the APHC by the Governments of Pakistan and India. It was against this background that

we extended an invitation to the Hurriyat to visit Islamabad."

At a later stage in response to another question, he maintained that in the view of Pakistan, the Hurriyat would continue to be at the centre of resolution of the Kashmir conflict. However, he did not elaborate what role Pakistan envisaged for the Hurriyat in the proposed summit meetings between Mr. Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf.

Mr. Sattar read out a carefully-worded five-para statement before taking questions. That statement was the outcome of extensive discussions and consultations among those who matter in the military establishment was evident from the fact that the press conference got delayed by five and a half hours.

In contrast to the flexible attitude demonstrated by the Minister in the question-answer session, there is tough posturing against India in the statement. It has particularly been harsh on India's decision to call off what has been termed a "sham ceasefire" and appeals to the world community to prevail upon India to end its "repression" in Kashmir.

While noting that Pakistan was yet to receive any official communication on Mr. Vajpayee's invitation to Gen. Musharraf, the statement said the "summit" (between the two leaders) would provide an opportunity for dialogue aimed at a permanent settlement of the long-standing Kashmir problem.

"A settlement in conformity with the will of the Kashmiri people will bring an end to the travail of the Kashmiri people. It will also remove the root cause of tensions that has blighted Pakistan-India relations since 1947. With that objective in view Pakistan consistently called for the resumption of dialogue and offered to participate in it at any level, including the highest."

The statement referred to the December 2 formulation of the Pakistan government for a resolution of the Kashmir dispute and said the APHC should be allowed to visit Islamabad. "For meaning-

ful talks on a settlement responsive to the will of the Kashmiri people, the APHC delegation should be allowed to visit Islamabad."

It said India's decision to end the "so-called" ceasefire would shock all those who had welcomed the suspension of military operations and accused India of removing even the "pretence of restraint" and giving its forces a "carte blanche to continue state terrorism"

Mr. Sattar said Pakistan was hopeful of an early summit meeting on the basis of the statement made by Mr. Jaswant Singh. "We presume there will be some elaboration when India sends us the communication on the invitation about the time frame of the summit. From our side, we would make every effort for an early summit date".

Asked how he could be optimistic of any breakthrough in the proposed summit when the Lahore summit was followed by Kar-gil, the Minister said that conditionalities "are behind us". Mr. Sattar pointed out that there was no linkage in the statement of the Indian Government on what had happened in the past.

What in his opinion was the difference between Lahore and the proposed summit? Mr. Sattar said "we are looking to the future. Pakistan will carry out its obligations under all agreements with India. We neither accept the right of any party to renounce any agreement, nor do we believe in any hierarchy of agreements."

Did the Government intend to consult other parties on India's invitation? The Minister said the Kashmir policy of the Musharraf regime was based on principles and U.N. resolutions. He evaded an answer on the negative response of the militant outfits to the invitation and their advice to Gen. Musharraf to reject the offer.

Reactions: Page 13

An element of confusion

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, MAY 24. An element of confusion crept into the Pakistani response on Mr. Vajpayee's invitation to Gen. Musharraf.

Within hours of the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, declaring at a news conference that the demand for tripartite talks on Kashmir was that of the Hurriyat, the chief spokesman of the military government maintained that there were three parties to the dispute and there could be no resolution of the conflict without involvement of all the three parties concerned.

Asked by *The Hindu* to clarify the subject, the Director General of the Inter-Services Public Rela-

tions (ISPR), Maj. Gen. Rashid Quereshi, said that "if the Indian offer is sincere, we welcome it".

"My response to the need for a tripartite dialogue to a news agency was in response to a specific query on what Pakistan thought of the Indian offer. While welcoming the offer, I said there are three parties to the dispute and it could be resolved only through (the) involvement of all the three concerned".

Maj. Gen. Quereshi said that it was not Pakistan's position that the Hurriyat be involved in the Summit-level dialogue between Gen. Musharraf and Mr. Vajpayee. "After all, it is a meeting between the two heads of the state".

THE HINDU

25 MAY 2001

Adaab Arz, Pervez

As diplomatic demarches go, the Indian invitation to Pervez Musharraf undoubtedly belongs in the most dramatic category. To begin with, there were seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the way of an Indo-Pak entente, including the famous Indian objection to Pakistan's sponsorship of cross-border terrorism. Secondly, the man himself. Official India loved to hate General Musharraf and perhaps with valid reason. The military dictator had ousted our good friend Nawaz Sharif in an overnight coup and, more unforgivably, plotted the Kargil invasion. The Indian outrage was manifest in Prime Minister Vajpayee's declaration from a Commonwealth platform that the only Pakistani leader his government recognised was Mr Sharif. However, as in politics, so in diplomacy: What is permanent is self-interest, as our gung-ho friendship with the once-despised United States proves most eloquently. By the yardstick of self-interest, it was even more necessary that India and Pakistan bury the hatchet and resume the long-abandoned path of dialogue. That India has shown the courage to acknowledge this is all the more commendable given the bitterness that characterised our relationship with the Musharraf regime. In any case, there were not too many options before the government other than to go in for a further spell of ceasefire. In itself that would have served no purpose except perhaps to make a largely cosmetic gesture to the outside world. Ceasefire as a logic can only work if accompanied by a well-thought-out political process. This was not the case in Kashmir, what with the government initiating a series of half-hearted measures, such as appointing a point person and issuing a broad invitation to nobody in particular.

Welcome as the latest government initiative is, there are some dangers its authors must be alert to. Any move on Kashmir must necessarily include its people. For far too long, Kashmir has been treated as strategy, of which border fencing, intelligence gathering and the like have been the major part. This attitude has to change, to be replaced by the admission that Kashmir, above all, is about people. A solution to this vexing problem will elude us as long as a feeling of alienation persists among the Kashmiris. Surmounting this is admittedly easier said than done. To further complicate matters, we have unhelpfully elected leaders who make irresponsible statements. That Farooq Abdullah has been having a running battle with the Hurriyat Conference is well known by now. But for him categorically to rule out a role in the peace process for any third party, including "so-called representatives of the people", is to carry his personal battle too far. Already, General Musharraf has responded by saying that the Hurriyat must find representation in the peace effort. Messrs Vajpayee and Co must firmly reign Mr Abdullah in if peace is finally to get a chance in the Valley. The other disturbing aspect relates to speculation about internal dissensions within the BJP, post-Tehelka and the assembly elections. Reports suggest that Kashmir has been revived in order to paper over these differences. If indeed there is a Vajpayee-Advani angle to Kashmir, then, that would only ensure that the already long-drawn-out peace process will now also be dogged by intra-party one-upmanship.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

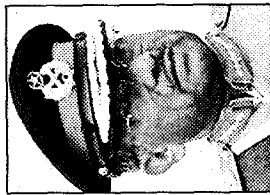
25 MAY 2001

Track II opens new channels



It seems that Track II diplomacy is opening as many channels as satellite television. We have already seen retired bureaucrats, culture vultures, former military men and ex-diplomats, while social activists and NGOs go without saying. Now, hot on the heels of the religious channel, inaugurated by the visit of the Shahi Imam of Delhi, comes the trade channel, with the meeting of the Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Islamabad, and attended by a high-powered chamber of Indian businessmen. The head of the Indian delegation, the President of both the PCCI and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was explicit that the interaction between the two business communities was indeed a kind of Track II diplomacy. The Indian businessmen pressed for Most Favoured Nation status for India, but realistically indicated they would settle for less. The Pakistan government's response was relatively muted, even confused. On the one hand Commerce Minister Razzak Dawood told the Indian delegates that MFN status was not on the cards, confirming this in his Wednesday press conference, while Privatization Minister Altaf Saleem expressed the hope that "the businessmen of the two countries will become a driving force, leading towards the resolution

of long-standing disputes." This is a significant statement, which is at odds with the firm stand of the present government on the sequence of negotiations with India. The Commerce Minister was in line with present policy with his statement that India could not be given MFN status at this stage, but that the Government of Pakistan would be willing to extend



the list of importable items from India from the present 603, on a case to case basis. The Privatization Minister was not. On the face of it, he had accepted a longstanding Indian point of view on the conduct of negotiations. Pakistan had held that Kashmir shelled be discussed first, then other bilateral issues, such as border disputes, trade and visa arrangements. India had held that other issues should be discussed first, and only then the most difficult issue, of Kashmir, tackled. This deadlock had held since the 1972 Simla Agreement. During the Nawaz era, a sort of breakthrough was made, when both sides agreed to discuss all issues simultaneously. This led to several

rounds of Secretary-level talks, and the setting up of seven working groups. The breakdown came when India fudged on the Kashmir working group. This approach was revived in principle by the Lahore Declaration, but the Musharraf government reversed this policy back to putting Kashmir first. Indeed, the Chief Executive on more than one occasion has referred contemptuously to Nawaz's approach, and the regime's apologists have pointed to it as a kind of treason by the deposed PM. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the matter, apart from other factors, India stopped talking entirely.

Now the Minister comes out with a statement that agrees in principle with the Indian stand. We can only presume that he has spoken politely, without realising the serious implications of what he said. The only nagging doubt that it might not be an honest mistake is because of the Track II flurry going on. If indeed he was expressing a Cabinet-collective view, then we have seen the greatest ever policy shift in Pak-India relations, amounting to a total acceptance of the Indian position. To remove doubt, it would be best if the Minister clarified exactly what he meant.

• *Editorial in the Nation, May 24, 2001.*

Deweaponization at last?

THE FEDERAL cabinet recently

gave approval for the new arms control policy that the interior ministry had been pushing for since the imposition of the ban on arms display in March last year. In a three-phase plan, the government now seems to have decided to cleanse the country of illegal weapons whose proliferation has reached alarming proportions

POSITIVE TREND

• SHOULD Musharraf accept Vajpayee's offer for talks?

314 votes total		
Yes	(229)	73%
No	(70)	22%
Can't Say	(15)	5%

• *According to an E-poll in the Nation, May 24, 2001.*

throughout the country. Provincial governments have been asked to work with the army monitoring teams in the arms recovery drive in order to ensure that no cracks or crevices affect the thoroughness of the operation. Also, one hopes that this time round the government will document all the weapons that will be recovered under the proposed plan. A case in point is the city court's Malkhana in Karachi, where illegally held and recovered arms are deposited, and which has had no proper audit to ascertain how many weapons are deposited there from previous such campaigns aimed at deweaponization.

The obvious hard nut to crack will

channels of Indo-Pak contact

be the tribal areas, which serve as the originating point of illegal arms, and from where dealers continue to obtain deliveries of illicit arms for their clients in the cities. Darra Adam Khel, located in the tribal area less than 40km south of Peshawar is the largest centre of manufacturing and supply of illegal arms in the country. Here, the factories started sprouting during the Afghan jihad against the Soviets, and even though the war came to an end in 1989, the facilities have since doubled and the business continues to flourish, thanks to the demand for arms in the domestic market. Arms proliferation in the NWFP can be gauged from the fact that in that province alone there are nearly two million legal arms licence-holders, including those for prohibited-bore weapons.

Earlier on, in October last year, when the government offered to dismantle the Darra Adam Khel factories, the reaction from the tribesmen was unequivocal: "be ready to face the consequences," they had threatened, and the planned deweaponization drive was deferred. An earlier attempt at deweaponization too had met with similar resistance in the Pashtoonabad district of Quetta in April last year. This time round, when the cabinet has given its approval for the implementation of the deweaponization drive, the government needs to make good on its resolve to rid the country of these weapons of death and destruction.

• *Editorial in the Dawn, 24 May, 2001.*

'Relative' peace melts relations ice

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, May 24: The Vajpayee government is hard-selling the "relative peace" along the Line of Control as the reason for the invitation to Pervez Musharraf.

The argument is expected to be the cornerstone of a consensus drive, which got off the ground yesterday when the government sounded allies as well as the Opposition before announcing the bold decision.

The Centre decided to change its policy towards Pakistan after assessing the situation along the LoC and in Kashmir and finding that Islamabad has tried to bring down the temperature along the border and stopped giving militants fire-cover to sneak into the Valley. But the problem was to get the partners in the ruling NDA and the main Opposition party, the Congress, to go along with the decision.

Yesterday afternoon, the Prime Minister started consultations with allies George Fernandes, Chandrababu Naidu, Bal Thackeray, Om Prakash Chautala, Parkash Singh Badal and Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah. He also sought the views of Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. After all of them supported the move and Vajpayee was satisfied that he had a broad consensus, the government announced that it would invite Musharraf for talks to Delhi.

The Congress said officially that Sonia was "merely informed and not consulted" by the Prime Minister. However, the party, which demanded that the Opposition be consulted before the talks begin, described the invitation as a "step in the right direction".

Thackeray, who usually does not mince words while ripping apart peace initiatives with Pakistan, said Vajpayee has shown grace by inviting Musharraf.

The government today underscored a subtle shift in the ground situation along the LoC. "The government has been gratified to note that in the last six months, there has been relative peace along the LoC due to restraint

shown both by India and Pakistan," foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal said today.

There has been "considerable lowering" of firing from across the LoC, he added. "We have been talking about a conducive atmosphere for resuming political dialogue with Pakistan and in our assessment there may not be absolute peace, but relative peace has been achieved along the LoC."

Jassal indicated that though foreign mercenaries continue to strike in Kashmir and many are still operating from Pakistani soil, India was no longer blaming Islamabad for direct support to militants.

The government has not given any date when the invitation will be sent to Musharraf. But going by Vajpayee's schedule for the next month, it appears that the summit between the nuclear neighbours will take place in July.

The Prime Minister is now vacationing in the hill resort of Manali. He will leave for Gujarat on June 3 to spend a few days reviewing earthquake relief efforts.

Vajpayee will be admitted to Breach Candy Hospital on June 6 to get his right knee operated upon. This will keep him in bed for at least two weeks. Experts feel he may not be able to attend office before another 18 to 20 days. This means the Prime Minister will be ready to meet Musharraf sometime between the first and third week of July — before the monsoon session of Parliament begins.

Jassal insisted that the decision to invite Musharraf was part of India's commitment to peace and there was no shift in the Kashmir policy. But Delhi was aware that the outside world was getting restless with its view that talks with Islamabad will not resume till violence in Kashmir ends.

Besides, after K.C. Pant was appointed chief interlocutor on Kashmir, the one point that most intellectuals made was that Pakistan had to be included in the talks to achieve a breakthrough. The argument gathered strength after the recent visit of foreign minister Jaswant Singh and home minister L.K. Advani to Kashmir.



Islamabad residents read newspapers splashing India's invitation to Pervez Musharraf for talks. (Reuters)

Across the border, hope of Simla II

FROM IDREES BAKHTIAR
AND AGENCIES

Islamabad, May 24: A streak of cautious optimism sliced through the clutter of customary sound-bites as Pakistan declared that Pervez Musharraf would respond in a "positive spirit" to India's invitation and opinion leaders here described the new initiative as the "biggest challenge" since the Simla summit three decades ago.

But Islamabad left little doubt that Kashmir would top the agenda of the proposed summit. "Both sides know fully well what the root cause of tension is. Therefore, the question of Kashmir

should receive priority attention," Pakistani's foreign minister Abdus Sattar said. He pointed out that India has not set any conditions for the talks. "The idea of conditions is behind us," Sattar said.

"The summit will provide an opportunity for dialogue aimed at a permanent settlement of the Kashmir problem. It will also remove the root cause of tensions that has blighted Pakistan-India relations since 1947," Sattar said.

The minister promised rapid response from Pakistan after India sends the invitation. "We presume there will be some elaboration in the letter of invitation.

We will make every effort to preclude any avoidable delay (in the resumption of talks)," he said.

A sore point was the Kashmir ceasefire withdrawal, which Sattar condemned as shocking. Another issue of divergence with India is the role of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, which according to Sattar, will "remain on the centre-stage". Indian home minister L.K. Advani has ruled out an intermediary role for Hurriyat.

Most Pakistan-based mujahideen have ridiculed Delhi's offer as a "farce", but Sattar played it down. On whether a third country had played a role in changing India's mind, he said: "A large

number of countries had voiced their considered view that a dialogue should be resumed...."

Analysts were spirited in their response, saying Islamabad must "jump" at this opportunity.

The Nation said the invitation was "indeed the biggest challenge, not just for Musharraf, but perhaps for any Pakistani leader since Zulfikar Ali Bhutto went to Simla". It added that Islamabad would be "making a mistake if it sent the military ruler to Delhi in a triumphalist mood of having forced the Indians to their knees".

Industry soaked up news of the invitation with hope, helping stock prices inch up.

THE TELEGRAPH

Setting the stage for summit

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, MAY 24. An early summit between the leaders of India and Pakistan now looks likely, with Pakistan responding positively to India's offer to revive the stalled dialogue between the two nations.

Despite the irritating rhetoric from Islamabad today on many issues, including India's decision to end the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan may have given itself sufficient flexibility to let a negotiating process with India unfold.

Indications here are that the Government will soon start preparations to receive the top gun of the Pakistani establishment for the first time in nearly a decade and a half.

Purists in the Indian security establishment will indeed be furious with some of the formulations in the official statement released in Pakistan today. But others see that Islamabad has not chosen to squander the Indian offer to resume the talks at the highest level.

Beyond the usual posturing, Gen. Pervez

Musharraf is suggesting that he would not miss the opportunity of travelling to New Delhi to meet with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Diplomatic circles here were keen to see Pakistani formulations on two key questions — the nature of the negotiating framework and the shape of the table. One referred to the weight Pakistan attached to the Kashmir question and the other to the number of parties in the conference hall.

Recent hints from Gen. Musharraf were that Pakistan might want an exclusive focus on Kashmir in the revived talks with India. He was also suggesting that the negotiations must be "tripartite", involving not only New Delhi and Islamabad but also the Hurriyat leaders.

Gen. Musharraf has certainly covered his flanks by retaining Pakistan's focus on Kashmir and in demanding that the Hurriyat leaders be allowed to visit Pakistan. But the Pakistani emphasis on these two issues may not amount to preconditions which would have derailed the proposed summit meeting.

While there were no major surprises in the Pakistani response, India also has reasons to be pleased with the international reaction that has widely welcomed its decision to revive talks with Pakistan at the highest political level.

That perhaps was part of the calculation behind the decision to reverse the earlier Indian insistence on linking the resumption of dialogue with Pakistan to a cessation of cross-border terrorism.

It has been clear for some time in the higher reaches of the Government that India had extracted all the political juice from Pakistan's "Kargil betrayal". There was no further diplomatic mileage to be gained by refusing to engage Pakistan.

There is no question that the option of inviting Gen. Musharraf had been in play since Mr. Vajpayee published his new year "musings from Kumarakom" in the first week of January. It was only a matter of choosing the appropriate moment to revive the negotiating track with Pakistan.

THE HINDU

25 MAY 2001

FRIDAY, MAY 25, 2001

A WELCOME INITIATIVE

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THE DRAMATIC INVITATION to Pakistan's Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for parleys is welcome and is reflective of the Vajpayee administration's apparent decision to think afresh about ways to address the widening estrangement on the bilateral front. With Pakistan also losing no time in indicating its willingness to suitably accept India's offer of talks at the highest echelon, the initiative must be fully followed through. This will call for high statesmanship from both sides. New Delhi's latest gesture can of course be seen as the first transparent sign of the Vajpayee administration's readiness to give up its policy of not wishing to engage a military government in Pakistan. However, New Delhi's justification of its new line does not cast much light on how exactly it has persuaded itself to consider holding a direct dialogue with Gen. Musharraf himself. By not insisting any longer that Pakistan should first cease to foment the forays of "cross-border terrorism" into the Indian territory, New Delhi seems to have opted for an approach of considerable pragmatism. Now, implicit in the current formulation is the indirect recognition that Islamabad may have in recent months reduced India's worries in this context, whether marginally or otherwise, by exercising conspicuous restraint along the Pakistani side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, what remains largely unexplained by official India is the basic rationale of an outward strategic awakening of this magnitude.

A parallel decision to call off the current ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir is a clear testimony to the complete collapse of the goodwill gesture that was first extended to the separatist groups about six months ago. While the original idea of a truce was courageous in scope, the changing ground realities in Jammu and Kashmir have certainly taxed the Indian security establishment well beyond its threshold of tolerance. Also to blame is the Vajpayee administration's track record of confusion and lack of coherence in craft-

ing political measures that could match the spirit of the truce. Symptomatic indeed of this continuing trend of conjuring up choices on an entirely ad hoc basis is the new move to try and keep the Pant mission on a virtual life-support system at this stage. There was of course nothing wrong in principle about the post-truce decision by New Delhi to appoint Mr. K. C. Pant as the high authority for an entirely 'internal' dialogue with a sweeping array of interest groups on how to carry forward a political process in Jammu and Kashmir. However, the Pant-track can at present be rendered meaningful only if an imaginatively focussed agenda, as opposed to its diffused mandate, is quickly drawn up. Impinging on this will be the equations that could now emerge between key Kashmiri outfits and Islamabad in the context of New Delhi's act of offering Gen. Musharraf an olive branch without strings of conditionalities.

The first indicated format for the proposed talks between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Gen. Musharraf is the matrix of 'composite dialogue' — a diplomatic mascot on the India-Pakistan front for several years now. Official India's latest reaffirmation of the Shimla Accord and the Lahore Declaration as the underpinnings of the proposed dialogue with Gen. Musharraf does allow for a serious discussion on the Kashmir dispute. The nuances of the actual agenda will, in fact, be determined by the dynamics of Pakistan's considered response to New Delhi's present offer. Islamabad may also take into account the diplomatic compulsions behind the Vajpayee administration's U-turn. At one level, official India seems to exude a greater sense of diplomatic direction in the evolving context of its search for some strategic affinity with the United States. However, the overall international calls for peace in South Asia, and not just Washington's emerging views on ties with New Delhi and Islamabad, seem to impinge on the India-Pakistan strategic environment.

25 MAY 2001

25 MAY 2001

Visit must be put to constructive use

By K.K. Katyal

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NEW DELHI, MAY 24. It is a long jump by India to have decided to invite the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, here for talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. It represents a high point of pragmatism — and the first reversal of Kargil, and a major one at that. But it is only an opportunity and the main point of interest is whether the two sides make constructive use of it? Political judgment is unable to furnish the answer at this stage. There could be no two opinions about the importance of the opening for meaningful efforts to reduce tensions and resolve problems. India has shed the earlier rigidities and is not insistent now on the conditions considered necessary in the past for the resumption of the dialogue. It will be a pity if Pakistan chooses to apply conditionalities to Gen. Musharraf's oft-stated willingness for talks "anywhere, any time, at any level." There is no ambiguity about the Indian offer of talks — in New Delhi, at the General's "early convenience," with Mr. Vajpayee.

