

APHC wants Kashmiris to have a role in Indo-Pak peace efforts

The Times of India News Service

KOLKATA: Kashmir has become an issue for diplomatic wrangling between India and Pakistan, while the people of Kashmir have been forgotten, feel All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders Abdul Ghani Lone and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq. APHC leaders were in the city to attend a series of programmes to facilitate people-to-people contact.

Reiterating the Hurriyat's stand on the Kashmiris' right to self-determination, they told this newspaper on Sunday that the people had no role in the recently held Indo-Pak summit. "Why is the Centre isolating the Kashmiri people from the peace initiative," asked Mr Lone.

He also brought the charge that it was the Centre which was projecting the Hurriyat as a friend of Pakistan and that by doing so it was pushing the APHC towards

Pakistan. "There is no doubt that we would like to discuss Azad Kashmir with Pakistan like we would like to discuss the rest of Kashmir with India," Mr Lone said.

He went on to point out that being a weak party, the Hurriyat was at the receiving end. Omar Farooq, meanwhile felt that Kashmir was not a bilateral territorial or a border issue. "It is an issue of life and death for 13 million people. We want peace, with honour and dignity. People of Kashmir feel that commitments made to them were not fulfilled," Mr Farooq pointed out. He emphasised that Kashmir was a political problem and the sooner Indian policy makers realised this the better.

Mr Farooq stuck to his point that the struggle in Kashmir was a freedom struggle. "Pakistan accepts that the Kashmiris' struggle is for

self-determination. India does not accept this," Mr Farooq said.

If the interaction of APHC leaders with a group of academics, journalists, politicians and Kashmir-watchers was an indication, finding a solution for the Kashmir problem was not so easy as analysing it.

For, although the topic of the discussion was finding possible solutions for the Kashmir tangle, the only concrete suggestion that came from one of the speakers was that the Line of Control should be accepted as the international boundary.

Speakers at the interactive session pointed out that the credibility of the APHC must increase if it wanted to be accepted as the true representatives of the Kashmiri people. For this, there must be representatives of the minority communities in Kashmir in the APHC.

The restaurant at the end of the Flyover

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, July 28

THE TEASER ad about 100 flyovers had foxed everyone, even the Kolkata Police, who had started an investigation. Lo and behold! "Flyover" turns out to be the brand name for a chain of fun and entertainment food parlours that is likely to be launched in the city.

Ilam Systems Ltd, the group behind this project, has already started Nut Khut range of vegetarian food parlours. Mineral water under the Ilam Pearl brand has also been launched. The company is planning to inaugurate the first 'Flyover' somewhere in North Kolkata and a 'mega Flyover' on the VIP Road.

General manager Kaushik Banerjee did not clarify the concept at the Press meet. He claimed the Flyover would be more than a mere food joint but details were not revealed. The company is planning to invest around Rs 8 crore for the mega Flyover and is looking for partners and franchisees for the smaller ones that would dot the city.

However, while these places would be franchisee-run the land would be owned by the company. The company is also planning to launch iced tea under the brand name Tea-u-lip. The iced tea would be available in carry-away cans.

Power disruption

POWER SUPPLY to consumers of Shyambazar and Hatibagan areas may be disrupted on July 31, between 9.30 am to 12.30 pm, as the CESC will undertake urgent maintenance work of the 6 KV switch gear at the Grey Street distribution station. Hatibagan, Halsibagan, Durgacharan Mitra Street and portions of Aurobinda Sarani, Raja Dinendra Street, Bidhan Sarani, Sovabazar and Bagbazar would also be affected on that day.

HTC, Kolkata

Hurriyat leaders tug at Kolkata's heartstrings

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ASHOK NATH DEY / HINDUSTAN TIMES

Hurriyat leaders Abdul Ghani Lone and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq at a seminar in the city on Saturday.

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, July 28

ONE, TILL a few weeks ago was among the most eligible bachelors — angst-ridden eyes coupled with persuasive arguments enough to convince anybody. The other, a septuagenarian politician, his halting but impeccable sonorous Urdu tugging at your heart's strings.