Pakistan's initial response is positive but it will make up its mind only after seeing the text of the invitation. It is not hard to imagine the considerations that may weigh with Islamabad — for

had it not been talking of the centrality of Kashmir? The present regime does not hide its unhappiness with the formulation in the Lahore Declaration, committing the two sides to dialogue on "all issues, including Kashmir." Its preference is for "Kashmir and all other issues." It is not comfortable with the "composite dialogue" either.

The Indian move should take care of the sense of deep hurt on the part of Gen. Musharraf because of New Delhi's conscious decision not to deal with him. In his talks with visiting Indians, he often spoke of the "humiliation" he had been subjected to. India has moved far away from the earlier stand. Soon after the coup in Islamabad, it was not prepared to do business with an "usurper," with the "murderer" of democracy. India vetoed the plan for the SAARC summit, scheduled towards the end of 1999 in Nepal, because it did not like the coup leader to get respectability in the company of South Asian heads. According to New Delhi, this line was in keeping with the stand taken by the Commonwealth leaders at the Durban summit, where Pakistan was suspended from grouping.

That position was given up after a while. India had no objection to dealing with the military regime

but wanted the climate to be "conducive" for the resumption of talks, — in other words, it insisted on end to trans-border terrorism. Later, this stand too was modified, with New Delhi wanting credible evidence of steps by the Pakistan Government against the jihadi elements. There are no conditions now. The decision to invite Gen. Musharraf is in keeping with the Prime Minister's "musings" — his preparedness to recommence talks at any level, including the highest level, if only Pakistan "gives sufficient proof of its preparedness to create a conducive atmosphere."

Pakistan should have no complaints against the revocation of the ceasefire, regarded a hoax by it. India decided against the ceasefire extension because it was seen as having lost its momentum, did not promise any direct gain and had lost its relevance to the peace moves — even for the K.C. Pant mission which, in any case, had not made much headway. The Prime Minister, however, wanted to guard against the message that India had gone back on the peace process. Hence the decision, at his instance, on an invitation to Gen. Musharraf.

In India, there is near-total consensus in favour of the Government move. All Opposition parties welcome it though, iron-

ically, it may be opposed by some in the Sangh Parivar and the Shiv Sena. In Pakistan, however, the Government may find it hard to get all-round backing, with the jihadis and, at their instance, some political parties branding it as a trap.

Gen. Musharraf should have no qualms. On several occasions, he had angrily rejected insinuations that he had refused to shake hands with Mr. Vajpayee in Lahore after the bus journey. He had merely suggested to the then Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif, that it would not be proper for the service chiefs to be present at the border in the midst of the political crowd and that a better course would be to see Mr. Vajpayee at the Punjab Governor's house, where he was to go by helicopter from the border, and this was readily agreed.

Those of us present on that occasion — it appeared "historic" then — had reported that Gen. Musharraf, along with the two other chiefs, saluted Mr. Vajpayee in the Government House, shook hands with him and shared the same sofa with him. And as the Chief Executive let it be known recently, he saw no problem in saluting Mr. Vajpayee again and in shaking hands with an "elder" and the leader of India.

THE HINDU

25 MAY 2001

Pak. rejects Indian demand for grant of MFN status

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

110-13
24/5

ISLAMABAD, MAY 23. A delegation of senior businesspersons from India which has come here on a mission to improve trade relations with Pakistan has suffered a setback as Pakistan has categorically rejected its demand for grant of Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status.

Even before the delegation could absorb the rejection of the demand, came the news of the decision of the military ruler and Chief Executive of Pakistan, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to cancel an early morning meeting with the businesspersons.

Of course, the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) sought the appointment with Gen. Musharraf and the Indian team was to have gone as part of the SCCI. It was all excited about the possible meeting with Gen. Musharraf and prepared to raise specific trade issues concerning the two countries.

It was conveyed to the organisers of SCCI that Gen. Musharraf was unable to meet the delegation due to his pre-occupation with some other work. The business magnates were clearly disappointed at the development though none was prepared to talk about it openly.

Grant of MFN status is one of the four major demands articulated by the delegation after day-long deliberations under the auspices of the India-Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (IPCCI) on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Commerce Minister, Mr. Abdul Ra-zaaq Dawood, told the members of IPCCI on Tuesday evening, when they called on him as part of the SCCI delegation, that his country had no intention at the moment to grant the status of MFN to India.

The Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Mr. Chairayu R. Amin raised the issue at the meeting with Mr. Dawood. He told the Minister that given the potential for trade between the two countries, the business community eagerly looked forward to Pakistan granting MFN status to India.

In the presence of the delegation, Mr. Dawood

gave a diplomatic answer and was not willing to make any commitment on the subject. However, immediately after the meeting with the delegation, in an interview to a Pakistani daily, he made it clear that Pakistan was not considering grant of MFN status to India.

"There would be no change in our policy. We would continue with our existing policy and consider it at an appropriate time," the Minister told the daily. The Minister was equally non-committal on the other demands of the Indian delegation relating to easing of visa restrictions, expansion of the list of items that could be imported by Pakistani businessmen from India and construction of warehouses on the border to ease the trade flow.

The MFN issue raised by the Indian business delegation is actually nothing new. The Indian Government, which had unilaterally accorded the MFN status to Pakistan, has been asking Islamabad for a long time for equal treatment. The standard response of Islamabad has been that the question of MFN was linked to resolution of all disputes with New Delhi including the "core issue" of Kashmir. In fact, last year, Mr. Dawood was in a spot when he announced that the issue of grant of MFN status to India was under consideration. The Minister had made the statement at a press conference a day after he unveiled the Export-Import Policy for 2000-2001. He came under attack from the political and religious parties and was forced to retract the statement. Thereafter, the issue took a back seat.

The FICCI delegation is clearly disappointed at the turn of events in Islamabad. It had prepared an elaborate case for improvement of trade between India and Pakistan and found ready support from its counterpart in Pakistan.

The case of FICCI and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) rested on the fact that while the official trade between the two countries is estimated between \$150 and 200 million, the unofficial trade is put around \$1 billion. The potential trade is projected at \$10 billion.

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001

Opposition welcomes Govt. move

NEW DELHI, MAY 23. Opposition parties tonight hailed the Government's decision to invite Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for talks though the Congress wanted to know the reasons for not extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Congress has all along held the view that talks at highest level between the two Governments are necessary. But we do not know the reasons behind the decision not to extend the ceasefire," the party spokesman, Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy, said.

He said it was for the Government to explain why the ceasefire was not extended and what results the ceasefire policy had yielded. Mr. Reddy said the Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, was only informed of the decision by the Prime Minister, but was not consulted.

Positive development: CPI(M)

Welcoming the move, the CPI (M) general secretary, Mr. Harishan Singh Surjeet, said inviting Gen. Musharraf for talks was a "positive development" as he had been demanding this.

"Gen. Musharraf has been saying he wants talks. The Government has no option but to accept that," he said.

About the withdrawal of ceasefire, he said once the talks begin "it will automatically create a good atmosphere".

A bold decision: BJP

The BJP described the decision as a "bold one in line with the mood of the people." "I congrat-

ulate the Government for taking this bold decision as it is in line with the mood of the people," the party president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, said here.

"The Government has come to the right decision by calling off the ceasefire in as much as the unilateral declaration of ceasefire for the past few months has not yielded the expected results. He said "the violence unleashed by terrorists did not abate even to a little extent thereby bringing out the fact that the terrorists have no desire for peace and purposeful talks."

'A logical step'

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mr. Farooq Abdullah, termed the invitation from the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee to Gen. Pervez Musharraf as a "logical step in the peace process."

"This is the next logical step in the peace process initiated by the Prime Minister during Ramzan in November last year," Mr. Abdullah said. He said after all it was between India and Pakistan to resolve the dispute.

"There is no role for any third party, be it a country or self-proclaimed representatives of people of Kashmir," the J&K Chief Minister said in an apparent reference to the Hurriyat Conference.

He expressed the hope that Gen. Musharraf will indulge in a meaningful dialogue and make efforts for resolution of the dispute. The Chief Minister also hailed the Centre's decision to continue with Mr. K.C. Pant as the

interlocutor on Kashmir and gave a call to all such Kashmiri youths who wanted to shun the path of violence to join the national mainstream.

Regretting the withdrawal of ceasefire, Mr. Abdullah said "We were forced to call it off as militants had increased attacks on civilians leading to more casualties." He asked "how long could the State or the Central Government remain a mute spectator to this." Giving another call to the Hurriyat and militants to join the peace process, Mr. Abdullah said "My door and even windows are open for all those persons who think about the better future of Kashmir."

Pandits happy

Kashmiri pandits welcomed calling off of the ceasefire in the Kashmir valley, saying it had "failed to yield positive results."

"The experience during the past six months has shown that it has failed to yield any positive results," Mr. Ramesh Manvati, spokesman of Panun Kashmir, an organisation of Kashmiri pandits said. In fact, the ceasefire had helped militants to regroup and attacks on security forces and civilians had increased, he said.

Mr. Manvati said the security forces should now be given a free hand to deal with militants, particularly the Islamic terrorists, to prevent Islamisation of the State. "A pro-active policy needs to be adopted if peace is to be restored in the State." He said though the Centre had given an opportunity for restoration of

peace in the militancy-torn State. "Pakistan and militants sponsored by it failed to respond positively." 24/5
ND 13

The Sangh Parivar outfits welcomed Centre's decision to withdraw the ceasefire in Kashmir and demanded immediate termination of the dialogue with militant groups and a "free hand" to the security forces to restore peace in the trouble-torn State.

"The Government has acted like a Government. We welcome the Centre's decision," a jubilant Acharya Giriraj Kishore, senior vice-president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said.

He, however, said the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's decision to invite the Pakistan military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for discussions in New Delhi would be "an exercise in futility" keeping in view the Pakistan's past role in fomenting trouble in the valley.

Welcoming the decision, the Bajrang Dal leader and Faizabad MP, Mr. Vinay Katiyar, demanded immediate termination of peace talks with militant groups. "We should talk only with nationalist groups and not with terrorists and separatists."

He demanded summary execution of all militants apprehended by the security forces in the State. The VHP and Bajrang Dal had been opposed to the ceasefire and advocated a hardline on Kashmir. — PTI

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001

We'll respond positively: Pak

HT Correspondent and PTI
Islamabad/New Delhi, May 23

PAKISTAN TONIGHT said it would respond positively to the invitation by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf to visit New Delhi for talks.

In the first reaction to Vajpayee's invitation to Musharraf, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Inamul Huq said "if and when the invitation is officially received, Pakistan will respond positively to it."

Huq said Gen Musharraf has time and again said that Pakistan is ready to meet the Indian leadership for a dialogue anytime anywhere.

The US hailed the invitation and said it continues to encourage all parties to seek ways to end violence in Kashmir. "We are continuing to support discussions between India and Pakistan," a State Department spokesman said in Washington.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah termed the invitation to Gen

^{HQ 29/5}
Musharraf as a "logical step in the peace process." He said after all it was between India and Pakistan to resolve the dispute.

"There is no role for any third party, be it a country or self-proclaimed representatives of the people of Kashmir," Abdullah said in an apparent reference to the Hurriyat Conference.

The Chief Minister also hailed the Centre's decision to continue with K C Pant as the interlocutor on Kashmir and gave a call to all such Kashmiri youths who wanted to shun the path of violence to join the national mainstream.

Regretting the calling off of the ceasefire, Abdullah said, "We were forced to call it off as militants had increased attacks on civilians leading to more casualties."

Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat said, "We still believe that tripartite talks can produce better results by including the principal party, which is Kashmir."

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24 MAY 2001

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Vajpayee calls off ceasefire, invites Musharraf for talks

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 MAY

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Wednesday, invited General Parvez Musharraf to New Delhi for peace talks while calling off the six-month-old ceasefire in the Valley.

The decision, which was taken at the meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security on Wednesday evening, is part of a double-pronged strategy aimed at striking at the jihadis without making any diplomatic compromises.

Musharraf was on an image transformation drive — trying to play the promoter of peace in the sub-continent instead of the architect of the Kargil operation. But this invitation is likely to stymie this image building effort of the Pakistani leader.

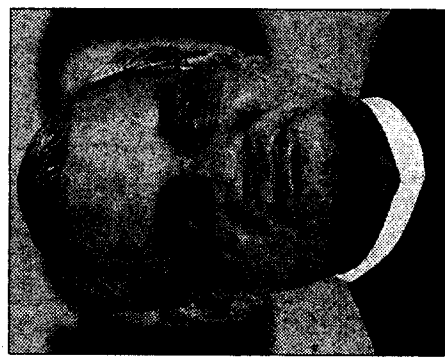
Musharraf, who has never tried to live down his image as a

indefatigable warrior against India, has lately tried to resolve the stalemate over Kashmir.

Mr Jaswant Singh made it clear that India is in no mood to yield the diplomatic ground so easily. "India is yet again offering the hand of friendship, reconciliation, cooperation and peace to Pakistan in the expectation that this opportunity will be positively and purposefully utilised by Islamabad," he said.

An official statement issued by the Indian government stated that the invitation to Musharraf was in keeping with the Lahore declaration and the Shimla Agreement. Musharraf's response should be worth watching because the olive branch comes with a declaration that the big stick will be wielded again against the jihadis.

The decision will have an important fallout on the ongoing Pant peace talks as the hardcore



Vajpayee & Musharraf: Two sides of a coin

among the militants will use this to prevent others from coming to the negotiating table.

While putting its best diplomatic foot forward, the Vajpayee government signalled its intent to

be firm with the terrorists and called off the ceasefire. The decision, which was influenced by the

feedback from the security commanders on the ground, will, in effect, mean giving a free hand to

the security forces at a time when they have come under severe stress because of the spurt in Islamabad-sponsored terrorism.

Mr Singh minced no words as he explained the implications of the development after the CCS meeting. "The ceasefire is now over. Hereafter, security forces shall take such action against terrorists which they judge best," he added.

Mr Singh said the responsibility for the calling off of the ceasefire lay squarely with the militants who used the restraint by the security forces to hinder the restoration of peace.

"These terrorist groups have hindered the restoration of peace in Jammu and Kashmir and have inflicted misery upon the people of that state."

The official statement said: "It was expected that various terrorist groups and organisations, mostly

foreign, will see reason and recognise the imperatives of peace, dialogue and cooperation and shun violence. Unfortunately, they have not."

It is believed that the decision was not an easy one as the government had to weigh the contrasting feedback from different agencies as well as the political parties. It has been learnt that the army was not exactly in favour of calling off the ceasefire.

While it had come under pressure from the terrorists, the policy of maximum restraint that the ceasefire induced afforded it some respite on the international border.

The paramilitary forces, however, were less inclined than others for the extension. They, after having been at the receiving end of the jihadi violence, have just been able to gain some advantage in the battle against terrorism.

Pakistan willing to smoke the peace pipe

K.J.M Varma

ISLAMABAD 23 MAY

PAKISTAN ON Wednesday said it will respond positively to Indian Prime Minister's invitation to military ruler General Pervez Musharraf for talks in New Delhi but refrained from commenting on New Delhi's decision to call off the ceasefire in Kashmir.

"If and when the invitation is officially received, Pakistan will respond positively," Pakistan's foreign secretary Inamul said in state-owned Pakistan television.

Pakistan's military ruler General Pervez Musharraf has more than once said he is ready to meet Mr Vajpayee for dialogue anywhere any time, Mr Haq said.

"Pakistan believes that a solution to the Kashmir dispute should be found through dialogue," he said. Significantly, Mr Haq, in his brief reaction, did not refer to Indian Government's decision to withdraw the six-month-old truce in Jammu and Kashmir.

Pakistan had responded to India's ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir with partial withdrawal of its troops from the line of control (LoC) but criticised the truce as a step "without any purpose."

— PTI

Pakistan's response may be positive

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 23. Pakistan is expected to respond positively to the invitation extended by the Government of India to the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, for talks, though the military regime appears to have been clearly caught unawares by the developments in New Delhi.

Pakistan's inclination to respond positively to the invitation was evident from the brief comment made by the Pakistan Foreign Secretary, Mr. Inamul Haq, on the State-owned Pakistan Television (PTV). "If and when an invitation is received Pakistan would respond positively," he said. He reminded the repeated statements of Gen. Musharraf to hold a dialogue with Indian

leadership "anywhere, any time and at any level". The latest initiative from New Delhi has come just days before the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan are scheduled to meet on the sidelines of the SAARC meeting in Colombo in June.

A gimmick: Lashkar

Notwithstanding the readiness of the military Government to respond to the invitation, the difficulties ahead for the Musharraf Government within Pakistan was evident from the reaction of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. It termed the invitation as yet another "gimmick" and urged the military Government not to get into the "trap" of diplomatic talks.

The spokesman of the outfit, Mr. Yahya Mu-

jaheed, told *The Hindu* over telephone from Lahore that the latest initiative by New Delhi was yet another fraud. "We appeal to the Chief Executive of Pakistan not to respond to the invitation as is yet another trap. In our perception India is preparing to attack Pakistan."

Bukhari meets Musharraf

The announcement from New Delhi was preceded by a meeting between Gen. Musharraf and Delhi's Shahi Imam Syed Ahmed Bukhari, who is supposed to be here as part of Track-II diplomacy. Surprisingly, his visit has evoked vicious reaction from the jihadi groups in Pakistan. They have accused him attempting to broker peace on behalf of Indian and U.S. Governments.

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001

Kashmir core issue for talks with India: Musharraf

GOVT PLAYS SAFE ON SHABIR LETTER

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BEIJING, May 21. - Addressing the "core issue" of Kashmir "is the bottomline" for Pakistan in any future talks with India General Pervez Musharraf has said.

The Kashmir issue "is the bottomline for Pakistan in negotiations since it has to be understood that Kashmir is the core dispute," the Pakistani military ruler told China Daily in an interview published today to mark the 50th anniversary of Beijing-Islamabad diplomatic ties.

Charging India with "intransigence" on the Kashmir issue, he hoped that New Delhi would agree to hold talks in the "foreseeable future" to solve the problem.

"The main hurdles that have so far eluded a solution to the

Kashmir dispute are India's insincerity and intransigence to hold meaningful talks with Pakistan," Gen. Musharraf said.

"I sincerely hope India will agree in the foreseeable future to resume the stalled dialogue in order to resolve the... Kashmir dispute," he said.

He said future talks "will surely have to focus on finding a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute according to the wishes of the Kashmiri people".

"I think the Indian Prime Minister, the Indian public and me-



General Pervez Musharraf

and arms purchases, Gen. Musharraf said Islamabad decided to go nuclear after India did so.

"In 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear tests which dramatically disturbed the strategic balance" in the region, he said. Pakistan responded "in order to restore the strategic bal-

dia also realise that talks must start to reduce tension between Pakistan and India." The international community too thinks responsibility," he said.

The hike in India's defence budget and its move to acquire several types of weapons systems will strain the security climate in the region, Gen. Musharraf said.

He ruled out early restoration of civilian rule in Pakistan, citing its cash strapped economy. "I believe we must have democracy, but not sham democracy as in the past. My devolution of power plan is aimed at ushering in true democracy," he said.

The Supreme Court had given three years to complete "our" agenda of political and economic reformation.

ance and to remove any ambiguity regarding our deterrent capability. Such ambiguity could have led to miscalculation... We've developed a nuclear deterrence We'll continue to pursue a policy of restraint and responsibility," he said.

The hike in India's defence budget and its move to acquire several types of weapons systems will strain the security climate in the region, Gen. Musharraf said.

He ruled out early restoration of civilian rule in Pakistan, citing its cash strapped economy. "I believe we must have democracy, but not sham democracy as in the past. My devolution of power plan is aimed at ushering in true democracy," he said.

The Supreme Court had given three years to complete "our" agenda of political and economic reformation.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 21. - The government today preferred to play safe by staying away from the controversy generated by the J&K Democratic Freedom Party leader, Mr Shabir Shah's letter to General Pervez Musharraf.

Mr KC Pant, the government's interlocutor on Kashmir, today said the government had nothing to do with Shah's writing a letter to Gen Musharraf on the issue.

Shah had sent two of his representatives with the letter to deliver it to the Pakistan High Commission here.

Responding to a query on whether he approved of Shah's move, Mr Pant said: "We have nothing to do with it."

"Shah is handling the situation and he does what he feels is best," he said.

Officials said the difference between Shah's group and All Party Hurriyat Conference is that while Shah has agreed to hold talks with Mr Pant, Hurriyat has rejected the offer un-

less their team was sent to Pakistan. Otherwise both stress on the point that Pakistan has to be involved in the talks.

Both also seek endorsement from Islamabad for every move they make.

India's stand on the involvement of Pakistan has been very clear since the beginning. It has maintained throughout that it is not averse to holding talks with Pakistan provided Islamabad creates a conducive atmosphere by completely stopping cross-border terrorism.

Shabir Shah, who has already received threats from militant organisations for having accepted government's interlocutor on Kashmir, Mr Pant's offer, has written to Gen Pervez Musharraf urging Islamabad to come forward and contribute in the restoration of peace and stability in the Indian sub-continent.

The letter of Shabir Shah was carried by two representatives of the JKDFP, Maulana Abdullah Tari, its secretary general and Saleem Geelani, the party spokesman.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 1998

Pak warns against fencing border

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, May 21

PAKISTAN TODAY warned India against erecting fences along the 'working boundary' and said it would keep foiling all Indian efforts in this direction.

The warning followed a meeting of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee in Rawalpindi today to assess the situation in Kashmir in view of India's continued attempts to erect fences along the 'working boundary'.

The meeting, attended by the Air Force and Naval chiefs and members of the National Security Council and chaired by Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf, charged India with violating its commitment made at the meeting of the two countries' border security forces in New Delhi earlier this month where India had agreed to stop erecting fences along the 'working boundary'.

"They (India) are not allowed to erect fences along the LoC or Working Boundary in the disputed territory to give it the status of permanent border," a military spokesman told reporters after the meeting.

Fencing of the border by India was a cause for concern to Pakistan, as such activity would take place in disputed territory and go against international laws, the meeting observed.

"India has been working on a plan to erect fences along the borders for the last many years. Since the LoC and Working Boundary are not a permanent



A child carries a rose during a procession to commemorate the 11th anniversary of the killing of Muslim separatist leader Moulvi Mohammad Farooq in Srinagar on Monday. A Hurriyat strike in Farooq's honour paralysed the city.

border, nobody can be allowed to fence them as they are in the areas declared as disputed territory in the UN resolutions," Maj General Rashid Qureshi said.

A military source confirmed

that Pakistani troops had foiled Indian fencing attempts by destroying 20 pillars erected in Ramgarh sector, some 55 km south of Jammu. On APHC leader Shabbir Shah's letter to

General Musharraf, the spokesman said today's meeting had decided to discuss the matter only after Pakistan's mission in New Delhi formally received the letter.

Bangladeshi bid to enter Meghalaya

Anirban Roy
Shillong, May 21

THERE WAS fresh tension all along the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border on Monday morning when nearly 36 Bangladeshi civilians tried to break into the Indian territory near Shylla, in East Khasi Hills district.

Inspector General of BSF, VK Gaur, confirmed the report and said a group of Bangladeshi civilians had been forcefully trying to sneak into an Indian village. The BSF personnel stopped the people from across the border, Gaur said, adding that the jawans posted at the border outpost had to fire warning shots to disperse the intruders.

"The Bangladeshi civilians told our jawans that they have been requested by the Indian tribals to plough their land," Gaur said. However, no one has been injured in the firing.

"Everything is under control. There is nothing to worry about," he claimed, adding that there is involvement of BDR in the incident.

Hizb threatens to intensify attacks

HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN has threatened to "target" Jammu and Kashmir administration besides intensifying attacks on security forces in the wake of killing of nine persons including an activist of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) in the last five days.

The recent killings had evoked widespread protests, with locals accusing security agencies of killing these persons in "fake encounters" after their arrests, even as police claimed that seven of the deceased including the JKDFP activist were militants and were killed in encounters.

Attack on BSF camp: Militants launched a grenade attack on a Border Security Force (BSF) camp, clashed with police at two places and set ablaze two houses in Jammu and Kashmir, where one person was killed and another arrested since Sunday night. The grenade was hurled at the camp located at a defunct cinema hall in Sopore. It missed the target and exploded near a security picket.

PTI, Srinagar

Good news! The dogs are barking

Arun Joshi
Golpattan (Indo-Pak border),
May 21

AN EERIE calm descends as the sun slides into the western horizon throwing its last rays on the stacks of the harvested crop — meticulously bundled to be carried home by the farmers on the border.

They have to wait for the next dawn to come back to their fields to pick up the rewards of a long toil. Right now it's time to hurry back home.

Roldu Ram pushes forward, but then, cannot help look back for a while to reassure himself that the harvested crop is still there. He hopes it would be there tomorrow as well.

In his sixties, Roldu shows no signs of any physical weakness.

But he is tense. It has been like this for the past three-four years. This time, he is worried all the more because Pakistan has resumed firing.

It's already dark now. Dim lights are visible at a distance in the houses scattered in the village. The howling of dogs pierces the silence of the night, almost reassuringly. They don't howl when a firing is on.

"Everything is normal here," Roldu says. "Things become tough only when the firing starts." He promises to show the bullet marks on walls of his house in the morning and stretches himself out on the cot in his veranda — a luxury on the border.

It was dangerous to lie like this in the open only a few months back when bullets would fly thick

and fast. After the ceasefire started, the firing has lessened. Now it has started again, with the Pakistanis getting to know about the fencing operation. But Roldu is willing to take his chances, as are other villagers. The summer heat is unbearable inside the brick-and-mud houses.

Bullets often force strange alterations, even in social customs. Weddings, for one, have become a day affair. The traditional night celebrations are off, marriages are solemnised during the day.

There was a time when people would refuse to marry off their children to families on the border. Now border residents have formed their own fraternity.

"We share our moments of fear as well as our happiness," says Gharoo — a man in his late

twenties. He married this January a girl from the neighbouring village. Gharoo was supposed to tie the knot with a girl from Domana, but her parents chickened out.

Nights are dreadful in this part of the world. Shankutla Devi of Lalyal village still mourns the loss of her buffalo, which was groaning in labour pain. Cattle are farmers' assets as they have no other source of income.

"I cannot forget that night," she recalls. "I prayed so hard for the firing to stop so that I could go out and do something. But that was not to be."

The worst happened. A bullet hit the buffalo, killing it.

Had Shankuta gone out to protect the buffalo, it would have been her.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAY 2001

The secret business of border fencing

Arun Joshi

Pargwal (Indo-Pak border), May 20

THE BLACK colour of the huge 12-foot pole and 3-foot-wide frames mingle in the darkness of the night as they are unloaded from trucks. These structures are handled as delicately as glass.

Labourers are forbidden from making any noise. They cannot utter even the usual pep-up noises to carry such huge structures. Nor are they allowed to light up beedis.

These men are part of the fencing brigade busy round the clock along the international border between India and Pakistan in Jammu, spread over 185 km from Chicken Neck to Paharpur in Punjab.

They work in the day where there is a cover of 'sarkanda'— high bushes that easily hide animals and men. But the real work starts only at night.

The worst fears of the BSF and the labourers have come true. Pakistani troops have started resorting to heavy firing, targeting the fencing structures. They have damaged the poles and fencing material in Ranbirsinghpura, Samba, Ramgarh and Chicken Neck sectors.

For the Pakistani border guards, the instructions are clear: "If any structure is seen erected on the Indian side, they should be prepared to be hanged." Pakistani Rangers Director General Azim Zarar is on the tour of the border areas and is personally instructing the men not to allow India to continue with fencing.

"Pakistan has a fencing phobia," a BSF officer said. The Indian side has completed picketing in 13.4 km of the 16.22 km where the work is on. Flooring has been completed in nearly 6 km, and about 75 per cent middle pickets and 95 per cent strut pickets have been installed. The 12-foot high structures stand on the two sides with a gap of three metres. The poles are fixed in three-and-a-half feet pits. These pits are at a distance of three metres, both vertically and horizontally. In between the two rows of the 12-foot high fencing, there is another row of two-and-a-half foot cross-fencing.

Over 1,200 men are involved in the task. These are



AFP PHOTO

Neighbours and relatives on Sunday try to console the wife of Ajaz Kitab, who was allegedly killed in the custody of Special Operation Group at Allahaibagh near Srinagar.

labourers from Orissa and Bilaspur who contribute to the migrant labour force in Jammu and Kashmir, where local labourers are scared of working.

These labourers have are also aware of the dangers. "Yes, I know what it means. But then we are working for the country," says Amar, a mason.

So far they have been able to work unscathed. BSF men guard them round the clock and bring them to the borders in trucks. "We are not afraid," asserts another labourer, Shiv Mohanty.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 1 MAY 2001

Trade team to visit Pak. next week

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY. 17. In a move towards track-II diplomacy, a high-level business delegation will visit Pakistan next week to hold talks on various issues relating to bilateral trade, including the sensitive question of granting the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) treatment to India.

The delegation, under the auspices of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), will take part in the second meeting of the India-Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry on May 22, followed by a meeting of the SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The FICCI secretary-general, Mr. Amit Mitra, told newsmen today that the 37-member delegation, led by the FICCI president, Mr. Chirayu R. Amin, would explore ways for developing mutual trade between the countries. It would focus on the issue of unofficial trade from India to Pakis-

tan, which is currently five times higher than the official trade, he said.

The delegates are expected to meet several senior ministers as well as the Chief Executive, Mr. Pervez Musharraf.

Mr. Mitra said the delegation would be the first-ever after the Kargil war and the aim was to build up a business-friendly environment. But he noted that the limited scope of trade was reflected in the low official trade and high level of unofficial trade. At present, there is a restrictive list of 600 items permitted by Pakistan to be imported from India. The list does not include items like automobiles, consumer durables, heavy engineering goods, textile machinery, cement, computer software and a large number of drugs and pharmaceuticals.

He said the delegation would raise the issue of MFN status to India which has been denied by Pakistan.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

18 MAY 2001

Indo-Pak trade on revival path

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 17 In a significant move towards Track II diplomacy, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry is leading a 37-member high-powered business delegation to Pakistan for improving bilateral trade ties, reduction of third country route and seeking Most Favoured Nation status for India.

The delegation, leaving on a four-day visit on May 21, led by Ficci president Chirayu R. Amin, will also participate in the second meeting of India-Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry to be followed by the executive committee meeting of Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Ficci delegation comprises leading business houses comprising of drugs and pharmaceuticals, engineering industry, transport equipment, auto components, tea and coffee, textiles machinery, chemicals, tyres and plastics signi-

fyng the interest of wide cross section of Indian industry to do business with Pakistan.

Ficci secretary general Amit Mitra told reporters here on Thursday that the official trade with Pakistan is about Rs 700 crores. Out of this, the exports are of the order of Rs 400 crores thereby indicating a positive trade balance in favour of India. At present, the trade

SPOTLIGHT

relations with Pakistan are marred by the existence of a restrictive list of more than 600 items which alone are permissible by the government of Pakistan to be exported from India, he said and added this is because Pakistan despite its commitment under the WTO has refused to grant the MFN status to India. India has, however, since long granted the same to Pakistan. Limiting trade to a restrictive list of imports has

greatly hampered bilateral trade which is reflected in the low levels of official trade and a high-level of unofficial trade through third country route.

The agriculture industry has one of the highest economic multiplier effects among the various industries even ahead of telecom and power. Liberalised India-Pakistan trade in the agro-sector would generate around 2.7 lakh jobs in India and 1.7 lakh jobs in Pakistan, Mr Mitra said. The India-Pakistan informal trade has two components.

One, illegal trade transacted through the land borders, secondly circular or informal trade which is carried out through third countries and re-exported from there to Pakistan, using West Asia or Hong Kong as alternate routes via Turkmenistan via road for unofficial trade. The unofficial trade is estimated to be around \$1 billion which is five times of the official trade (\$200 million) between the two countries.

THE ASIAN AGE

16 MAY 2001

India keen on ties with Pak: PM Poll panel Vajpayee's

HT Correspondent
Loni (Ghaziabad), May 9

ATL BIHARI Vajpayee today said India wants to establish friendly relations with Pakistan but "we can't tolerate their support to cross-border terrorism".

He said India was keen on promoting bilateral trade and people-to-people contact with Pakistan. But "the fact that some people come from across the border and surreptitiously stay behind to foment trouble cannot be overlooked," he said referring to the ISI. The Prime Minister was addressing a rally after dedicating the 1,270 km Jamnagar-Loni LPG pipeline to the nation.

Vajpayee said he had gone to Lahore with great hopes but Pakistan replied with the Kargil intrusion which left a sour taste. The hard reality is that "we cannot choose our neighbours and must live in peace and harmony with them," he said.



PTI PHOTO

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee dedicates the world's longest LPG pipeline at Loni on Wednesday as UP Chief Minister Rajnath Singh and Governor Vishnukant Shastri look on.

"We want the whole of Asia to jointly march ahead and I, therefore, find it very difficult to understand why Pakistan should be upset over India developing close ties with Iran," he said.

He said Iran has plenty of nat-

ural gas which India needs but getting it through the sea pipeline is too expensive. The land route is a viable alternative but the pipeline would have to pass through Pakistani territory.

The Prime Minister dismissed

LAHORE DECLARATION TO BE REVIVED

INDIA AND Pakistan will revive the spirit of the Lahore process to remove trade bottlenecks. The second meeting of the Indo-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry will be held after a gap of over two years in Islamabad on May 22. The Indo-Pak chamber is a joint venture of FICCI and its Pakistani counterpart FPCCI. It was mooted in Lahore in the presence of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif. The two business chambers had signed an MoU in April.

HTC, New Delhi

the Bangladeshi border skirmish as a minor incident and said it had been blown out of proportion.

He assured farmers that the Government would not hesitate to raise Customs duty if foreign goods flood the market.

Hemendra Singh Bartwal
New Delhi, May 9

THE ELECTION Commission is unlikely to take cognisance of the charges of violation of the model code of conduct levelled against the Prime Minister, who reportedly stated at a public meeting in Assam that his Government would consider issuing work permits to Bangladeshi migrants.

While there was no formal response on the issue from Chief Election Commissioner M S Gill, EC sources said Atal Bihari Vajpayee's remark did not technically amount to violation of the conduct code, which forbids the announcement of any new Government policy, scheme or programme before the elections.

In this case, officials said the PM did not make a declaration of any specific Government decision and had merely stated that the Government would cor-

18 MAY 2001

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Musharraf ready to visit Delhi for talks

By Hasan Suroor

110-13 17/5
LONDON, MAY 16. The Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has said that he is prepared to go to Delhi for talks provided India is willing to "move forward" on Kashmir.

"If they don't want to move forward on the Kashmir dispute, I have no reason to go to India. If they are serious about it, yes, anytime I would like to go", he said in an interview to *The Guardian* in Rawalpindi adding "you can't clap with one hand."

Gen. Musharraf said he doubted India's "sincerity" and accused New Delhi of "trying to play games to gain time" in a bid to "create a gulf between the Kashmiris and Pakistan, and within Kashmiris".

He described the ceasefire declared by India as a "farce". While the ceasefire on the Line of Control was holding, the ceasefire announced by India (against militants) was non-existent. "It is a farce meant for the consumption of the West".

Criticising the Vajpayee Government's approach to the All-Party Hurriyat Conference's insistence on tripartite negotiations on Kashmir, he said: "I'm really doubtful what the Indians want. I doubt their seriousness. I think they are trying to play games for gaining time. When they gain time, their strategy is, may be, to try to create a gulf between the Kashmiris and Pakistan, and within Kashmiris themselves. I am afraid that is a very short-sighted strategy. It will not function. It will not succeed. The ball is entirely in India's court and the sooner they realise this, the better".

Gen. Musharraf said India "wasted" two recent "windows of opportunity". One when the Hizb-ul Mujahideen declared a ceasefire last year. "We got this opportunity to move towards serious dialogue — then again the window closed and we started back to normal confrontation.

And now this very serious window of opportunity

where there is a ceasefire on the Line of Control — and the ceasefire which Indians have declared which is really a farce. There is no ceasefire there", he alleged blaming India for "wasting" yet another window of opportunity.

The military ruler said the initial "vibes" with the Vajpayee Government were encouraging and he was optimistic that the Indian Prime Minister was "keen on taking bold action." "But I'm disappointed with the outcome of everything", he said returning to his theme of lost "opportunities" for what he believed was want of proper response from New Delhi. He said he was "not dying" to visit Delhi unless India was keen.

On the U.S. nuclear missile defence shield and India's "enthusiasm" for it, Gen. Musharraf noted the "new geo- strategic" Indo-U.S. understanding (first he called it "collusion" but then added that may be it was just an "understanding") and said: "Although basically it is for economic reasons, one has to see whether this develops further into a strategic relationship. If that happens — now that is where we would see with a little bit of anxiety." He argued that there was strategic balance in the region and Pakistan would be anxious if that balance was to "tilt in favour of India". "I only hope that the new U.S. administration understands the implication of this strategic balance which requires to be maintained in South Asia." He said the previous U.S. administration had a pro-India tilt, and hoped that the Bush administration "would balance this out." He spoke of goodwill for the Bush administration in Pakistan saying that every individual Pakistani supported him in the election.

The military ruler also answered question on domestic situation and warned that Ms. Benazir Bhutto would be arrested if she returned to Pakistan. "Legal action will be taken against her, certainly."

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2001

Centre is not averse to talks with Pak: Pant

The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: The Centre has expressed its willingness to take steps that will contribute to a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan provided the latter co-operates and initiates measures that facilitate the peace process. This was stated by the Centre's chief interlocutor for talks on Kashmir, K.C. Pant, in a letter to Shabir Shah, chief of Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), on Tuesday.

Mr Pant was reacting to Mr Shah's positive response to the offer for talks extended by the Centre in April and replying to the clarifications sought by the separatist leader.

Sharing Mr Shah's concerns, Mr Pant said that in view of the complex scenario in Kashmir, there was need for a serious and well-meaning beginning to a peace process. "Peace was an imperative need so as to alleviate the suffering of the people and not merely to treat the Kashmir problem as another law and order issue," Mr Pant said.

The Centre, being the ini-

tiator, was willing to take measures that would contribute to a meaningful dialogue with Pakistan. And it was in this spirit that the Prime Minister had taken various initiatives like the Lahore visit and the announcement of the ceasefire, he added.

Mr Pant's reply to the clarifications sought by Mr Shah was released to the press here on Wednesday after deliberations of the contents at the DFP's executive meet. In his letter, Mr Pant appreciated the efforts taken by Mr Shah to restore peace in Jammu and

Kashmir and hoped that he would continue to do so.

N.K. Jain, Pant's emissary, handed over the letter to Shah on Tuesday. Mr Shah wanted to know whether the Centre recognised the Kashmir issue as more than just a law and order problem. He also wanted to know whether there was a possibility of involving Pakistan in the talks at a later stage. Many militant outfits had issued veiled threats to the separatist leader and one of his associates, Mohammed Abdullah Tari, even escaped a bid on his life when militants threw a grenade at the DFP office here recently.

Releasing Mr Pant's letter to the press on Wednesday, Mr Tari told reporters that the DFP intended to hold discussions with persons from different regions of Jammu and Kashmir on May 25 to decide on its response to Mr Pant's reply. In his letter, Mr Pant had also appreciated Shah's democratic spirit in holding discussions with various persons from different regions in J&K. He also expressed his desire to meet Mr Shah.

Musharraf willing to visit Delhi at a 'moment's notice'

By Rashmee Z. Ahmed
The Times of India News Service

LONDON: General Pervez Musharraf has restated his willingness to visit Delhi any time and at a moment's notice if "serious" Kashmir talks are on offer, even as he cast doubt on India's attitude to the dispute, its strengthening relationship with the U.S. and suggestions that the Bush administration was preparing a new strategic balance in South Asia.

"I would be prepared to go (to Delhi), but I am not at all dying to go there and meet them, unless they are keen," General Musharraf said in an interview published here today in *The Guardian*.

31 MAY 2007

India stops fencing Pak border in Jammu

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, May 13

INDIA HAS temporarily suspended plans to fence the international boundary with Pakistan in the Jammu region.

The status quo will not be disturbed now, it was decided after a meeting between Border Security Force officers and Pakistan Rangers at Jalandhar yesterday.

The decision to instal defences along the 210 km segment of the international boundary in Jammu had been made in the early 1990s. The long delayed project was taken up only earlier this year, in the face of hostile opposition by Pakistan.

On March 29, the Pakistani foreign office put out a strong statement against the Indian move to construct defences along what Islamabad calls the "working boundary".

Five days later, the Ministry of External Affairs rejected the Pakistani description of the border and declared that "our forces will continue to construct such defensive structures as are needed".

The Narasimha Rao Government, sources said, had decided to fence the 210 km stretch of the international border in Jammu after it realised that militants crossed into Indian territory in all seasons.

However, heavy shelling by Pakistani forces thwarted attempts to fence the border. New Delhi holds this stretch to be part of the international boundary, but Pakistan maintains that it is only a "working boundary" subject to a "final" settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute.

The India-Pakistan border in Jammu and Kashmir has three segments. Apart from the contested 210 km stretch of the boundary, there is a 740-km "Line of Control" which ends at a location called Pt.NJ 9842.

The stretch from there to Indira Col, a pass on the Siachen Glacier, is called the "Actual Ground Position Line". Effectively, even the international boundary is a disputed stretch.

Attempts were reportedly made from March this year to construct fences up to the southern banks of the Chenab River. Pakistan Rangers responded by firing mortars, and the BSF retaliated.

Rather than allow the situation to go beyond control, the Government decided to freeze the fencing project, in view of the general policy of maintaining restraint along the J&K border.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 MAY 2001

India, Pak. agree to stop firing across working boundary

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 13. India and Pakistan have agreed to put an end to firing across the working boundary and the targeting of innocent civilians.

An agreement to this effect was reached at a meeting of the representatives of the Pakistan Rangers and the Border Security Force in Jalandhar last week.

Interestingly, an official announcement said here that "the two sides have decided that no attempts will be made to alter the status of the working boundary, including the erection of fence or establishment of defence-oriented structures".

In the last few weeks, India and Pakistan have been engaged in a war of words over the alleged attempts by India to erect fencing on the working boundary. When Pakistan lodged a protest, India said it had every right to take all actions to secure the border to effectively check infiltration.

Asked about Pakistan's claim, a senior diplomat in the Indian High Commission here expressed ignorance about the agreement.

As per the Pakistani announcement, the main points discussed at the meeting included exchange of fire along the working boundary in Jammu-Sialkot sector, joint patrolling, illegal border crossing, anti-smuggling and maintenance of boundary pillars along the International Border.

"The two sides expressed satisfaction over the maintenance of boundary pillars and joint surveys conducted for the purpose and agreed that measures being taken to check smuggling, drug trafficking and illegal immigration would be strengthened", the announcement said.

The parties also agreed to exercise restraint while dealing with those held for crossing borders.

Officials of survey, works and narcotics control department of both the countries also attended the meeting.

Maj. Gen. Zarrar Azim, Director General, Pakistan Rangers, who

led the Pakistani delegation, has been quoted by the Associated Press of Pakistan as saying that both sides had agreed to exercise restraint while dealing with inadvertent border crossers.

He told the news agency that those who had mistakenly crossed would be exchanged on May 28. "We are holding 27 Indians and India five Pakistani nationals. All of them would be returned on verification of their credentials".

Sinha to visit Hong Kong

BEIJING, MAY 13. The Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, will be in Hong Kong tomorrow to woo foreign direct investment (FDI) from the region, official sources here said. "The main objective of his visit is to invite foreign direct investment and encourage joint ventures as well as broaden and deepen India's trade relations with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR)," the Consul General of India, Mr. Ashok K Kantha, told PTI.

"It is for the first time that India is looking at the East for enhancement of trade and commerce and the first visit by the Indian Finance Minister to Hong Kong is expected to result in larger foreign investment inflow into India," Mr. Kantha said.

During his stay in Hong Kong, Mr. Sinha will interact with the chairman, Hutchison Whampoa and Cheung Kong Holdings, Mr. Li Ka-Shing. Mr. Sinha will also meet the chief executive of Hong Kong Sar Government, Mr. Tung Chee-Hwa, and the Financial Secretary, Mr. Antony Leung.

The major event is "Focus on India", a session of Credit Lyonnais Securities Asia Ltd Investors' Forum on Wednesday where Mr. Sinha will deliver a keynote speech on investment opportunities in India.

THE HINDU

14 MAY 2001

Islamabad seeks Indian response to talks offer

Beijing, May 10

CHARGING INDIA with aggravating the situation by its nuclear ambitions and arms acquisitions, Pakistan military ruler General Pervez Musharraf today sought "a positive response" from New Delhi to Islamabad's offer for resumption of the peace process in south Asia.

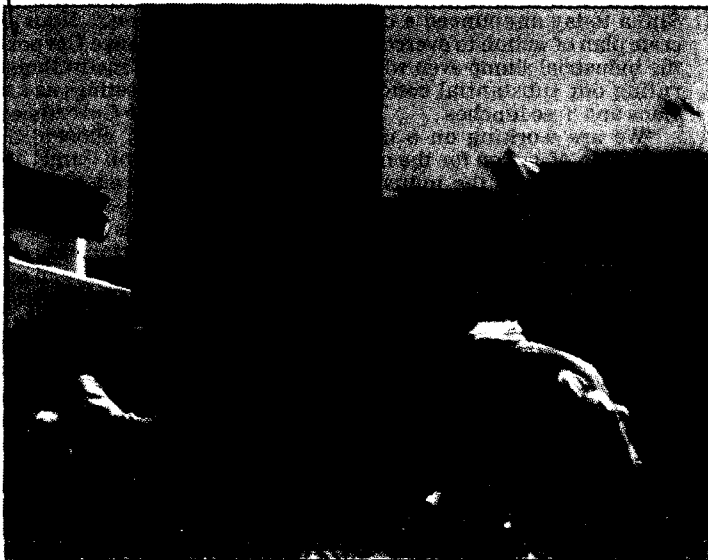
In an interview with China's official *Xinhua* news agency on the eve of premier Zhu Rongji's visit to Islamabad, Musharraf said Pakistan has already proposed, through diplomatic channels, the resumption of bilateral dialogue with India to address the core Kashmir problem and other outstanding issues.

"The ball is now in India's court. A positive response from India could start a peace process in south Asia," *Xinhua* quoted the military ruler as saying.

Stating that Pakistan wanted to settle disputes with India through dialogue, Musharraf said "the unresolved Jammu and Kashmir dispute is the main cause of Pakistan-India tension and conflict in south Asia."

"The acquisition by India of the state-of-the-art weaponry and its nuclear ambitions as manifested in India's nuclear doctrine have further aggravated the situation," he said.

Musharraf said, "last year, India increased its Defence Budget by 28 per cent. This year it has been increased by another 14 per cent. Currently, India is conducting a military exercise involving several corps of the Indian Army with support from its air force near Pakistan border in Rajasthan."



AFP PHOTO

Chinese and Pakistani flags flutter in Islamabad on the eve of Zhu Rongji's visit on 11 May to mark the golden jubilee of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

With such developments, he said "we have to remain vigilant."

Commenting on Zhu's upcoming visit from May 11-14, Musharraf said it will be a landmark event in the history of Pakistan's relations with China.

"I am confident that it will send out a strong signal to everyone of the continuing strength and durability of multifaceted and multidimensional relationship between Pakistan and China which has a positive impact on the peace and stability of south Asia," Musharraf said.

"Our two countries have developed a comprehensive partnership in all fields during the last 50 years for mutual benefit of our

two peoples. This partnership is also in the interest of peace and stability of south Asia and the wider Asia-pacific region," he said. He said relations between Pakistan and China have remained unaffected by changes in the international environment. "In the changing geo-political and strategic environment, strong partnership between Pakistan and China will have a salutary effect on regional and global peace," Musharraf said.

Meanwhile, in an interactive meeting with Chinese journalists in Islamabad, Musharraf said Pakistan welcomed the Bush administration's perception to have balanced relations with Pakistan and India. PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 MAY 2001

Trace Pakistanis without valid visas: Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 7. - To curb the increasing clout of Pakistan's ISI in the country, the Centre has directed state governments to trace over 31,000 missing Pakistani nationals who have entered India and are living here without "valid visas" for years.

"The possibility of them working as ISI agents and their involvement in supplying arms and ammunition to the militants, especially in the border districts of the north-eastern states cannot be ruled out", highly placed home ministry sources said, quoting intelligence reports.

At least 31,543 Pakistani nationals are living in India "illegally" since 1990 and the law enforcement agencies have failed to trace them, official sources said.

"The state governments have been directed to launch a massive manhunt to detect their whereabouts and deport them as soon as possible," sources said adding "if timely action is not initiated by the state administrations and other law enforcement agencies, the situation is likely to turn volatile."

Since 1997, about 853 such people have been deported. The number of deportations, which was 267 in 1997 came down to 195 in 1999 and 108 in 2000, sources said. Maharashtra has reported the largest number of "untraced" Pakistani nationals (1159), followed by 383 in Uttar Pradesh, 364 in West Bengal, 224 in Madhya Pradesh, 104 in Kerala.

Between 1990 and 1993, there was an increasing trend of such "missing/untraced"

BJP CLAIMS OPP-ISI NEXUS

NEW DELHI, May 7. - The BJP suspects that some Opposition leaders were in league with the ISI to destabilise the central NDA government, the party spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said while reacting to the arrest of six ISI agents, who were planning to kill the Tehelka chief, Mr Tarun Tejpal.

If anything would have happened to Mr Tejpal, the NDA government would have been defamed and it would have given the Opposition a handle to intensify their agitation against the government, Mr Malhotra said. The NDA had suspected such an attempt and had therefore given security cover to Mr Tejpal, he added. Mr Malhotra said that one Rashtriya Janata Dal MP is alleged to be behind the plan to kill Mr Tejpal and the Congress has been supporting the RJD in Bihar.

- SNS

Pakistani nationals, sources said. However, the statistics available with the government, showed a decreasing trend from 3048 in 1993 to 2839 in 1995 and 2496 in 2000.

MHA sources said "Some brokers are actively engaged to facilitate them in extending visas and various investigative agencies are trying to find such cases." Majority of such missing Pakistani nationals were reportedly taking shelter in Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Punjab, Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Ben-

gal. On the police criminal nexus in these states, sources said, "It is true several police officials are involved in the heinous crimes, but we don't think they will provide them protection."

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Patita Uddhar Sabha, an NGO working for the uplift of prostitutes and their children, has said intelligence agents of the ISI, the CIA and KGB frequently visit the red light areas in the country and try to gather vital information.

The BPUS president, Mr Khairatilal Bholia said, "They (intelligence agents) bring girls from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka. They move about freely in red light areas and get a lot of information from the visitors."

Mr Bholia urged the home minister, Mr L K Advani, to issue special photo identity cards to the residents of the red light areas - including brothel owners, prostitutes and their children - to curb the situation.

He said, "While several such incidents involving espionage agents of foreign countries had recently come to light, especially at the GB Road red light area in Delhi, police had been unable to track them down." He also suggested visitors should not be allowed to visit red light areas after 11 p.m..

Mr Bholia said a committee comprising senior police officials, journalists, NGOs and social workers should be formed to survey the red light areas every three months to spot the new entrants.

"This measure will generate fear among the prostitutes and they will not try to give shelter to any agent or person", Mr Bholia added.

THE STATESMAN

8 MAY 2001

We still want dialogue with Pakistan, says Vajpayee

Kamarhati, May 6

ATL BIHARI Vajpayee today said India was still willing to discuss bilateral issues with Pakistan despite Islamabad's global propaganda to the contrary and its incursion in Kargil.

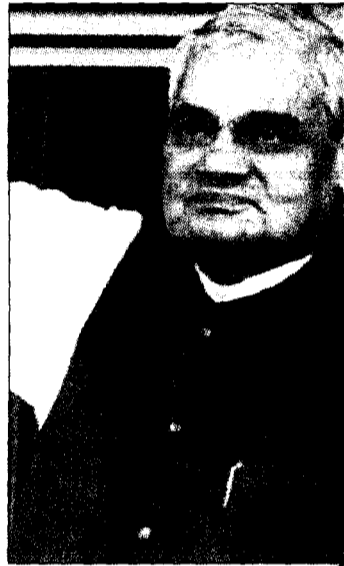
"Pakistan is telling the world that we are not willing to hold talks with them. But we say we still want discussions. It was with this aim that I rode the bus to Lahore. But then they waged war in Kargil," Vajpayee said at a BJP election rally here.

India, he said, had displayed utmost restraint in dealing with the Kargil situation by keeping within its own territorial limits despite having the military might to move into Pakistan. Expressing concern at ISI activities in India, he said Pakistan

was sending militants and spies, besides a huge quantity of arms and ammunition into the country.

The Prime Minister asserted that the Government would not compromise in any way the country's security. On the recent skirmishes on the eastern borders, Vajpayee said Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had regretted the incident and ordered an inquiry.

India would also have the incident probed, he said. "Truth must come out." Slamming those who had advocated the use of the nuclear option, he said: "Can we use the nuclear option to settle such a small dispute? There are some who want to create tension. We must be careful of them."



PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 MAY 2001

HD-1
7/5

No tripartite talks on Kashmir, says Nambiar

9nd -
Pak

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MAY 6. India has categorically ruled out any tripartite discussions on the Kashmir issue that would include Pakistan. However, it is prepared for a bilateral dialogue with Pakistan provided it is willing to address India's concerns over violence in the Valley.

In an interview with two Islamabad-based Indian correspondents here today, the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, said "for any dialogue with Pakistan, to reach a level of credibility, as far as we are concerned, we need to have a basic environment, basic climate established which can come about only when Pakistani authorities can give some indication that they are not going to encourage and would put some control on these militant organisations."

On the demand of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and Pakistan for a tripartite dialogue, he said India did not favour it.

"The situation in Jammu and Kashmir is about lowering the level of violence due to acts of terrorism encouraged by organisations such as the Lashkar and Jaish-e-Mohammad, which needs to firmly countenanced. Unless that happens and unless we can see some control on their activities, we will have to take a view that Pakistan is not interested to stem the violence".

The High Commissioner said the impression was that Pakistan would like see violence as a lever to push its own agenda and to put political pressure on India. "As far as we are concerned, we will have to

move in the direction of trying to involve the political groups of J&K to launch a process of dialogue with us, both to lower violence and to discuss the large issue of resolving the political differences." He said that as per the latest assessment, the involvement of 'foreigners or outside elements' in Kashmir has been increasing over the last few months.

"The impression I have is that there is a certain element of tacit toleration of these activities which could be based on a sense of fear and intimidation which could naturally happen in this kind of situation. It could be based on cumulative disaffection among the population."

On the appointment of Mr. K.C. Pant as an interlocutor and the possibility of a meeting between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan on the sidelines of the SAARC summit in Colombo, Mr. Nambiar said these were separate issues and linking them would be artificial.

Asked about India's readiness to engage the Musharraf regime, he said New Delhi had no reservations on holding a dialogue. "We have dealt with military regimes in the past here and I think the military regime is in effective control. As for doing business, we will do business with them. I myself met the CE and paid a courtesy call on him and that is on instructions. So I do not think that we have any problems with the military regime here."

On further movement on Kashmir in the context of what happened in the last five months, he said, "As far as I can see, the initiative taken by the Government of India in respect of Kashmir is there for everyone to see."

THE HINDU

31 MAY 2001

Pakistan seeks clarification on war games

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, May 3

THE INDIAN High Commissioner to Islamabad, A K Nambiar was summoned to the Foreign Office here last night for a clarification on the Indian Army's plans to conduct large-scale war games near the Pakistan border in early May, daily Pakistan *Observer* reported today.

"The Indian High Commissioner was conveyed Pakistan's deep concern over the press reports which suggested that India is planning to conduct biggest-ever military exercise near Pakistani borders in a clear violation of Pak-India Agreement on military exercises. Pakistan sought an official clarification over the veracity of reports," the paper said quoting a high-level Foreign Office official.

Meanwhile, military spokesman and Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations, Maj-Gen Rashid Qureshi, said that so far the matter had not been raised at the military level.

He said on April 17, India informed Pakistan that the Indian Army would conduct two separate division-size exercises with support from its Air Force in mid-May in Bikaner and Jhansi and would remain 90 m to 150 km from the international border. He alleged that India had planned to carry out bigger war games.

30 MAY 2001

No objection to gas pipeline: Pakistan

518 UNITED NEWS OF INDIA 215

DUBAI, May 1. — Pakistan has no objection to the proposed gas pipeline between Iran and India running through its territory, a Pakistani minister said.

Talking to reporters here, the Pakistan minister for commerce, industries and production, Mr Abdul Razak Dawood, said such a venture would be a "win-win" situation for all parties.

"We've indicated to Iran that we will allow the pipeline to go through Pakistan," he said.

Replying to a question about the proposed pipeline's security, he said: "When we made such an offer, we obviously intend its security will also be maintained". A local paper quoted him as saying that the ball was now in India's and Iran's court. Pakistan, he said, could join tripartite talks on the issue once India and Iran had completed their discussions on it.

"Such a project has various technical, financial, contractual and legal implications apart from investment issues and we will examine all these in an objective manner," he added.

Mr Dawood said Islamabad had indicated its willingness to Iran on the issue a year ago.

Teheran has also favoured the passage of the pipeline through Pakistan.

India has strong reservations about Iran's proposal for establishing the pipeline via Pakistan. Security of the proposed overland pipeline, assured supply of gas and the question of no country having arbitrary or unilateral control to run off the energy source are among the security considerations which make India wary. The issue was also touched during Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Teheran last month but no decision could be taken on it.

THE STATESMAN

2 MAY 2001

Pak. naval ships in Myanmar on eve of Musharraf visit

By Atul Aneja

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NEW DELHI, APRIL 30. Within days of the maiden visit to Myanmar by the Pakistan Chief Executive, General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistani warships are concluding a visit to Yangon. The warships, Tipu Sultan, a destroyer, and Sushak, a Daphne class submarine, are holding joint manoeuvres with the Myanmar Navy in the Bay of Bengal. The Pakistani tanker, Mobin, is also part of the flotilla. These ships will move out of the Myanmar waters tomorrow, when Gen. Musharraf is expected to arrive in Yangon. After concluding his visit to Myanmar, Gen. Musharraf will move on to Vietnam.

The presence of the Pakistani warships has evoked a mixed response within the Government.

The Navy, on its part, has 'noted' the presence of the warships, but is taking the visit in its

stride. It is of the view that port calls in general are "routine" and these ships have been sent by Pakistan to participate in a maritime defence exhibition at Singapore.

However, another section within the security establishment is not taking such a benign view.

It is pointed out that the visit should be looked at "politically" and not in isolation. One view that is being expressed is that Pakistan, through the ship visit, is sending a signal to India of its intent to influence its eastern neighbourhood. Pakistan, it is said, has ever since the emergence of the Sheikh Hasina Government in Bangladesh, looked for a toe hold along India's eastern neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, it has made a concerted effort to cultivate Myanmar, a country with which its "all weather" friend China has close ties.

Pakistan, sources point out, is involved in training officers of the Myanmar Air Force as well as

army personnel in long gunnery courses. It has supplied arms and ammunition worth 2.5 million dollars in March-April 1999 and two of its delegations visited the Coco Islands in 1997-98. A surveillance radar at Coco islands monitors India's missile tests at Balasore. Prior to the naval visit, a Pakistani defence college team had also visited Myanmar.

The visit by the Pakistani vessels has been preceded by a high profile visit by a Chinese military delegation which left Myanmar last week. Led by the Deputy Chief of the PLA General Staff, the eight-member team concluded its annual visit to Myanmar in late April. The delegation has also toured Nepal and Sri Lanka. Besides, a Chinese submarine reportedly surfaced at the Myanmar port of Sittwe recently.

Sources point out that the accent of the Musharraf visit may be on expanding the military cooper-

ation with Myanmar, though Pakistan may also offer its expertise in the agriculture sector to Yangon. During the visit, Gen. Musharraf is expected to visit the Bahadur Shah Zafar memorial and offer a donation for its renovation.

"Realists" within the Indian establishment say that New Delhi cannot expect Myanmar to be unduly inclined towards it. Nevertheless, it does expect Myanmar, especially after recent high profile visits, to show sensitivity to India's security concerns.

India, for instance, would resent either China or Pakistan to meddle in an area west of the Chindwin river, a key tributary of the legendary Irrawady. That would mean exposing India's troubled north east, especially Nagaland, to external forces. New Delhi will also find Pakistani access to the strategic Coco Islands unacceptable.

THE HINDU

1 MAY 1999

Hurriyat rejects Kashmir talks sans Pak

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 26 APRIL

THE HARDLINERS in the 23-party Hurriyat Conference seemed to have prevailed over the doves with its executive council on Thursday rejecting the Centre's offer of talks on Kashmir, saying that only tripartite talks involving Pakistan could resolve the vexed issue.

After an hour-long meeting of the conglomerate's executive in Srinagar, Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat declared that "a just, ever-lasting and honourable solution to the Kashmir issue could be found only through tripartite talks involving Pakistan." Calling for talks to be held in the "right direction", Mr Bhat insisted that a

Hurriyat delegation be allowed to travel to Pakistan to talk to the government and militant leaders.

Sources in the government on Thursday attributed the Hurriyat's hawkish line on the pro-Pakistan leanings of its leaders. Hurriyat executive member Syed Ali Shah Geelani — known to be a pro-Pakistan hawk — had met Pakistan High Commission Ashraf Jehangir Qazi on Wednesday and is believed to have discussed the Centre's Kashmir offer with him.

It may be recalled that it was the inclusion of Mr Geelani in the proposed Hurriyat delegation for Pakistan, that had prevented the government from clearing the visit. The government, fearing that Mr Geelani might exploit the visit

for anti-India propaganda, had refused to issue a passport to him, which in turn ensured that the Hurriyat mission never took off. In any case, the government has ruled out tripartite talks.

The Hurriyat executive's decision to persist with its Islamabad mission comes even as executive member Abdul Ghani Lone had recently described this as "a personal opinion of Mr Bhat" and advocated a more liberal and open approach.

The Hurriyat's dismissal of the Centre's offer on Thursday is however unlikely to derail the government's peace dialogue. It may be recalled that Union home minister L. K. Advani had recently pointed out that while the

Hurriyat will be invited for the talks, it will be up to them to either accept or reject the offer. Mr Pant, he had said, will continue to talk to other J&K representatives — including the panchayat leaders, political parties, bodies such as Panun Kashmir and Ladakh Autonomous Council — regardless of the Hurriyat's response.

On its part, the 23-party conglomerate — after having dragged its feet over the offer by the Centre's emissary, Mr K. C. Pant, to join other Kashmiri groups and organisations in resolving the issue — on Thursday also dismissed the government's offer to talk to a cross-section of J&K organisations as "inviting a crowd".

"A crowd is always a crowd.

Therefore such a process of talks cannot lead us anywhere. We will not board a train which leads nowhere," he said and insisted that the Hurriyat alone be involved in the peace talks "as it represents the sentiments of the people of Jammu and Kashmir." "We are prepared to talk to India in New Delhi, Pakistan in Islamabad and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in 'Azad Kashmir'," Mr Bhat said.

Maintaining that the Hurriyat's Pakistan mission must take shape, he said "If we are allowed to go to Pakistan it will turn out to be a new leaf. We have to involve the Pakistan government and militant leadership in the talks for an everlasting solution to the Kashmir issue."

27 APR 2001

No Pak, no talks: Hurriyat

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, April 26

THE ALL-PARTY Hurriyat Conference today rejected the Centre's dialogue offer through its interlocutor K C Pant, saying the offer was inadequate and fell short of the fundamental pre-requisites that would lead to resolution of Kashmir issue.

Professor Abdul Gani Butt, the amalgam chairman, said at Hurriyat's Raj Bagh headquarters after today's executive meeting that the offer would not lead anywhere. "The offer should be purposeful (and must) lead to (a) real destination", he said.

Butt said peace could be guaranteed only if the core issue of Kashmir was addressed. "Unless some stark realities are accepted and acknowledged while talking on Kashmir, neither can the

issue be resolved nor can peace be restored", he said.

The Hurriyat chairman said the Kashmir problem could be resolved only through tripartite talks - involving all three parties - India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat Conference.

The Hurriyat Conference was the sole representative of Kashmiri people and only it should be invited for the dialogue, he said.

"We represent the aspirations and wishes of the Kashmiri people including Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah, and only we should be invited for talks. New Delhi has invited a crowd, and we cannot talk in a crowd," he said.

Questioning New Delhi's real intent, he said, by inviting a crowd, the Centre had sought to limit "our representative character". The issue of Kashmir would lose its international character

once "we are engaged at an internal level dialogue" he pointed out. Any dialogue on Kashmir must involve Pakistan and the Hurriyat as the sole representative of Kashmiri people, Butt stressed.

When Prime Minister Vajpayee declared the cease-fire, "we took a bold initiative and suggested that a Hurriyat team be allowed to visit Pakistan. That was a right step in the right direction. But "as in the past, hard-line elements sabotaged the move," he said. The Hurriyat still wanted to be allowed to visit Pakistan as a "prelude to tripartite talks to find out a solution to the Kashmir issue," Butt added.

The Hurriyat response to the talks offer came after two weeks of intensive parleys among all components of the multi-party amalgam.

(12)

Indo Pak

HF 1 27/3

Indo-Pak. Foreign Secys. may meet in Colombo

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 25. A meeting between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Pakistan is likely to be held in Colombo on June 8 on the sidelines of the SAARC preparatory meeting, according to the Pakistani Urdu daily, *Jang*.

Quoting diplomatic sources, it reported that the session of the Working Committee of SAARC Foreign Secretaries would begin the same day. It said the Foreign Ministries of the two countries were preparing for the meeting but strict secrecy was being maintained.

There have been speculations about the possibility of such a meeting ever since the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, hinted about it in an interview to the CNN in Washington.

Mr. Singh said in the interview, which came immediately after his interaction with the Bush Administration, that India desired

resumption of dialogue with Pakistan provided the latter was prepared to create a conducive atmosphere.

Pakistan mum

Pakistan has not reacted so far to the suggestion from Mr. Singh though the interview was splashed in a big way in all the leading Pakistani papers. *Jang* said in its report that the Pakistani Foreign Secretary would be in Colombo on June 7.

It said the Indian Foreign Secretary was also due there the same day. It said the two officials would hold talks on June 8, 9 and 10.

The Kashmir issue would be on top of the agenda and other matters and modalities for bilateral talks would also be discussed, the paper said.

The possibility of a meeting between Mr. Singh and the Pakistani Foreign Minister later this year could not be ruled out.

Pak entry to regional body 'blocked'

Musharraf irked over India's move

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

DUBAI, April 20. - Pakistan military ruler General Pervez Musharraf has hit out at India for blocking Pakistan's entry into the 19-nation Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation even as he called for a "purposeful dialogue" between the two countries to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"Pakistan has so far been denied entry into the association due to India's machinations...It is unfortunate that India once again chose to play the regional policeman and opposed Pakistan's membership of the association on totally baseless and flimsy grounds," Gen Musharraf said in interviews to English dailies of Oman ahead of Omani

ruler Sultan Qaboos bin Said's three-day official visit to Pakistan.

Gen Musharraf said: "India's action is a rebuff not only to the IOR-ARC's mandate but also to the will of member-countries for whose support Pakistan remains so grateful".

This is the first comment that the Pakistani leader has made on the IOR-ARC ministerial meeting held in Muscat earlier this month, at which Pakistan's application for membership of the IOR-ARC was debated at length.

India vehemently opposed the move to make Pakistan a member of the grouping on the ground that Islamabad was practising a discriminatory trade regime by not granting the Most Favoured Nation status to India.

New Delhi took the stand that

Islamabad could not become a member of the IOR-ARC until it did not abide by the instrument of acceptance of the association, which calls for normal trade and economic relations between the member-countries. Pakistan's application has now been deferred for discussion at the association's next meeting in Colombo in 2003.

Referring to Kashmir, Gen



Gen Pervez Musharraf

Musharraf said India and Pakistan must come out of their "old mind-set" and begin a purposeful dialogue to find a lasting solution to the issue.

Stressing that the resolution of the Kashmir issue was central for peace and stability in South Asia, Gen

Musharraf said 50 years of confrontation between India and Pakistan had adversely affected economic and social development of the entire South-Asian region.

The military ruler said: "We believe that there is no alternative to a meaningful dialogue between the two countries for the settlement of this dispute. In pursuance of this policy, Pakistan has reiterated, on a number of occasions showed its willingness to engage in a constructive and meaningful dialogue with India at any time, any level and anywhere to resolve this outstanding dispute in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions."

On the possibility of Pakistan signing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, he said his country had made its position clear on the issue.

THE STATESMAN

21 APR 2001

Masood men on 'shock' mission

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Lucknow, April 18: Police claimed that three Pakistani militants of the Jaish-e-Mohammad group were shot dead this morning by a team of the special task force at Gomtinagar in the heart of the city when they were on their way to "capture" the disputed site at Ayodhya.

The outfit was floated by Masood Azhar, one of the three militants freed by India to secure the release of passengers of the Indian Airlines plane that was hijacked to Kandahar in December 1999.

Uttar Pradesh police are "shocked" at the size of the arms cache recovered from the slain militants. They were caught with a rocket launcher, 20 grenades, an AK-47, one AK-56, two improvised explosive devices, four electronic detonators, RDX, two automatic 9 mm pistols and a bagful of live cartridges. Some of the arms had the Pakistan army seal.

A senior STF officer claimed the militants were laying out a plan to eliminate Sonia Gandhi and daughter Priyanka, besides Ashok Singhal and L.K. Advani.

An associate of the militants, who was nabbed last night, said they had hatched a plot to kill the Congress leader and her daughter as they were "soft targets", whom "no one would expect to be attacked".

The militants, identified as Salim alias Babar, a resident of Sind, Rashid and Sajjad, both from Lahore, were directly under the charge of Masood Azhar. Rashid had been in charge of Masood's personal security.

"It is not just the VHP which has its eyes on the disputed site at Ayodhya," a senior police officer said, adding that the militants, by attacking the security forces stationed at the site, wanted to make an international issue of it.

"We can actually heave a sigh of relief," state police chief M.C. Dwivedi said. He added that never before had hardcore militants been nabbed in Lucknow, that too with such a huge cache of arms.

Police said the militants had been promised another big consignment of arms once they reached Ayodhya. "We were tipped off about their movements in Uttar Pradesh by both the Intelligence Bureau and the state intelligence unit," superintendent of police Rakesh Pandey said.

He added that the police were "extremely fearful" of their agenda. "We now have proof that the Jaish-e-Mohammad is making inroads in the state," he said.

Police said the militants had visited several schools and institutions run by those "close to Pakistan" to recruit new members.

Dwivedi fears the "game is not over" yet. "We know there are more hardcore militants hiding in the state," he said. Police have zeroed in on several possible hide-outs and are keeping a close watch. "We just cannot afford to take any more chances," he added.

THE TELEGRAPH

India wants Pak to stay out of Iran pipeline project

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 9: India on Monday ruled out the involvement of Pakistan in the proposed gas pipeline project with Iran. On the eve of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Tehran, newly-appointed adviser in the ministry of external affairs K. V. Rajan said the gas pipeline between Iran and India was a bilateral issue and Pakistan was not involved in it.

On the Indo-Iran cooperation in supply of natural gas, Mr Rajan told reporters that the joint committee had recently held its third

meeting and was examining various options, including laying of a deep sea pipeline and the possibility of participation of international private sector parties in it.

"The committee has interacted with international private sector groups. Discussions in this regard are making excellent progress but no agreement has been signed so far," he said, making it clear that no agreement on the issue is expected to be signed during Mr Vajpayee's visit.

Economic issues are going to dominate the Prime Minister's four-day visit to the Gulf nation,

beginning April 10. The two sides will sign five agreements to strengthen economic ties.

Apart from economic relations, New Delhi and Tehran will also explore the potential for a long-term strategic partnership, especially in energy, petrochemical, fertilisers, information technology and other fields.

Mr K. V. Rajan said the agreements would be on trade and cooperation in energy, both hydrocarbon and non-conventional energy and information technology.

Mr Vajpayee's visit to Iran is the

first by an Indian Prime Minister in the last eight years. The last visit was by Mr P. V. Narasimha Rao in 1993. The Prime Minister will hold talks with Iran President Syed Mohammad Khatami. Apart from bilateral issues, the two sides will take up regional concerns as well.

The Afghanistan issue will figure prominently in talks as both the nations have expressed reservations over the conduct of the Taliban regime. Iran and India will explore ways to strengthen the Northern Alliance, engaged in war with the Taliban militia.

Meanwhile, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh has arrived in Tehran from Washington to join the prime ministerial delegation. Minister of state for commerce and industry Omar Abdullah will accompany Mr Vajpayee.

On the eve of the visit, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry has suggested a new transport corridor involving India, Iran, Caspian sea and Russia, instead of via Pakistan, for surface transportation of goods. It said a "positive climate" for bilateral trade prevailed between Tehran and New Delhi.

THE ASIAN AGE

17 APR 2001

Indian 'silence' disappoints Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 15. Even as the newly-appointed Kashmir peace negotiator and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, opened talks in New Delhi with "willing" groups, Pakistan has expressed "disappointment" over what it termed as the Indian silence on its December 2 proposals for resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Talking to presspersons here on Saturday, the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, said Pakistan was disappointed over the lack of response from the Indian side to the three-point formulation unveiled in the December 2 statement.

The formulation envisaged invitation to the executive of the All Parties Huriyat Conference (APHC) to visit Islamabad for discussions leading to a tripartite dialogue and exercise of maximum restraint on the Line of Control with a call to India to reciprocate the gesture. To every announcement vis-a-vis Kashmir from New Delhi since the December 2 formulation, Islamabad

made it a point to draw the attention to the statement and sought a definite response.

It is in this context that Pakistan looks at the appointment of Mr. Pant as an attempt to "divide" the Huriyat and deny Pakistan its "rightful place" at the negotiating table.

"The international community has realised the situation and has been calling for a dialogue to resolve the dispute. But, India remains unmoved", Mr. Sattar said. He claimed that the people of Kashmir were continuing their "struggle for freedom" and the international community was convinced of the genuineness of the right of the people of Kashmir for their "inalienable right to self-determination". The Minister described the speculations about various options on Kashmir as "discussion for the sake of discussion" and maintained that India and Pakistan have not had substantial discussions on the Kashmir issue since the signing of the Shimla Agreement in 1972.

"We are for a solution that is without prejudice to the recog-

nised position of Pakistan. We support the demands of the APHC. The question whether Kashmiris should accede to Pakistan or become independent is premature," he said.

Sattar for China

Mr. Sattar is leaving tomorrow on a four-day visit to China to mark the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The visit is viewed with interest as the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr. Zhu Rongji, is coming here on an official visit in the second week of May. A wide-range of issues of bilateral interest and regional and international situation is expected to be focus of the high-level visit of the Chinese Premier.

There was concern in Islamabad over the stand-off between Washington and Beijing over the detention of the American surveillance aircraft by the Chinese authorities. Obviously, there is a sigh of relief here over the resolution of the dispute.

At a meeting with the Rawalpindi Press Club Mr. Sattar said that his forthcoming visit to Beij-

ing would provide a valuable opportunity for exchange of views on regional and international developments.

"I shall speak about our efforts for peace, settlement of Kashmir, nuclear restraint and progress achieved by Gen. Pervez Musharraf's Government towards economic revival and good governance," the Minister said.

The Minister said bilateral cooperation would be a major part of his discussions in Beijing. He described the proposed visit of the Chinese premier as a "landmark event" and said both sides place special emphasis on enhancement of economic cooperation. "To that end we have been engaged in intensive preparations."

Mr. Sattar said that Pakistan-China relations have continued to flourish and leaders of the countries use vivid metaphors to describe the friendship. "It is an all-weather friendship; it is strong and enduring like the Karokorum Mountains. It is an evergreen tree with deep roots. And the tree has continued to flower."

Pak pulls out of Delhi TT meet

New Delhi, April 13

PAKISTAN TODAY pulled out of the 15th Commonwealth Table Tennis Championships hours before its team was to land here, in an apparent retaliation to India's refusal to participate in the Sharjah cricket tournament.

The Pakistan team, which was cleared by the Indian Government to participate in the tournament, was scheduled to arrive here this evening by bus from Lahore but the Table Tennis Federation of India received a message conveying the country's withdrawal at the last minute.

TTFI sources said they received

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ved a phone call from the Pakistani federation this evening, informing them of the withdrawal from the championships, starting here tomorrow. No reasons were given, the sources said.

But Pakistan blamed India for its pullout from the TT championships, saying a no-objection certificate to its team had been issued by the Indian Government only after the expiry of the deadline.

"We received the No Objection Certificate on April 12 and it was not possible to complete all the procedures and then apply for visas as the team was supposed to have left for India on April 13 by bus," Pakistan Table Tennis Fed-

eration Vice-President Iftikhar-ul-Haq was quoted by the official APP news agency as saying.

"In view of these circumstances, we are forced not to take part in the championship and it is really sad for us," he added.

However, Table Tennis Federation of India Secretary Mool Chand Chowhan had yesterday said India cleared Pakistan's participation the previous evening.

Indian recently refused permission to its cricket team to play in a triangular one-day series currently on in Sharjah, also featuring Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Agencies

Sugar stab

PAKISTAN NOW seems to be out to sabotage Indian sugar exports. As many as 36 goods trains loaded with sugar and some de-oiled cake destined for Lahore have been stranded in India as the Pakistani authorities are not sending back the railway engine for these wagons. According to the agreement, the two countries take turns in providing a railway engine for six months each. It's Pakistan's turn now

HTC, Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 APR 2001

Unmindful of the fact that Pakistani team had withdrawn from the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship to be held in New Delhi, the Shiv Sena activists are seen protesting against its participation, on Friday. Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

Akali, Sena activists stage protest against Pak. team

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, APRIL 13. Oblivious of the fact that Pakistan had pulled out of the 15th Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship, activists of the Shiv Sena and the National Akali Dal held protests — during which the Pakistan national flag was also burnt — at the Ambedkar Stadium bus terminal when the Lahore-Delhi bus reached there this evening.

Under the impression that the table tennis team from Pakistan would be on the bus, the activists of both the organisations staged vociferous protests at the bus terminal around the time the bus arrived under a heavy police escort.

About 15 activists of the National Akali Dal, led by its president, Mr. Paramjit Singh Pamma, reached the terminal at about 6 p.m.. Soon after,

they held a demonstration outside the gate of the terminal and burnt the Pakistan flag. The police personnel stationed at the terminal then swung into action and arrested all the protestors.

Just as the National Akali Dal activists were being removed, the Shiv Sainiks reached the place holding aloft their own saffron flags and placards denouncing the arrival of the Pakistan team.

The Shiv Sainiks, who numbered about 30 and were led by their Delhi unit president, Mr. Jai Bhagwan Goyal, raised slogans against Pakistan and urged the team members — who were not there on the bus — to go back. Some of the activists even tried to block the bus, but were kept at a distance by the about 100-strong police force.

THE HINDU

14 APR 2011

Jaswant hints at Indo-Pak ^{HVF 10/7} foreign secy talks

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 9

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh has hinted at the possibility of a meeting of Indian and Pakistani Foreign Secretaries on the sidelines of the SAARC Standing Committee conference. The meeting is likely to be held in the second half of May, provided all member countries agree to it.

Jaswant made this remark yesterday in Washington at the end of his US visit when he asked about the possibility of the revival of talks between the two countries. The External Affairs Minister said an opportunity might be afforded by the forthcoming Standing Committee meeting to be attended by the Foreign Secretaries of all SAARC nations.

Though Pakistan has interpreted this as indication of a turn in India's policy, officials at the MEA said there was no change in country's stand that violence and talks can't go on simultaneously.

"The minister has only suggested that the coming foreign secre-

taries' conference might provide the opportunity of a meeting between the officials of the two countries on the sidelines. However, there is no firm date or venue set for the meeting. It is up to Sri Lanka, which holds the chair of SAARC, to develop a consensus among members for the meeting," a senior official said.

Lankan foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar during his December visit to New Delhi had urged India to continue technical level meetings of SAARC. India had agreed to it. On February 22, Singh assured Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga that India would not object to foreign secretary-level multilateral conference (Standing Committee) if held in the second half of May.

The SAARC went into limbo following the October 1999 coup in Pakistan. A summit was to be held in Colombo in November but was cancelled. Since then, despite Pakistan's entreaties India has stayed away from a rescheduling of the summit but allowed technical level consultations.

'Indians have done more for America'

By Anita Joshua

SAHARANPUR (U.P.), APRIL 8. Continuing his tryst with the real India that was glossed over during his Presidential visit, the former U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, put another hamlet of the country on the world map today with a whistle-stop tour of Rampur Maniharan village here this afternoon.

For the two-and-a-half hours that he spent in this "sugarcane belt," Mr. Clinton held court wherever he went — endearing himself to the crowds not just with his demeanour but also with his vote of confidence in the potential latent in India. "No nation in the world has as much potential to do well and be prosperous in the new century as India. But it all depends on educating all the girls and boys in all the villages," he said after laying the foundation stone of the Hillary Rodham Clinton Centre for Multimedia Technology.

Stating that Indians were rated highest in terms of educational qualifications and income among the 200 ethnic and racial groups in the U.S., Mr. Clinton said "Indians who have come to the U.S. have done more for America than America for them."

'Unemployed' husband

This, according to the former President — who admitted that he was standing in for his wife who was busier these days — was why he had tried to establish better relations between India and

been set up by the Vinod Gupta Charitable Foundation.

Unmindful of the mid-day heat or the dust that was kicked up by the crowd that had gathered around both institutes, Mr. Clinton mingled with the people; shaking the hand that could reach up to him from behind the security cordon. He also spent considerable time going around the two institutes.

At the Hillary Centre — also set up by the same Foundation — he was treated to two folk dances. Though he did not join in the way he did at Nayala in Rajasthan last year, he tapped his feet. And, as always, he thanked the girls for their performance while addressing the gathering. Later, he gave them more reason to smile by meeting each one of them before leaving the institute premises.

Though no effort had been made to spruce up the village for the special visitor and few in the neighbouring villages even knew of the visit, when he drove out little over an hour later, Mr. Clinton returned with more than just the Gujjar turban and 'nawabi' suit that were presented to him.

Date with Nalla: Page 15



The former U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, watching a dance by school children at Rampur in Uttar Pradesh on Sunday. — PTI

the U.S. during his Presidency. This said, the "unemployed" man added: "Our goal should be to provide education to all and ensure that Indians get the same kind of opportunities here that they get in the U.S."

Landing at the Sarsawa Airport Base shortly after noon, the previous occupant of the White House drove to Gochar College where he laid the foundation stone of the William Jefferson Clinton Science and Technology Centre that has

'India, Pak., should create climate of confidence

LONDON, APRIL 8. The former Pakistani Prime Minister, Ms. Benazir Bhutto, today favoured creation of a climate of confidence by both India and Pakistan to put the feeling of "hatred" behind them.

Both countries should start talking about safe and open border across Kashmir, allow people to cross over, get to know each other and build confidence, Ms. Bhutto said answering questions from listeners of Sunrise Radio, Asia's largest private network here. "I hope we can have successful negotiations with the Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, for a better future," she said.

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Asked how she proposed to tackle the ticklish Kashmir issue, Ms. Bhutto said, "Kashmir dispute has led to four wars and bloodshed on both sides. Kashmiris have been killed and Indian troops have been killed. I am now asking both India and Pakistan to help create a climate of confidence building." She said part of the blame for the hate relationship lay in the cold war situation and on the leadership of the two countries. "It is very important to look at the issue in context. Is it one of concessions or is it one of understanding each other's points of view."

"I think it would be wrong if I

expected India to concede or India expected Pakistan to concede (on Kashmir).

What we need to do is to think of Kashmiri people, think of peace, think of how we can make south Asia a great market that can compete in the 21st century with other markets. "And if you look at it, instead of I win, you lose scenario, if we look at it as win-win scenario, moving for bringing people together in a state of amity and friendship, I think all of us can win. There are some people who think that the LoC ought to be recognised so that it could lead to peace and others feel there can be backlash if LoC is recognised. So we are

obsessed with LoC." On the new programme she would put forth to the people if voted to power, Ms. Bhutto said her topmost priority would be to ensure peace within the country and peace within the region.

She admitted that there was a lot of pressure from the military in Pakistan on an elected government and a lot of pressure from the civil service on the Indian Government on the Kashmir issue.

"May be what we need to do is think more about retreat and about political relations at the highest level that can help circumvent deeply entrenched positions," she added. — PTI

THE HINDU

29 APR 2001

Infiltrators repulsed amid Pak firing

Jammu, April 7

TROOPS FOILED two infiltration attempts in Jammu division's Poonch district on Thursday, killing three militants and injuring two amid heavy firing by Pakistani soldiers, officers said today.

There was an exchange of fire between troops and a militant they spotted crossing over to the Indian side of the LoC at Panjani. A search team yesterday found the body of a militant, identified as Muddessar Hamid. An AK rifle, an under-barrel grenade launcher with six grenades and two hand grenades were found on his person.

At Kinari on the same day, troops noticed a group of six militants moving in a dense forest, about 600 metres inside the LoC. Two militants, believed to be foreign mercenaries died and two were injured as troops returned the infiltrators' fire. Pakistani

soldiers from Dheri post also fired at the Indian soldiers.

The militants were forced to beat a retreat, dragging their injured mates with them.

Indian soldiers later found one 60 mm mortar, seven 60 mm mortar bombs, 70 plastic explosive sticks, nine RPG boosters and some cartridges in the area.

13 killed in encounters: Eleven militants, a BSF jawan and a civilian have been killed and seven soldiers injured in gun fights with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir since last evening, an official spokesman said today in Srinagar.

A joint team of special operations group of local police and security forces cordoned off Neel Jarari village in Doda district yesterday. Six foreign mercenaries were killed and two security-men injured in the shootout that ensued.

Four AK assault rifles, a grenade thrower, four grenades,

246 rounds and a wireless set were recovered from the foreign militants, who had been involved in a large number of operations including killing of members of the minority community last year at Kunda Hansraj and some truck drivers on a national highway.

Security forces shot dead three militants including two Pakistani mercenaries from Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami in two encounters at Bata-Dodian and Mendhar in Poonch last night. A huge cache of arms and ammunition was recovered from the slain militants.

Security forces also recovered two AK assault rifles, three wireless sets, a rocket, four rifle grenades, 174 rounds of ammunition from a militant hideout last night at Kulhind-Ogad. Militants kidnapped one Hyder Ali from his house at Premnagar and set ablaze a government school at Narain-Chhatroo in Doda last

night. A BSF jawan, Constable Vijay Raj, was killed when militants detonated an improvised explosive device at Nathipora-Wadoora in Sopore area of Baramulla district in north Kashmir this morning.

The militants are believed to have triggered the IED possibly with a remote control when a vehicle of 84th BSF battalion was passing. The vehicle was damaged in the explosion.

Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants were killed and five security personnel wounded in a fierce encounter which lasted for several hours at Cheerhar village in Watlab area of Sopore today.

The shootout started when militants hiding in a house fired on security forces trying to flush them out. Police found the body of a civilian from Neegan in Kokernag area of Anantnag district in south Kashmir last evening.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 8 APR 2001

India not serious

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 6 Pakistan today slammed India for its effort aimed at imposing a military solution on Kashmir and said that if India was sincere about resolution of the conflict, it should respond positively to the December 2 formulation of the military establishment.

Formally reacting to the offer of a political dialogue with all sections of peace-loving people of Jammu and Kashmir, contained in the latest policy statement on Kashmir, a spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office accused India of being not serious about finding a peaceful settlement to the imbroglio. Leave alone acknowledgment of the change in the nuance of the Indian statement on the offer of a bilateral dialogue, there was not even a mention of it in the three-paragraph statement read out by the spokesman.

Perhaps the response of Pakistan Foreign Office could not have been different. In one of his latest interviews, the Pakistan Chief Executive and the military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, dubbed the Kashmir ceasefire a 'farce'. In another interview he had dismissed the concerns of India arising out of activities from across the border as 'baseless'.

The sum and substance of today's statement was that despite the professed declaration of ceasefire in Kashmir, the Indian forces "continue their 'terror campaign' and the latest state-

ment is a reflection of its persistent effort to impose a military solution in Kashmir, avoid meaningful talks and mislead the world opinion."

"The requirements of a meaningful dialogue were outlined in Pakistan's statement of December 2. India must stop its repression in Kashmir, respond to Pakistan's restraint, resume meaningful dialogue with Pakistan with the participation of the Kashmiri representatives and for this purpose allow the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to visit Pakistan for consultation," the statement said.

The spokesman said if India genuinely sought peace it should abandon its policy of violence and state terrorism. "It must respond sincerely to Pakistan's proposal of December 2 for a settlement of the Kashmiri dispute consistent with the aspiration of the Kashmir people and in accordance with the Security Council resolutions", he said.

When asked whether Pakistan intended to complain to the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the 'refusal' of India to resume the stalled dialogue, the spokesman said Mr. Annan, during his recent visit to the sub-continent had counselled both the countries to sit down at the negotiating table. "His advice is a reflection of the world opinion. Refusal of India to heed the counsel shows its obduracy".

Militant organisation in Pakistan virtually echoed the same sentiments. Within hours after

about talks: Pak.

the statement in New Delhi on Thursday, the Hizb-ul Mujahideen denounced it as a 'gimmick'. Today it was the turn of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and other militant outfits to debunk it.

The Jammu and Kashmir People's League (JKPL) dismissed the latest Indian statement as 'senseless'. Its chairman, Muhammad Farooq Rehmani, said given the nature of Kashmir dispute, there was no scope for a bilateral dialogue. In a separate statement, the former Finance Minister and track-II activist, Dr. Mubashir Hassan, said the latest Indian offer would disappoint many in Pakistan and Kashmir. "It is too much general. However, an offer, seemingly inadequate, is better than no offer".

He, however, added, "I don't reject Mr. Pant's nomination. But if you repeat exercises undertaken by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah (1975 Accord), where will we go then? All relevant parties to the dispute — India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat — would have to engage themselves in a meaningful dialogue to address the core issue of Kashmir."

Echoing similar sentiments, former Hurriyat chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, said New Delhi needed to give more clarification on its offer of talks. "All that the Indian Government wants is the dialogue for the sake of peace. The offer makes no mention of any concrete initiative or even honest motive for a permanent solution," the Mirwaiz said. — PTI

No peace without us: Hurriyat

SRINAGAR, APRIL 6. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference today termed the Vajpayee Government's Kashmir offer an exercise in futility. The Hurriyat chairman, Mr. Abdul Gani Bhat, said "the manner in which New Delhi is dealing with the vexed Kashmir issue is without any purpose".

"Unless the Centre fulfils its earlier commitment of allowing a Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) to hold talks with their counterparts and militant leaders there, no purpose can be served by entering into any kind of dialogue with the Government," he

THE HINDU

H&D-13

Musharraf rejects Lahore process

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NEW DELHI, APRIL 6. The Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, has virtually rejected the Lahore process stating it did not address the main issue of Kashmir.

"I don't see it (Lahore process) as a low or even the high point because, really, the Lahore summit was not addressing the main issue.

It is just a process which would never have carried forward the dialogue in a concrete manner," he said in an interview with noted journalist, Mr. M. J. Akbar.

He said everyone must realise that the Kashmir problem was the main source of tension between India and Pakistan for which the two countries had fought wars. "Anybody who thinks that Pakistan and India can get very chummy, friendly and cooperate without a solution to the Kashmir

issue, is not a practical and realistic individual."

He had even suggested to the Pakistan Government to include Kashmir in the final draft of the Lahore summit.

The ultimate draft gave the impression that Kashmir was a minor irritant between the two countries and there were many other big issues among them.

"I think it should be Kashmir and all other issues and not all other issues and Kashmir. It ought to be like that if we are realistic and want to improve relations."

Gen. Musharraf also expressed regret over India's decision not to play in Sharjah and said as far as cricket was concerned the two countries should start playing without "talks". "It is unfortunate that the Indian Government is acting against the interests of Indian cricketers." — UNI, PTI

THE HINDU
37 APR 1991

Vajpayee is an elder, I trust him: Musharraf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

PAKISTAN'S military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf says he would have no inhibitions in saluting Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee if he comes to Pakistan and describes the Indian leader as a person whom he would like to "trust".

"I have no inhibitions in saluting Vajpayee, he is elder to me. If he comes now I will salute him again. I will shake hands with him," Musharraf told a senior Indian journalist refusing reports that he had declined to shake hands with Vajpayee during his visit to Lahore in February 1999.

Asked if he "trusted" Vajpayee, he said "I would like to

trust him because to me he look as a person who would like to resolve that (Kashmir) dispute."

Recalling a statement by Vajpayee earlier this year that included the Prime Minister's views on Kashmir, Musharraf said "Vajpayee's body language and his statement seem that he really wants to move ahead. I would like to move ahead. I can certainly think I can certainly."

The Pakistani military ruler, however, said he did not trust the BJP.

"I do not have that kind of



trust (in people around Vajpayee)", he said.

Terming reports that he refused to shake hands with Vajpayee in Lahore as "not the fact at all", Musharraf said "who is say-

ing all this? I really don't.... You ask Mr Vajpayee."

He recalled as having told then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that since there would be a lot of political activity at Wagah border when Vajpayee reached there by bus, "it doesn't behove of them (men in uniform) to be in masses of people pushing and shoving around and the three service chiefs standing there..."

The General said Sharif agreed with his view that the three service chiefs would be at the

Governor House in Lahore where Vajpayee would fly by helicopter.

"So we did not go to Wagah. I was there with the air and naval chiefs at the Governor House in Lahore. The moment the helicopter came, I saluted him first and I shook hands with him first, and we went inside the house. I sat with him for half-an-hour," he said.

"I don't think it ever came into my mind that I should not shake hands with him. He is an elder and he is a leader of India. I will shake hands with him. What's my problem. And this has never happened. I don't know how...I'd like to ask you how's this come about? Who's spreading this? This is not the truth," Musharraf said.

Pakistan coast guard arrests 65 Indian fishermen, seizes 11 boats

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan coast guard has arrested 65 Indian fishermen for allegedly fishing in Pakistani waters in the Arabian Sea.

Pakistan coast guard official Sayed Mirza told journalists in Karachi that the Indian fishermen, along with 11 boats, were seized on Wednesday at the shallow waters near Badin-Thatta along the Pakistani sea coast.

They were later brought to Karachi and sent to local prisons. Cases of violation of Pakistan's Foreigners Act and Fisheries Act were also registered against them,

he said.

With Wednesday's arrests the total number of Indian fishermen held in Pakistan jails went up to 285. Over 50 boats of the Indian fishermen are also in the custody of Pakistani officials.

The arrests of Indian fishermen followed the recent decision of the two countries to release large number of fishermen held in both Indian and Pakistan jails. Following the understanding, India released 160 Pakistani fishermen, while Islamabad released 84 Indian fishermen. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 APR 2001

Pak rejects peace offer, says India not serious

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 6 APRIL

PAKISTAN ON Friday categorically rejected the Indian peace initiative, accusing India of "not being serious." Pakistan's rejection was accompanied by a similar response by the pro-Pakistan Hurriyat Conference and the Pakistan-based militant group, Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT).

"The offer is part of the political design to subvert the ongoing struggle," the LeT spokesman Abu Usama said. "India just wants to take the pressure off its security forces but it will not succeed in this," he added.

Hurriyat leaders rejected the talks offer, calling it an exercise in futility unless they were allowed to go to Pakistan to take part in talks.

Observers also pointed out that the biggest militant group in Kashmir, the Hizbul Mujahideen, had not yet commented on the offer.

Indian sources said the Pakistan response reflected an unrealistic view of the current situation in the sub-continent. Their stand is premised on the demand to allow the Hurriyat leaders to travel to Pakistan.

Pakistan is attempting a cover-up with its statement that "India is persisting in its efforts aimed at imposing a military solution in



FOREVER MILITANT: A group of Kashmiri Muslims scuffle with security forces while shouting anti-India slogans in Narbal, near Srinagar, on Friday. — AP

Kashmir, avoiding meaningful talks and misleading world opinion."

Although some of the Hurriyat leaders do possess travel documents, India will not allow a Hurriyat team with Syed Ali Shah Geelani as part of it, to travel to Pakistan. With his hardline, pro-Pakistani views, India believes that no credible purpose will be served by sending the Hurriyat to Pakistan.

Most importantly, India does not regard the Hurriyat as the "real

representative" of the Kashmiris.

Pakistan's focused attention on getting the Hurriyat Conference across is seen not only as a palpable lack of any clear strategy, but a pointer to a very fundamental dilemma within Pakistan — of whether the Kashmir dispute is political or religious.

Many Indian observers now believe that no real political solution to Kashmir will ever be acceptable to Pakistan, because its very basic premise for the dispute lies elsewhere.

The Economic Times

5 APR 2001

HISTORY OF HATE

India, Pakistan Must Rise Above Past Failures

THE Kashmir ceasefire needs to be viewed in the larger context of Indo-Pakistani relations. Should the past psyche of Hindu-Muslim conflicts be allowed to deteriorate into chaotic fundamentalism on both sides, or should it be a fresh new millennium opportunity with new sane mindsets? Put in a different way, will Hindu-Muslim, India-Pakistan conflicts be allowed to drag us back to medieval times, or do both societies, and, as a result, the whole of South Asia move into the dangers posed by globalisation.

The mindsets of leaders on both sides needs to surmount historical conflicts aided by the media and public opinion. First, what are the historical realities which created long conflicts. The history of the last millennia has seeped into Hindu and Muslim consciousness. Islam caused hurt to Hinduism by conquest and conversion over seven centuries. In that time there were palliatives and a little harmonisation. Jehangir saw a remarkable similarity between Sufism and Vedanta. Dara Shikoh shared that catholicism. But, there were also remembered symbols of counter-attack, Rana Pratap and Shivaji.

PROGRESS

There was a brief period of anti-British reconciliation between the Mutiny of 1857 and the Khilafat movement of 1919. But in the same period, Hindu progress in education, employment and business, and the Muslim incapacity to cope with a changing, modernising world, brought political separateness. The Muslim League turned Jinnah and Iqbal from nationalists to separatists, the makers of Pakistan. Rioting drew the blood of both communities over decades.

Muslims forgot that their hurt psyche over the loss of empire was due to the British, not the Hindus, and in the last run-up to Independence, they seemed to lack an appreciation of the hurt which 700 years of conquest and domination had inflicted on Hindus. Modern Muslim politics from Jinnah to Suhrawady to Banatwala, to revenge-filled Imam Bukhari fed on the backwardness of the Muslim masses and produced medieval separatism.

When the political testing time of sharing power came after 1937 in the states, Nehru could not rise above the petty

The author is formerly of the Indian Civil Service.

By AD MODDIE

politics of sharing power more equitably. That was a critical lack of trust. The road to Pakistan was paved in that last decade before Independence in mutual distrust. And Nehru's foreign concept of secularism (based on the Western history of conflicts between Church and State) was irrelevant in India. If he sought a truer Indian synthesising "dharma", he should have turned to Sufism,

in environmental policies in harmony with Nature — all on the side of sanity and progress.

So the fundamental issue is not a splintered response to the Kashmir ceasefire. It is only one more statesmanly opening of the door of lost opportunities to make this rise above the continuous failures of the past. It is whether Hindu and Muslim can rise above a millennium of social and state failures and find a higher mutual destiny which can then benefit the smaller surrounding states of South Asia also. This is strategic realism, not wishful thinking. What could be the elements of that shared, happier destiny in this 21st century? Let me suggest the obvious.

1. A greater sense of mutual security between Hindu and Muslim, India and Pakistan, the boundaries of which are as much in the psyche as in territory. Then a huge peace bonus devoted to the uplift of over 1,200 million people across those boundaries and the removal of the shame of the world's worst poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, and the largest numbers of the wretched of the earth. Also mutual anti-terrorist global interests, as terrorism is a global virus disrupting societies. Pakistani generals, politicians and public opinion must know that the modern sane world cannot equate terrorism and "jihad".

ENERGY

2. The sharing of energy flows — as of the Indus water flows earlier. Poverty means low energy consumption.

3. An economic mutuality in agriculture, industry, trade and services, the big healer of poverty and unemployment, which form the basis of fundamentalist terrorism. And the old economy bolstered by mutuality in the new economy of IT and bio-technology could put South Asia and Saarc on a rising road in the new century.

4. There could be a mutuality in tourism, eco-tourism and culture tourism of enormous dimensions, multiplying wealth and employment in the two countries along with the revival of the Mughal-style composite culture in arts, architecture, cinema, literature, and philosophy.

Will the leaders of both countries, political and religious, be sane enough? Their place in history lies there. Or else, the world's worst form of anarchy and the collapse of governments and societies are painful realities staring both countries in the face. Enough damage has been done already.



Nanak, and Kabir, meaningful Indian roots.

After Nehru, Congress proclaimed secularism, but blatantly played the communal and caste cards. Kashmir could have been India's prize in a synthesising "dharma", but politics gave rise to prolonged corruption, maladministration and rigging of elections. Nehru's secular vision proved hollow.

The political mistake of taking the Kashmir issue to the UN was compounded by not having a plebiscite in the first three years after the Pakistani raids of 1947, when the Kashmir people's verdict would have gone in favour of India. So India's political failure in Kashmir in the last 50 years has compounded a wider centuries-old problem of hurt psyches.

BATTLES

Two fundamentalisms have torched those psyches. They are, ironically, fighting past battles from Somnath to mosque pulpits, to Ayodhya, and now in ancient Buddhist/Hindu Afghanistan. All fundamentalisms share three things: first an irrational violent insanity; second, an inability to cope with the problems of the contemporary world of hunger, education, and development of people, their human rights and the Rule of Law, the institutions of democracy, and international problems of trade, technology and capital flows. The third is a lack of future vision. Hence frustration and anger. Globally and regionally, the future lies in liberal democracy, in liberal economies, and

THE STATESMAN

3 APR 2001

Pak. militant groups reject Advani's talks offer

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 2. Pakistan-based militant organisations have "rejected" the offer of talks with Kashmiri groups without the involvement of Pakistan even as the Musharraf Government has said that the Union Home Minister, Mr. Lal Krishna Advani's statement reflects the 'confusion' of the Indian Government over the Kashmir issue.

The organisations which have rejected Mr. Advani's offer of talks include the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which called off its unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir after its demand for a tripartite dialogue was rejected by New Delhi, the Harkat-

ul-Mujahideen and the Al-Badr.

In his reaction to Mr. Advani's statement, the Director-General of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), Maj. Gen. Rashid Quereshi, said in a television interview that it reflected confusion at the highest level on the Kashmir question and was certainly not the way to move forward for resolving the conflict.

The chief military spokesman said in the last few months India had been making conflicting and contradictory statements on its approach towards resolution of the Kashmir dispute. "At one stage they said yes to the Hizb and at another, no to the Hurriyat.

The flip-flop continues."

Maj. Gen. Quereshi said it was not clear whether it was the Home Ministry or the Foreign Ministry which was presenting the correct picture of the Indian standpoint. "There is confusion and need for clarification."

On whether the military establishment had decided to take up the issues of border fencing and firing from across the border with India, Maj. Gen. Quereshi said while he was not aware of such an initiative, Pakistan was clear in its understanding of the subject.

"The Working Boundary is a disputed area and no one is allowed to alter its status. As we

have already stated we would not allow India to fence the border along the Working Boundary."

In his reaction to Mr. Advani's statement, the Hizb spokesman, Mr. Salim Hashmi, said there was no question of accepting the offer of a bilateral dialogue with India. "Reluctance on the part of India was one of the main reasons for the Hizb to end its unilateral ceasefire in July last year. As far as we are concerned there is no change in the ground situation," he said. The Hizb activists would continue to target the Indian military installations and troops engaged in combat with the mujahideen.

THE HINDU

APR 2001

3 APR 2001

India won't play at Sharjah for three years

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, April 1. - India will not allow its cricket team to participate in the three-nation Sharjah tournament. The government has also told the cricket board that the team should not play at "non-regular venues" for at least three years.

The other two countries, taking part in the tournament, are Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

"The government has decided, after careful consideration, that Indian cricket team should not participate in cricket tournaments at non-regular venues such as Sharjah, Singapore, Toronto, etc, for at least three years," an official release said here today. "The BCCI has accordingly been informed that Indian cricket team shouldn't participate in the forthcoming tournament in Sharjah, commencing from 8 April, 2001," it said. The decision is in keeping with India's policy of not maintaining cricketing ties with Pakistan after the Kargil war in 1999. It comes four days after tournament organisers lobbied hard to ensure the country's participation.

India twice pulled out of the annual Sahara Cup bilateral tournament in Toronto and refused to grant the team the permission to tour Pakistan late last year. Pakistan's continued support to cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir was cited as the chief reason behind the refusal.

Muthiah's reaction: Reacting to the decision, the BCCI president, Mr AC Muthiah, today said former Indian Test cricketers would stand to lose if the team is not allowed to play at non-regular venues like Sharjah, adds PTI from Chennai.

"Former Indian Test cricketers would be the losers as we (BCCI) were nominating a few cricketers every year for receiving some benefit from the tournament," he said.

The board would abide by the government decision, Mr Muthiah said.

Pak response: In response to India's announcement to pull out of the Sharjah tournament, the Pakistan Cricket Control Board today said it would stick to its decision to boycott India in all future tournaments, adds PTI from Islamabad.

The board's decision not to play India in future would be forwarded to the Pakistan government for approval by its chairman, Gen Tauqir Zia.

The board director, Brig Munawar Ahemmed Rana, said Pakistan's decision not to play India enjoys popular support.

However, the final decision in this regard would be taken by the government.

Earlier this week, Gen Zia had told a meeting of South Asian umpires that Pakistan wouldn't play against India from now on. He made it clear that Pakistan would not swallow the insult easily.

Senior Pakistani cricketers, including Imran Khan has, expressed support to PCCB's decision.

THE STATESMAN

72 APR 2001

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26/3

'India not responding to initiatives for talks'

Indo Pak

By B. Muraldhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 27. Pakistan today accused India of "stepping up" repression in Kashmir despite the declared policy of ceasefire and complained about "non-response" to its meaningful initiatives for resumption of the stalled dialogue and resolution of the dispute.

Addressing a press conference here, a Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman talked about the December 2 formulation of Pakistan extending an invitation to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to visit Islamabad for discussions that could lead to a "result-oriented" dialogue and said unfortunately, India had chosen not to respond to the initiative.

He said that while Pakistan had been observing maximum restraint on the Line of Control and pulled back some of its troops on the international bor-

der, India had stepped up violence on the people in Kashmir.

He accused the Indian security forces in Kashmir of attacking unarmed civilians, killing people taken into custody and making arbitrary arrests.

The spokesman said that the actions of the Indian Government in Kashmir had exposed the hollowness of its claim of a ceasefire. Asked if the Tehelka scandal could derail the Kashmir peace process, he said Pakistan considered it to be an internal matter of India.

On the nuclear programme of Pakistan, he said Pakistan would continue to maintain "credible nuclear deterrence at the minimum possible level."

At the same time, he maintained that minimum deterrence did not mean a "static programme" and it would be influenced by the developments in the region.

Comments of the Foreign Of-

fice spokesman on the nuclear programme of Pakistan were almost an echo of what the Chief Executive and the military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had stated while addressing participants of "weapons firing camp 2001" on Monday in Baluchistan.

In his address, Gen. Musharraf had said that Pakistan would maintain minimum deterrence to ensure its security in view of the ongoing tensions with India.

"We are always outnumbered and must maintain a minimum deterrence which we will continue to do. We will maintain the deterrence to such a level that will ensure the country's security."

He made a reference to the "growing" military disparity between Pakistan and India in the light of India's massive hike in defence spending and its recent arms deals with Russia.

THE HINDU

28 MAR 2001

PLATFORM | Ashok K. Mehta

Generally speaking

The military, which is the predominant voice of Pakistan, wants India to engage with the Musharraf regime to solve the Kashmir problem. On its part, India should be ready to compromise

IN JANUARY, Pakistani generals visited India. Never before had so many retired Pakistani army men — including the last chief of army staff, General Jahangir Karamat — invaded Delhi on multiple Track II security dialogues. These warriors came armed with *mantras* for peace. Also present were two Chinese strategic experts and one American of Pakistani origin, Shireen Tahir-Kheli. That Pakistani and Indian generals, along with the Chinese, sat at the same table was itself an achievement.

Kashmir can neither be wished away nor put on the backburner. The origin of *jihad* in Kashmir is being linked to the recapture of Mazar-e-Sharif by the Taliban in August 1998. The dominant expression and plea by the visiting generals was for re-engagement: breaking out of what they called a 'zero-dialogue situation' to a meaningful engagement on Kashmir.

Some of the salient thoughts they left behind were: wars have never resolved any problems; the yearning for peace is genuine on both sides of the border; the Kashmir *masla* is an Indian creation exploited by Pakistan; it is turning from a political to a politico-religious problem; Pakistan would have no problem accepting India's dominant role in the region and that it does not have the economic capacity to compete with India in a crippling arms race; Pakistan is not seeking parity with India; that China is indeed an issue in India and any settlement now on Kashmir and other issues will be lasting as it would be underwritten by the military.

These generals realised India's reservations in engaging a military regime that was responsible for Kargil as well as for the takeover of the Pakistani State. But the option painted was worse — one of dealing with a fundamentalist order rather than a good Muslim military authority. It was suggested that both countries could jointly defuse religious bigotry.

If true, this makes sense, as the call in Pakistan for *jihad* in Kashmir can have an unpredictable effect on the 140 million Muslims in India — not to mention the communal fillip this would provide the Hindu diehards. The argument was that India engaging Musharraf would help him in undercutting *jihad*.

Pakistanis are acutely conscious of the fact that *jihadis* are a bigger threat to Pakistan than to India. The Delhi dialogue has established one thing without doubt: if it wants, the Pakistani military regime can rein in the *jihadis*.

However, the dialogue has clarified that the main reason for not muzzling the *jihadis* is the perception that they are the ones who have secured the 'hard-won advantages' in the 'freedom struggle'. Their gains are seen as a leverage to re-engage on Kashmir.

While the idea of *jihad* is appealing to Pakistanis, the generals have come to a better understanding of the overwhelming Indian compulsions in not engaging a neighbour that disguises terrorism as *jihad* and employs it as instrument of foreign policy. Karamat, in particular, saw India's difficulty in accepting unconditional talks when the *jihadis* were using symbolism in attacking the Red Fort and other

targets in Kashmir.

A fellow general even advocated Pakistani condemnation of the attack on Red Fort. What he also said was that *jihadis* would require some incentives or assurance on Kashmir to suspend their cross-border military offensive. In other words, all roads from Pakistan are leading to Kashmir.

The good thing about 'Generalspeak' is that it is shorn of diplomatese. In Pakistan's case, it conforms to the views of the military regime — though one of the generals was at pains to emphasise that his views on the India-Pakistan situation were his own and not those of Islamabad. The message received on the seminar circuit was that India should come down to earth from the moral high ground it has wrested after Lahore and Kargil.

The blame for Kashmir spinning out of control has also been laid at India's door. Lahore failed because the military was not taken on board. Kargil happened because it is rooted in Kashmir. As there is no escape from re-engagement, the two sides should settle down to talks.

These should cover four broad areas: nuclear risk reduction; Kashmir (but must go beyond stated positions); military CBMs, and brainstorming. The first, being most critical, should be delinked from the composite dialogue and the exchange started forthwith.

What the generals did not mention was that a month before, an Indian team had gone to Islamabad to evolve a nuclear restraint

regime. The exercise was bombed by the premise of 'Kashmir or nothing'. The Kashmir dilemma is what it is because, according to one of their generals, Pakistan has "no fall-back position".

Military CBMs is a good idea and should become part of the larger effort in military diplomacy. In Pakistan and China, the military plays a substantial role in both policy and decision-making.

Although this is not the case in India, the military has automatically swung into the policy-making loop after the nuclear tests and Kargil. Unlike diplomats, soldiers speak a common language and share a unique culture.

The movement of generals, even those retired, across the LoC was a good beginning to breaking the mindset of mistrust. When they say the Lahore-type process (which does not include the military) will not work, they are reminding India that in Pakistan, the army has become the ultimate arbiter of its destiny. When Karamat noted that Pakistan is a drag on India's ambitions, he was hinting that by getting Kashmir out of the way India could flow and grow to its natural size.

The roadblock to re-engagement is ending cross-border *jihad*. The prescriptive order from one of the generals — "Help Musharraf to help you" — when decoded, reads: "Begin talks with Musharraf. He will then rein in the *jihadis*."

This, in fact, is Musharraf helping Musharraf. The compromise is that instead of sequential actioning, both sides should simultaneously make a declaration of intent.



Musharraf vs Musharraf

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 MAR 2001

Delhi rejects Pak pipeline proposal

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, March 26: Delhi has stuck to its stand of not involving Islamabad in the proposed India-Iran gas pipeline project, despite Pakistan chief executive Pervez Musharraf's assurance to ensure the safety of the pipeline.

Musharraf was reported by agencies as telling newsmen in Karachi yesterday that Islamabad would "adhere to international norms in ensuring the security of the pipeline". But Delhi maintained that at the moment there was no possibility of involving a third party in a bilateral project.

"It is a bilateral agreement between India and Iran and there is no change in our stand," a senior foreign ministry official said.

However, the timing of Musharraf's assurance for the pipeline is significant. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is scheduled to visit Iran next month and the

two sides are likely to discuss the project.

India is one of the biggest consumers of Iranian gas and one of the cheapest ways of transporting it from Iran, according to many, is by laying a pipeline through Pakistani territory.

Another option is an underwater pipeline through Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone. But India is reluctant to go into any arrangement involving Pakistan. The issue came up during last month's joint commission in Teheran and the two sides decided to "explore all aspects of the gas pipeline".

The third option being spoken about is shipping the liquefied natural gas from Iran. But experts feel it will be too expensive and, therefore, not feasible.

Though he assured the proposed pipeline's safety, Musharraf ruled out normal economic and trade relations till the Kashmir



Musharraf

dispute was settled.

"We will allow it (the pipeline)... But for the development of full economic relationship with India, we need to resolve our disputes... Address the issue of Kashmir to the satisfaction of all parties and then develop economic relations between both countries," Musharraf was quoted as saying.

Stressing that there was no ch-

ange in Delhi's stand, the foreign ministry official argued that Musharraf's statement "only weakens the argument that India should try to involve Islamabad in the gas pipeline project".

Referring to a ministry of defence report he said it had been pointed out that, for its energy security, India should try to look for routes through countries that not only have cordial relations with Delhi but are also keen on developing and strengthening trade and economic relations with it.

According to estimates, the project — if it materialises and with Pakistan as part of it — will bring over \$8 billion to cash-starved Islamabad.

His country's tottering economy has, however, not deterred Musharraf from stressing that there would be no rollback in Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes or any reduction in its defence budget.

"Due to external threats faced by Pakistan, its defence budget cannot be reduced," Musharraf was quoted as saying. He pointed out that though Pakistan does not want to be involved in any arms race, it does not want to lower the minimum deterrence level.

India also ruled out the possibility of entering into an arms race in the region.

Foreign ministry spokesman R.S. Jassal hinted as much while referring to reports basing their account on the Jane's Intelligence Review which said Pakistan's nuclear might was greater than India's.

Jassal said Delhi's "minimum credible deterrent, based on proven indigenous technologies and under civilian command and control, effectively addresses any threat to the country's security and territorial integrity. There need be no ambiguity or any doubt in this regard."

U.S. and India: a lighter touch?

49-13
By C. Raja Mohan 26/3

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25. As the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, heads to the United States next week for a substantive engagement with the Bush administration, India has good reasons to believe that Washington might deal with a lighter hand some questions that have dogged Indo-U.S. relations over the years. These include the nuclear issue, Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations.

Unlike his predecessor, Mr. Bill Clinton, the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush, has no burning desire to resolve every conflict in the world. Right until the last day of his stay at the White House, Mr. Clinton was pushing the peace process in West Asia. He mastered the details of the complex negotiations and actively participated in them.

The signals from Washington are that the U.S. will now step back a bit. The new American approach to the West Asian talks has been outlined by Mr. Colin Powell, Secretary of State. The U.S. will "assist" the peace process, but not "insist" on it, Mr. Powell declared. The main impetus to the peace process, Washington now believes, must come from the parties to the dispute and not from the United States. Mr. Powell has also said that an end to violence must be a precondition for the talks between Israel and Palestine.

India believes these principles will be equally valid in the subcontinent. New Delhi has argued that it will engage Pakistan only after Islamabad's puts an end to cross-border terrorism. New Delhi should be pleased that the first hints from Washington are broadly supportive of this approach.

Equally significant for India is the fact that the U.S. will not be breathing down its neck as it did under the Clinton administration to find a solution to the Kashmir dispute.

To be sure, Mr. Bush would want to bring down the military and nuclear temperature in the subcontinent, and promote a dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad on all issues. But the expectation is that the U.S. will leave

the initiative to India and Pakistan and will be reluctant to impose itself.

At the top of Mr. Singh's agenda will be to define the substance and form of the future nuclear dialogue between India and the U.S. The more than 10 rounds of security dialogue between Mr. Singh and the then U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Strobe Talbott, after Pokhran-II helped transform bilateral relations.

The talks generated a much better appreciation in New Delhi and Washington of each other's nuclear concerns. They also became a vehicle for cooperation in new areas. For example, the Indo-U.S. Joint Working Group on terrorism was an off-shoot of the dialogue.

New Delhi and Washington must now look beyond the framework of the Jaswant-Talbott dialogue. The benchmarks that the Clinton

DIPLOMATIC NOTEBOOK

Administration had set for the improvement of Indo-U.S. relations have lost some their salience.

The most important American benchmark was India's adherence to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. But the Bush administration now believes the CTBT is fatally flawed.

Further, the U.S. determination to build a National Missile Defence system is likely to fundamentally alter the rules of the nuclear game as understood in the last five decades. This opens the door for a radical restructuring of the Indo-U.S. nuclear dialogue. Defining the elements of that dialogue will be one of Mr. Singh's biggest tasks in Washington.

Mr. Singh should also be interested in altering the form of the nuclear engagement between the two nations.

His talks with Mr. Talbott, who was one step below him in protocol terms, made some sense given the urgency of finding some understanding with the U.S. after Pokhran-II. The fact that Mr. Talbott was very close to Mr.

Clinton was another consideration. But the future Indo-U.S. nuclear dialogue will have to be conducted at a different level.

One of the biggest impediments to faster improvement of bilateral relations during the Clinton years was the Non-Proliferation Bureau in the State Department. Under pressure from the Bureau, the administration insisted till the very end that the relations would not "realise their full potential" unless the non-proliferation concerns of the U.S. are met by India.

There is some good news from the Bush administration. The man designated by Mr. Bush to become the Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Richard L. Armitage, had some thing to say a few days ago about single-issue bureaus in the State Department that flourished in the Clinton era.

"I will tell you quite frankly," Mr. Armitage told the U.S. Senate in his confirmation hearings, "that I do not like single-issue bureaus. Although arms control, democracy, education, culture, non-proliferation and so forth are important issues, they make sense only within the context of a total package. I will be looking to the regional bureaus to integrate all the key issues and to interact with the embassies."

India will hope the Bush administration brings greater political sensibility to bear upon its nuclear dialogue with India that has been dominated for too long by non-proliferation fundamentalists in Washington.

Whatever grievances India might have about the previous administration, it should give full credit to Mr. Clinton for transforming the framework of Indo-U.S. relations. Although Mr. Clinton's enthusiasm for India came in the waning days of his presidency, it appeared genuine. Mr. Clinton will be back here early next month to savour a little more of India.

THE HINDU

Pakistan has edged past India in N-capability

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, March. 25. -- Pakistan has edged past India in nuclear weapons capability since the two countries conducted nuclear tests in May 1998. London-based *Jane's Intelligence Review* said.

India was slow in deciding and completing delivery systems, evolving procedures, tactics and doctrine for nuclear use as well as ensuring effective control over nuclear forces. Pakistan, on the other hand, quickly implemented effective systems and procedures for its modest nuclear arsenal. Pakistan daily *The News* quoted the weekly as saying.

"New Delhi insisted on creating an original Indian system. Pakistan implemented lessons it learnt from already established nuclear powers," the weekly said.

Nuclear policies in India are controlled by the government and scientists from atomic energy commission and defence research organisations. "India feels nuclear weapons are necessary for political use and for enhanced international prestige and discounts the possibility of them being used on the battlefield." In Pakistan, the army controls its nuclear policies and has incorporated them into the overall military strategy, the weekly said.

India is yet to develop an effective missile-based nuclear deterrent and has also not deployed a missile force in quantity, the weekly said.

Musharraf not to quit: General Pervez Musharraf today said he would not step down when his term as army chief ends later this year, adds AP.

"I am not going to retire in October," Gen. Musharraf told reporters here.

Under the constitution, the General's three-year term is set to expire in October. He declined to say how he would legally extend his term in office.

He denied recent reports that he would renege on his promise to return Pakistan to democratic rule by 12 October, 2002, the date set by the Supreme Court.

THE STATESMAN

28 MAR 2001

U.S. keen on expanding ties with India

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 24. The Bush administration would continue to build on the present momentum in relations with India, and was ready to expand ties in every area, the Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, told India's Ambassador, Mr. Lalit Mansingh, on Friday when the latter presented his Letter of Credence.

The 30-minute meeting at the State Department focussed on the way bilateral relations had evolved in the recent past and the outlook for the future. The "vision statement" and the dialogue architecture, as well as the interest in both nations to resume the high level official contacts, were discussed. Gen. Powell said the President, Mr. George W. Bush, was keen on building on the good work of the past.

Later talking to reporters, Mr. Mansingh said he told Gen. Powell that bilateral relations today "are

the best they have ever been", and assured the Secretary of State of New Delhi's keen desire to build on the momentum as also in the commitment to achieve the goals and objectives identified by the two countries.

The two officials discussed the coming visit to the U.S. of the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, with Gen. Powell saying he was looking forward to a full discussion on a range of issues. The Secretary of State will host a lunch for Mr. Singh who is also expected to meet top Cabinet members of the Bush administration. Since Mr. Singh also holds the Defence Portfolio, he will call on the Defence Secretary, Mr. Donald Rumsfeld, as well.

According to Mr. Mansingh, there was a brief discussion on the subject of sanctions during the meeting with Gen. Powell. New Delhi's stance on the subject was conveyed and Gen. Powell said the issue was under review.

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2001

Mansingh, Powell in friendship

VOW

Washington, March 24 (PTI) — The US will continue to build on the momentum established in the past to expand relations with India.

This was US secretary of state Colin Powell's message to India's ambassador-designate Lalit Mansingh when he called to present a copy of his letter of credence.

"The secretary of state clearly reiterated the policy of President (George W.) Bush to build on the good work done in the past and expand relations with India. Powell said he himself was committed to this process," Mansingh told reporters after the 30-minute meeting.

He said current Indo-US relations were the best so far. He assured Powell of India's desire to build on the momentum that has been established.

Mansingh said India was committed to achieving the goals and objectives jointly identified by the two countries and touched upon several areas of cooperation agreed in the Vision Statement signed during former President Bill Clinton's India visit.

Mansingh borrowed one of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's phrases to say that New Delhi and Washington were "natural allies".

On Jaswant Singh's visit next month, Mansingh said the external affairs minister was looking forward to fruitful discussions with Powell, defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld and national security adviser Condoleezza Rice.

When Mansingh briefly raised the issue of post-Pokhran sanctions and conveyed India's viewpoint, Powell said the sanctions were being reviewed.

"Basically, what we discussed was about the way Indo-US relations have evolved in the past and the outlook for the future," Mansingh told reporters after the meeting.

Mansingh expressed appreciation of the contacts established between Bush and Vajpayee. Bush, as a candidate for President, had had a telephone conversation with Vajpayee during his US visit.

Later, as President, Bush telephoned Vajpayee to express sympathy for victims of the Gujarat quake and also to convey his commitment to furthering closer ties.

"India is a highly impressive democracy and the Bush administration is keen to expand bilateral relations in every area," Powell said.

He said he was looking forward to a full discussion on a whole range of issues with Jaswant Singh. Powell recalled Mansingh's earlier tenure in Washington as deputy chief of mission and his own visit to India two years ago. Mansingh extended an invitation to him to visit India again.

THE TELEGRAPH

25 MAR 2001

U.S. Congressmen
call for lifting
of sanctions

WASHINGTON, MARCH 22. Key members of the U.S. Congress have called for lifting of remaining sanctions against India and to deepen Indo- U.S. relations correcting "errors of the past".

"The new Bush administration has a chance to correct the errors of the past, such as the imposition of sanctions against India," the Republican Congressman, Mr. Ed Royce, said on Wednesday night.

"We need not only to lift the sanctions on India but we need to be looking at joint military exercises with India," he told the inaugural function of the formation of a new umbrella organisation of Indian American community — the Indian American National Foundation.

Mr. Royce, co-chairman of the India caucus, said there was need for greater understanding of India's concerns, saying Washington should work in concert with New Delhi with a taskforce on terrorism. He hoped the Bush administration would move rapidly to do that "to build on the relationship the Clinton visit to India had opened up". — PTI

THE HINDU

23 MAR 2001

22 MAR 2001

21 MAR 2001

WJW Blackwill HD-1
to be next
U.S. envoy 23/3

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, MARCH 22. In a significant development, the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, has announced his intent to nominate Mr. Robert Blackwill as the next Ambassador to India.

"Bob Blackwill understands the important place India holds in my foreign policy agenda and will be an outstanding American Ambassador to India. He will bring a wealth of expertise to the position," Mr. Bush said in a statement issued by the White House.

What is of importance to India is that in the nomination of Mr. Blackwill, the President has shown this is a senior level appointment meaning, among other things, a desire to have the bilateral dialogue at a very high level.

From a political point of view, the nomination is in the first batch of appointments of the Bush administration. Mr. Blackwill has been a foreign policy adviser to the President and part of his transition team. He is known to be very close to the National Security Adviser, Ms. Condoleeza Rice. In fact, there was speculation that he could be appointed to a senior position in the National Security Council.

A Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to the President, Mr. George H.W. Bush, between 1989 and 1990, Mr. Blackwill is considered an expert on arms control and disarmament issues, with particular focus on Russian and European affairs. He was the Ambassador and chief negotiator during negotiations with the Warsaw Pact on conventional forces in Europe.

Mr. Blackwill is currently the Belfer Lecturer in International Security at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. An author and editor of several works on foreign and defence policy, Mr. Blackwill served as political counsellor in the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv; was the Director of West European Affairs on the National Security Council staff; served as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs.

THE HINDU

23 MAR 2001

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Jaswant's US visit begins on 5 April

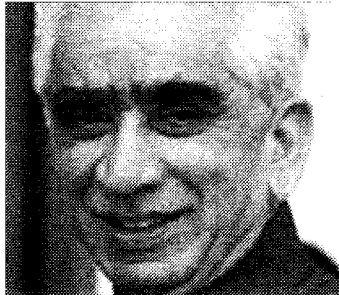
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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 20. - Mr Jaswant Singh's three-day visit to USA will start from 5 April. The first high-level official meeting between the two countries under the Bush administration will be held at Washington on 6 April.

The meeting holds significance in the backdrop of the critical views of US defence secretary Mr Donald Rumsfeld on Russia supplying fuel for nuclear reactors.

He was also critical about the "rogue states" such as North Korea, Pakistan and Iran which are receiving the supply. India's name was also included in the list. Later in



Mr Jaswant Singh

its reaction, India had said that it received all supplies from Russia under the International Atomic Energy Agency. The external affairs ministry spokesman said the talks between Mr Jaswant Singh and US secretary of

state Mr Colin Powell would cover a broad spectrum of issues. During the visit of Mr Jaswant Singh, who also holds additional charge as defence minister, he would meet several other senior US officials. "The canvas for discussions is much wider and the agenda encompasses a whole range of bilateral relations," the spokesman said, adding that there has been a clear indication in public in both countries reflecting the desire to strengthen relations.

Mr Singh's visit underscored the significance attached by both countries in boosting relations and furthering the objectives of the Vision Statement.

THE STATESMAN

21 MAR 2001

Ceasefire received well in U.S.

By Shujaat Bukhari

WASHINGTON, MARCH 20. Notwithstanding the unabated violence in Kashmir claiming more and more civilian lives, the unilateral ceasefire announced by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is seen as a move in the right direction in the U.S. Though the State Department policies are yet to see any formulation in the absence of no permanent appointees in key positions as yet, the international response to the initiative has strengthened India's position as a peace-loving nation.

The absence of a serious follow-up to the peace initiative in Kashmir has been relegated to the background, and the impression among the think-tanks is that the steps taken by the Vajpayee Government are fairly bold. The extension of the ceasefire has further increased Mr. Vajpayee's image. The official view is certainly in India's favour and Pakistan is still seen as a non-serious player, taking no initiative to rein in the 'jehadi' groups.

For those who are responsible for South Asia in the Bush administration, an end to tension on Indo-Pakistan border is in itself a big leap forward which could lead to a re-opening of the stalled dialogue between the countries. Though concerned about the loss of life of civilians in Kashmir, the officials feel that the extended

ceasefire may push ahead the process towards lasting peace in the region resulting in a settlement on Kashmir.

A significant factor is the echoing of the recent statement of the U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, who lay stress on the Lahore Declaration. Since India is committed to this declaration, it certainly could open ways for a peaceful settlement, said a top official in the U.S. State Department.

Other issues such as non-proliferation and essentially better U.S.-India economic ties have since overshadowed Kashmir. "It is essentially a bilateral issue" said the official, but did not rule out a role for the U.S. if asked by both countries. "Unless both parties want a third party role there is no such role for us" he said. The U.S. did not support any particular solution to Kashmir. Even as things would crystallise in the coming months as the appointments at the top-level are finalised, there is a general trend in favour of India, which even the supporters of Pakistan admit.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh's proposed visit to the U.S. in early April is seen to be significant. "It is a fact that during the senior Bush regime the tilt was towards Pakistan but the situation in South Asia, particularly after the nuclear tests in 1998, has changed much" said a

member of a Washington-based think-tank on foreign policy.

The bottom-line at a symposium organised here by the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), the foreign policy institute at Johns Hopkins University, was no different. The need for strengthening relations between India and Pakistan was stressed there.

As for Kashmiris who are actively involved in their efforts to mould opinion of the new U.S. administration, Kashmir has to figure in their agenda. Dr. Ghulam Nabi Fai, executive director of Kashmiri American Council (KAC) which works in tandem with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference admits that Mr. Vajpayee's peace moves have succeeded. However, he says that the sense which had developed earlier is fading away in the absence of a political follow-up. "It has to be supplemented by a comprehensive process including the visit of the Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan." Dr. Fai said there could be gradual talks.

In another development, the senior Hurriyat leader and JKLF chairman, Mr. Yaseen Malik, who arrived in the U.S. on March 11 is touring most parts of the country to mobilise support on Kashmir. Mr. Malik, who has been granted a U.S. and U.K.-specific passport, is being admitted for treatment to heart ailment in Washington and will visit the U.K. later in April.

THE HINDU

21 MAR 2001

Time ripe for Indo-Pak talks: Annan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 15. — The UN secretary general, Mr Kofi Annan, today said it was the right time for India and Pakistan to resume the dialogue which had been stalled for a long time.

Extending readiness to support such a move, Mr Annan said: "I am ready to support the dialogue in any way I can".

Speaking to the media after arriving on a three-day visit, he said: "My good offices will remain available should the parties wish to engage under UN auspices".

There was need for return of the spirit of the Lahore Declaration and renewal of dialogue with Pakistan to reduce tension and build confidence, he said.

"This is essential for peace of both nations and security of the people of Kashmir who have had too many years of violence and suffering. It's time to begin healing the wounds to restore trust and regain a sense of common future," he said. Mr Annan, who will meet Indian leaders tomorrow, said: "So long as grievances persist and violence continues in Kashmir, the two countries will be unable to tap the full potential of this region". Stressing that it was important



WELCOME: Mr Kofi Annan is greeted upon his arrival at a hotel in New Delhi on Thursday. — AP/PTI

for the talks to begin, he said "it is the right time for India and Pakistan to resume dialogue."

On sending UN observers to Afghanistan, he said there has not been any discussion on this. Before sending the observers, the mandate of the observers has to be clarified.

On the implementation of the Brahmi report, Mr Annan said action had been taken on those recommendations which he

could directly implement. But action was yet to be taken on suggestions on which the government's approval were required.

Replying to another question on stand-by force by UN, Mr Annan said at the time of crisis, stand-by force always helps but whether the force could be sent for a particular mission depends on the approval of the respective government.

UN chief to miss Lok Sabha action

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 15. — The UN secretary general won't be able to witness the proceedings tomorrow at the Lok Sabha where he has been invited by the Speaker.

At the business advisory committee meeting called by Mr GMC Balayogi, Opposition leaders declined to give any assurance to him to let the House pass a resolution, felicitating Mr Kofi Annan.

"Sensing MPs' mood, it's difficult to guarantee that there would be no slogan-shouting and pandemonium in the House even in Mr Annan's presence in the VIP gallery," a floor leader told Mr Balayogi.

An alternative suggestion to welcome Mr Annan in the Central Hall of Parliament was also shelved.

It was finally decided that the Speaker would felicitate Mr Annan at a special meeting of all floor leaders of the Lok Sabha including Mr AB Vajpayee and Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

'Pak. should create right environment for talks'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

110-14 1573

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 14. The Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. V.K. Nambiar, has said that experience of India with Pakistan particularly since the Ramazan initiative to observe ceasefire in Kashmir had not been 'good' and resumption of dialogue was possible only if Pakistan was willing to create the 'right environment'.

Speaking at a dialogue organised by the Islamabad chapter of Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (PIPFPD) here Mr. Nambiar said Pakistan should address India's concerns on militants operating from its soil and halt the "ceaseless anti-Indian propaganda".

Though it was Mr. Nambiar's first public encounter here since he took charge of the mission in August, the attendance at the meeting was rather thin. The decision of the organisers to restrict entry to the members and the Joint Committee for Citizens' Rights and keep the press out was a main reason for the small gathering. Perhaps the forum's experience when it organised a face-to-face with Ms. Tara Bhattacharjee, grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi, two weeks ago made them extra cautious. That meeting face to face with Ms. Bhattacharjee almost turned into an Indian-Pakistan official encounter with members of the audience demanding answers from her on the Kashmir dispute.

Mr. Nambiar emphasised the need to tackle the 'stereotypes' on both sides. The biggest stumbling block was the stereotype on perceptions of each other. India was seen as a big brother with ambitions of a superpower that had never reconciled to the creation of Pakistan. In India, the stereotype was that of a Pakistani military apparatus out to break up the Indian union.

This was the backdrop against which the two countries sought to engage each other at the Foreign Secretaries-level in the early Nineties. The exercise yielded a series of useful agreements but the process was stalled in the seventh round when Pakistan sought to link progress on all issues to the Kashmir dispute.

The bus journey of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to Lahore sought to break the logjam but the bus was 'hijacked' to Kargil. It was now back to square one. "There is agreement even in India that we have to transcend Kargil but the question is how?"

Mr. Nambiar referred to Mr. Vajpayee's musings and India's willingness to travel the extra mile provided Pakistan was prepared to show 'proof of willingness' to address some vital concerns of India. Pakistan would have to reciprocate if it was interested in a meaningful dialogue.

In response to a question on the shape of possible solution to the Kashmir dispute, Mr. Nambiar said federalism, democracy and secularism would be the guiding factors. At the same time he was not willing to hazard a guess on the possible contours of a solution and maintained that they would emerge in the course of dialogue.

THE HINDU

15 MAR 2001

TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2001

AN APT CALL FOR DIRECT TALKS

THE UNITED NATIONS Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has wisely drawn upon the prestige of his high office to enhance the authenticity of potential impulses on the India-Pakistan front for a genuine process of direct parleys between them in the present dismal context of their vacuous non-engagement. However, the Vajpayee Government will be well advised not to retreat into false triumphalism over Mr. Annan's comments endorsing the U.N.'s peripheral status on matters concerning India-Pakistan ties. Mr. Annan has not really gone beyond the obvious limits of normative international law while endorsing the basic proposition that the old U.N. resolutions for a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir have never at all been enforceable under the scope of the global organisation's exclusive charter. The essence of the latest observations by the U.N. chief is that the intrinsic seriousness of a mutually agreeable bilateral dialogue will not be undermined by the historical fact that the Kashmir issue had been deliberated upon by the U.N. at one stage in the past. It is in this sense that Mr. Annan has done some plain-speaking while in Pakistan during the first lap of his current South Asia tour. Without disputing that the resolutions relating to Jammu and Kashmir have not been erased from the U.N.'s statute books, he has sought to encourage Pakistan as also India, albeit for different reasons, to recognise a practical imperative and resuscitate the spirit of their own Lahore Declaration of 1999. In his perspective, the new road-map for any such revival of purposeful bilateralism will be useless without "restraint, wisdom and constructive steps from both sides".

For India and Pakistan, the centrality of a process of direct talks, besides of course the importance of the Lahore Declaration as a signpost of the bilateral spirit, may not be particularly contentious visions as clearly distinct from being troublesome issues at the ground level. Pakistan's psycho-war with India is sustained to a considerable extent by the perception that the Kashmir dispute is on the U.N.'s

agenda. It is, therefore, comprehensible that Pakistan's leaders have now drawn attention to Mr. Annan's (putative) comment during his talks with them that the international community remains concerned over Kashmir. However, Pakistan seems to have taken in its stride his message that mediation over Kashmir by a third party would remain just an impracticable idea in the light of India's decisive refusal to countenance the very thought. But Pakistan knows, too, that any argument at present by New Delhi against the urgency of a direct re-engagement with Islamabad will lend itself to severe scrutiny, perhaps by the larger international community as well.

In recent weeks, the Vajpayee administration has demonstrably squandered the momentum that was generated by its own ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir towards a renewal of talks with Pakistan. New Delhi acknowledges the beneficial spin-off effect of Islamabad's announcement of a policy of 'maximum (military) restraint' along the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. Yet, New Delhi's hesitation to take imaginatively bold steps to widen the opportunities for building trust in its ties with Islamabad remains inexplicably bankrupt as a follow-up policy. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's promise to steer away from the beaten track of polemical diplomacy has been severely dented by the recent refusal to allow a designated delegation of the All Party Hurriyat Conference to travel to Pakistan for clearly confidence-building purposes rather than any mediatory intervention in regard to the two states. A new test case now is the latest orchestrated but informal move by New Delhi to express doubts whether Islamabad itself will allow the "leaders" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir to travel to India to attend a political convention in Jammu. The idea of informal exchanges among the "leaders" of Jammu and Kashmir across the LoC cannot be easily brushed aside, subject to India's vital national and security interests.

THE HINDU

13 MAR 2001

Will Annan statement induce realism?

183 By K. K. Katyal HD-13

NEW DELHI, MARCH 12. Will the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan's clarification on the status of the Security Council's 1948 resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir add to the belligerence of the jihadi outfits in Pakistan and generally harden extremist trends? Or will it have a chastening effect and induce realism? Given the "high expectations" — to use the words of Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar — pinned on the eve of Mr. Annan's visit for support to their stand and the deep sense of shock now, any optimism on this count will be out of place.

The call for action on the 1948 resolutions was a code word for the demand for amalgamating the State with Pakistan and, as such, both the establishment and most of the parties felt cheated of the backing they thought was their due in the achievement of their objective. In days to come, they will reserve harsh epithets for Mr. Annan, harsher for India.

There was another reason for their dismay — the Secretary-General's advocacy of bilateral talks between India and Pakistan in the spirit of the Lahore Declaration. The present regime — and, at its instance, most non-official commentators — did not hide their dislike for the Lahore initiative, because of the dismissed Prime Minister, Mr. Nawaz Sharif's association with it. Soon after the coup, the declaration was dismissed as "*fallana dhimkana*" (one of these routine ones, one of those routine ones), and even though the official rhetoric against it was toned down substantially, the military rulers would find it hard to accept, for a dialogue with India, a framework

worked out by the Prime Minister, dethroned by then.

Pretext for violence

The jihadi outfits may use the "closure of the U.N. route" as a pretext for stepping up violence, but whether the Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, and the Army establishment, while maintaining a tough public posture, will pursue policies leading to an engagement with India is to be seen. The main problem will not be the Lahore Declaration — the talks can be held in keeping with its spirit without saying so — but New Delhi's call for a "conducive atmosphere". Despite its repeated stress on this point, the Indian Government is aware of the present reality — that to insist on an end to terrorist violence as a precondition is to wait indefinitely — and may be satisfied with public disapproval of the activities of terrorist groups by the Pakistani establishment. But is Gen. Musharraf in a position to do that in the present-day jihadi ambience?

New Delhi has reasons to derive comfort from Mr. Annan's response to Pakistan's call for activating the U.N. resolutions, and for commending the path of dialogue. He is bound to make an equally pointed plea for bilateral talks during his visit here later this week. India's stand will carry greater conviction if it offers specific suggestions for making use of the ceasefire, apart from its repeated stress on "conducive atmosphere". To say that the Secretary General will find the concern over trans-border terrorism uppermost in New Delhi's mind is to stress the obvious.

Anger over U.N. stand

The anger and dismay over Mr. Annan's stand was reflected in a lengthy comment by

the daily *Nawai-e-Wakt* today. "For a long while," the paper said, "Pakistan indulged in wishful thinking that an honourable settlement of the Kashmir dispute is possible with the help of the international community and the U.N. It was given the bogus assurance that the solution could be hammered out through a bilateral dialogue. These words were repeated in the Tashkent Declaration, the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration. The Lahore Declaration was particularly regretful, as it did not refer to the U.N. resolutions at all... Viewed in this background, the only way to resolve the Kashmir problem is to strengthen Pakistan in economic and defence-related areas, and to step up jihad and take it to its successful conclusion." It was severely critical of the U.S. policy and urged Gen. Musharraf to disprove the perception that America backed the military regime for the completion of its (Washington's) agenda. It saw something fishy in the move to relieve Dr. A. Q. Khan, architect of Pakistan's nuclear programme, from his position.

True, Pakistan had always talked of the U.N. Resolutions, but the current pressures and rhetoric were stepped up for the consumption of Mr. Annan. As seen by India, the 53-year-old-resolutions could not be implemented apart from other factors, because of Islamabad's disinclination then to meet its obligations. In any case, the resolutions were superseded by the Shimla Agreement, which converted the ceasefire line into the Line of Control. The Pakistani supremo, Mr. Z. A. Bhutto, who negotiated the agreement, was agreeable to converting it into the international border but wanted time to prepare domestic opinion. That Islamabad went back on it was a different story.

THE HINDU

13 MAR 2001

Distant neighbours

By K. K. Katyal

The India-Pakistan problem has both been simplified and rendered more difficult. Paradoxical, yes, but when was it devoid of inconsistencies?

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IN THE medley of recent developments, the India-Pakistan problem has both been simplified and rendered more difficult. Paradoxical, yes, but when was it devoid of inconsistencies? The oft-used description — distant neighbours — says it all. The situation is simple because the issues bevilting their relationship have crystallised, with the removal of ambiguities; and it is difficult because the emerging reality is far more daunting.

Let us take these developments, one by one. Conflicting reports on the Hurriyat have yielded place to a clarity of sorts. New Delhi does not recognise the Hurriyat as a mediator and, as such, the speculation on the timing of its trip to Pakistan, the composition of its delegation, etc, has become redundant. Simultaneously, the Track-II diplomacy, on which hope had been pinned for years, reached a dead-end, and, as a result, there is a renewed surge of interest in Track-I contacts.

India, going by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's "musings", is willing and ready to seek a "lasting solution of the Kashmir problem" and is "prepared to recommence talks with Pakistan at any level, including the highest level". (Of course, there was a proviso that "Pakistan gives sufficient proof of its preparedness to create an atmosphere conducive to a meaningful dialogue".) The revival of the SAARC summit — the prospects for which have improved somewhat — could help to provide an occasion for the "highest-level" contacts. The shape of the agenda is clear too — "lasting solution of the Kashmir problem" and Pakistan's willingness to create a "conducive atmosphere". There is little ambiguity about this last matter. Thanks to the ceasefire, the jihadi groups responsible for continuing terrorist strikes are clearly identifiable, and so are their operational headquarters in Pakistan. Here is a situation where a country allows its territory to be used (even encourages its use) as a springboard for terrorist acts against its neighbour. It has been evident day after day — there is a strike at a military post or police headquarters or a massacre of citizens and the responsibility is

claimed by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, based in Pakistan. Undoubtedly, a blatant violation of the norms governing dealings between two countries — neighbours at that. The Pakistani argument that these elements are not under its control and, as such, it could not be held responsible for their actions is patently bogus. There is no dearth of tell-tale evidence that the Pakistan Government is in a position to rein in these groups. Even assuming that it is helpless, what prevents it from publicly distancing itself from them or disapproving of their actions — and, otherwise, making its stand clear? What should one make of the derisive comments by responsible persons in Pakistan, describing the ceasefire as a sign of India's weakness or of the fatigue of its security forces?

The only merit of New Delhi's shortsighted stand on the Hurriyat is that it ends the suspense caused by confusing reports of the thinking within the Government, on the one hand, and the goings-on within this umbrella organisation in Jammu and Kashmir, on the other. What the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, said in Parliament last week had been his position from the beginning — since the idea of a Hurriyat visit was mooted at the time of the first ceasefire announcement. It was hardened by the subsequent utterances from the Pakistani side — that the Hurriyat's consultations in Islamabad would eventually pave the way for tripartite talks. That was not how the Hurriyat — in any case, the moderate section — saw its role, which even disapproved of the interpretation put by some in Pakistan on its proposed trip. According to New Delhi, there was no communication gap between the Hurriyat and Islamabad, given the frequency of contacts between its leaders and Pakistan's High Commissioner in India. Had New Delhi acted swiftly — soon after the Ramzan ceasefire announcement — and let it go to Pakistan, the subsequent pressures and controversies could have been avoided. The

Hurriyat would not have been seen as assuming a larger-than-life role and Islamabad's bid to project it as the "third party" could have been countered by active involvement of its representatives in internal discussions by New Delhi.

The flexibility in India's stand on the SAARC, if maintained, could pave the ground for talks between the top leaders of the two countries. India, which vetoed the plan for a scheduled summit in December 1999 because of the military coup in Islamabad, could now have the satisfaction of having driven home its point against the dismissal of a democratic government. Enough was enough and the business of the grouping could be allowed to proceed. New Delhi has no objection to the conclave of the SAARC Foreign Secretaries (who constitute the "standing committee"), raising hopes that the meetings of the Foreign Ministers and the Heads may not be far away. Any optimism, however, is premature. The standing committee is slated to meet in May — around the time the current three-month extension of the ceasefire expires. As a result, there is the apprehension that the deliberations of the Foreign Secretaries may be influenced by the developments in Jammu and Kashmir and the fate of the ceasefire.

New Delhi would do well not to link the SAARC process with the progress (or otherwise) of the peace move. That would hold regional cooperation hostage to a highly intractable factor. It will expose New Delhi to the very charge that is levelled against Pakistan. On the contrary, a soft line on the SAARC summit could bring Mr. Vajpayee and Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, at the same place — Kathmandu, venue of the next summit. It may be too much to expect that they could address substantive matters after having broken the ice, but they could well discuss modalities for a serious resumption of the dialogue. After all, the Male SAARC summit in 1997

provided an opportunity for the then Prime Ministers, Mr. I. K. Gujral and Mr. Nawaz Sharif, to set in motion the two-plus-six process, envisaging discussions on Kashmir security matters and six other issues. And it was the first meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Sharif on the sidelines of the 1998 Colombo SAARC summit which culminated in Lahore (that Kargil undid that gain is another story).

The first indication whether the SAARC process would go ahead will be available when the venue of the standing committee meeting is announced. If it is Colombo, it will mean there is no break yet with the stalemated position of the past. If it is Kathmandu, this will be a signal of forward movement — an encouraging pointer that the deliberations of the Foreign Secretaries would be followed, in a quick succession, by higher-level contacts. Because of the present deadlock, the SAARC's plans for regional cooperation have not received the requisite attention. It had been engaged in some promising initiatives on the economic front: there was considerable advance in regard to the preferential trade arrangement while the next — and ambitious — plan for a free trade area had been taken up seriously. The Indian stand did mean a slowdown. But could Pakistan blame New Delhi after having blocked the steps for economic cooperation and linking it with the resolution of the "core issue" involving India?

Back to the earlier-stated formulation — that, on the one hand, the matters related to India-Pakistan dealings have been simplified (not made easy) and, on the other, the outlook continues to be marked by deep gloom. The two routes, the Hurriyat course and the Track-II process, which seemed promising at one stage, are no longer available. It is the Track-I approach that calls for exclusive attention now — through the SAARC route. The lead is to be taken by India. Also, New Delhi would be squandering away the gains of the ceasefire if there is no engagement with various sections of political opinion in the State. On its part, Pakistan has to provide credible evidence of separating itself from the jihadi elements.

Pak. regrets Advani's line on Hurriyat

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 8. Pakistan today denounced as a "complete distortion of objective realities" the statement of the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, on Wednesday in Parliament that India sees no mediatory role for the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in any future dialogue between Pakistan and India.

In a swift and sharp reaction, the spokesperson of the Pakistan Foreign Office criticised both the components of the statement made by Mr. Advani related to the status of the Hurriyat as well as the question of issue of travel documents to the Hurriyat delegation designated by the APHC Chairman, Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat.

Pakistan's reaction was on expected lines and flows out of the position it has adopted in the last three months. Ever since India decided to extend the ceasefire for the second time in January, Pakistan's line has been that the ceasefire would be meaningful only if it was followed by concrete steps as spelt out in its December 2 formulation.

In a way, the statement of Mr. Advani in Parliament on Wednesday amounted to formal reaction of the Indian Government to Pa-

kistan's December 2 formulation, which consisted of an invitation to the Hurriyat to visit Islamabad for consultations to eventually pave the way for a tripartite dialogue on the resolution of the Kashmir conflict. The Foreign Office spokesperson not only criticised Mr. Advani for his approach towards the Hurriyat and the Kashmir dispute but also urged the Indian Government to re-

spond without any further loss of time to its December 2 proposals.

"The Government of Pakistan calls upon the Government of India to abandon its policy of violence and repression in Occupied Kashmir, enable the APHC delegation to visit Pakistan without delay, reciprocate the positive steps taken by Pakistan and enter into a meaningful dialogue for a

peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute," the statement said

The spokesperson said Mr. Advani's claim that the Indian forces are observing a ceasefire in Kashmir "is belied" by continuing arrests, torture, disappearances and killings of innocent civilians including custodial and extra-judicial killings and by other human rights violations.

Amanullah Khan applies for Indian visa

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 8. A group of 26 prominent politicians and intellectuals from Pakistan and Pak. Occupied Kashmir (PoK) including the chairman of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Mr. Amanullah Khan, today applied for visas to visit India in connection with a conference proposed to be held in Jammu in the third week of March.

A senior official in the Indian High Commission who confirmed receipt of the applications maintained that they would be dealt with "according to legal and procedural formalities".

Implied in the brief comment of the official was the suggestion that most probably the visa applications would have to be referred to New Delhi as most of the politicians who have sought the visa belong to organisations which at one time or the other were

declared as unlawful outfits in India or were engaged in "anti-India" activities.

The conference indeed poses a dilemma to the Indian Government that is already grappling with the question of issue of travel documents to the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC).

A total of 88 persons from Pakistan and PoK were invited by the organisers of the peace conference on Kashmir in Jammu.

Among those invited are Mr. Amanullah Khan, chairman, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Sardar Qayyum Khan, former Prime Minister of PoK and Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary, Prime Minister of PoK.

Besides Mr. Khan among the list of 26 members who have sought visas includes the founder-president, Jammu and Kashmir Plebiscite Front, Mr. Shaukat Maqbool Bhat and Mr. G.M. Mir.

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2001

Return of Pak. PoWs was a mistake: PM

By Haroon Habib

DHAKA, MARCH 6. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has advised those desiring to divide Kashmir on the basis of religion to learn a lesson from the emergence of Bangladesh which proved the communal divide wrong.

In an interview to a Bangladesh freelance journalist, Mr. Shahriar Kabir, on March 4 at New Delhi, which was published in the largest circulated Bangla daily *The Janakantha*, today, Mr. Vajpayee said India committed a mistake by returning the 92,000 Pakistani Prisoners of War (POWs) without trial after Bangladesh's independence in 1971.

The Prime Minister expressed his optimism that the people of Pakistan would not accept military dictatorship any longer.

Islamabad's close connections with the Taliban would be disastrous for Pakistan.

On the growth of religious fundamentalism in India, Mr. Vajpayee admitted there are people who are extremists in religious views.

But he ruled out the possibility of emergence of fundamentalism in India as a result of resurgence of those forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan. India would continue to remain a secular country.

"We decided to accept secularism right in 1949. Pakistan always wanted a communal divide. But what they would say after emergence of Bangladesh? Bangladesh, a sovereign and independent country, has negated the two-nations theory. Pakistan is now trying to implement that old theory in Kashmir again".

Kashmir issue has no relevance with religion, though Pakistan believes it so. "This is entirely a political issue, Pakistan must stop patronising the extremists, and its solution must be made through discussions."

THE HINDU

7 MAR 2001

Another secret tunnel found on Indo-Pak border

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BATALA, MARCH 5

THE recent discovery two days ago of another secret tunnel on the Indo-Pakistan international border, near Addian post in Dera Baba Nanak sector, has raised a question mark on the security aspect.

While ploughing his field, Swaran Dass, a resident of Chauntra village, accidentally discovered the tunnel when the foot of his ox fell into the ditch, which was hardly ten metres away from the fenced border.

The tunnel, dug from the Indian side, was at least 50 feet deep and implements used for digging were also discovered from the tunnel site. Dass reported the matter to the nearby Border Security Force post who kept the matter a secret.

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The BSF suspects it to be the handiwork of the ISI. Arguably the ISI had dug up the tunnel with the help of its agent to explore possibilities of infiltration to India from Pakistan as the crossover from across the border has become very difficult with the fencing of the 564 km-long Punjab border with Pakistan.

Earlier, similar tunnels were discovered in Dera Baba Nanak sector in Gurdaspur district in November and December, 1999.

At that time, the BSF and police put the blame on a Pakistani courier, Jaika Masih, who was seen in the area for quite some time.

He used to cross the border frequently and dug two different tunnels there but these were discovered by alert BSF personnel during night patrolling along the border.

INDIAN EXPRESS

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Pak. will study India's defence budget hike

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH. 2. Pakistan today said it would take "appropriate steps" to counter the security threat arising out of India's decision to hike its defence budget in a big way, while ruling out a matching response.

At a press conference here, the Director-General of the Inter-Services Public Relations, Maj. Gen. Rashid Quereshi, said a study would be undertaken to find out the implications of the hike in India's defence outlay, and necessary steps would be taken to counter any threat.

For three days after India's budget was unveiled, Pakistan not only expressed concern over what

it termed a whopping hike in the defence budget, but also urged the international community to take note.

Maj. Gen. Quereshi recalled the statement of the Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, that Pakistan had decided not to get involved in an arms race, and said there was no question of a matching response to India. "It is for the international community to clearly identify who is causing tension in the region and who is not interested in the peaceful resolution of all problems".

The chief military spokesman claimed that Pakistan over the past one and a half year had shown extreme restraint and initi-

ated various measures to bring peace to the subcontinent. These included the unilateral decision to observe maximum restraint on the Line of Control and partial withdrawal of troops from the international border.

The so-called unilateral ceasefire or non-combat operations in Kashmir by India had made little difference on the ground. India's refusal to allow the Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan clearly exposed its insincerity, he said.

On the sectarian violence in some parts of the country in the past few days, Maj. Gen. Quereshi said the Government would not be pressured by any group and law would be upheld.

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