Meet the tearsome twosome from the Kashmir valley — handsome Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and the statesman-like Abdul Ghani Lone. After 13 years of militancy, the 'freedom struggle' in Kashmir has turned a new leaf — one of emotional war. Leading the assault are these two prominent figures of the All Party Hurriyat Conference. And their first stop was Kolkata, 'the city that has a heart'. What started some 13 years ago with the abduction of the Home Minister's daughter, moved on to boycotting the elections, killing security men, abducting tourists, targeting local Hindus, recruiting foreign mercenaries

has, after Agra, acquired a new dimension.

"We think we need to convince the people of India about our point of view. Thus we are planning communication at the interpersonal level," said Farooq. He said the Hurriyat remains committed to the path of *boli* (dialogue) than *goli* (bullet).

Lone appealed to the audience with his couplets. Farooq spoke about his experience as a teenager whose father fell to militants' bullets. The audience at the Bhartiya Bhasha Parishad's auditorium, who seemed intransigent to their view point initially, left with a heavy heart at the end of the seminar — Jammu and Kashmir: The Way Out.

Lone admitted the presence of foreign mercenaries among the ranks of the Mujahideen. "The Mujahideen have been active in the valley since the past three years but there numbers are small," he added. Farooq said not even one per cent of the 30,000 militants killed were foreigners. He said they had entered the valley to

fight a *jihad* as they felt Muslims were being wronged. "The Government turned a deaf ear to our problems for all these years. The elections were rigged, elected Governments dismissed and our Chief Minister imprisoned. Do you call this a democracy?" he asked.

"It is the Indian Government which is responsible for the rise of militancy. But now they are blaming Pakistan, the Hurriyat, Mujahideen, foreign mercenaries and what not," Lone said. For Kashmiris, the relationship with India is a legacy of forgotten promises, he added.

The two reiterated their desire to hold parleys. "You can talk to Nagas, Mizos, Khalistanis but not us. You do not invite Hurriyat and don't even let others invite Hurriyat," said Lone. Farooq spoke of the pain the Kashmiris have gone through in the last 13 years. "You can be a bit more generous," said Lone before ending with a couplet — *Khudaya un aankhon ko bhi noor kar de, Jin aankhon mein murawat nahin.*

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Lone blames Centre for foreign ultras' entry

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 28. — The Hurriyat chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Lone, today held the Centre responsible for the presence of foreign militants in Jammu and Kashmir.

He was speaking at a seminar ("J&K — the way out") at the Bhasa Parishad auditorium this afternoon. It was organised by the Centre for Peace and Progress.

"Foreign militants are there in Kashmir because of the Union government's faulty policy. The Indian government is projecting us as the agents of Pakistan," Mr Lone said.

He said Hurriyat leaders would not meet New Delhi's representative, Mr KC Pant, to discuss the Kashmir issue. They would rather meet the Prime Minister.

The Hurriyat chief criticised the Centre for opposing the Pakistan high commission's decision of inviting the group's leaders to the tea party held in the honour of General Pervez Musharraf.

The Centre thought "if we were allowed in the party we would conspire with the Pakistanis." He said that the history of Kashmir was a "histo-



Mr Abdul Ghani Lone and Mohammed Umar Farooq, Awami Action Committee chairman, in Kolkata on Saturday. — The Statesman

ry of broken promises".
Mohammad Umar Farooq, chairman of Awami Action Committee, said the Kashmir problem is a political one and should be resolved politically. Kashmiris should be allowed to meet Indian and Pakistani governments to resolve the issue.

Participating in the discussion, Mr Mohammad Salim, state youth welfare minister, argued that if freedom

movement was going on in Kashmir then why were not the Kashmiris, but foreigners taking part in it? "During Indian freedom struggle the Indian people and not foreigners took part in the movement."

Mr Saugata Roy said that to solve the Kashmir issue, steps should be taken to develop the state economically. He urged Hurriyat leaders to join mainstream politics.

PM may not visit Pakistan this year

H BULA DEVI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 28. — Prime Minister is unlikely to visit Pakistan this year, thanks to his busy schedule for the next five months. General Pervez Musharraf's formal invitation to Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was delivered yesterday by the Pakistan high commissioner, Mr Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, to the foreign secretary, Mrs Chokila Iyer.

PMO officials said Mr Vajpayee's schedule for the next five months is full. Parliament's monsoon session will end in August. The foreign ministry has started preparing for the UN General Assembly session that is scheduled to begin in the third week of September. Mr Vajpayee and Gen Musharraf are likely to meet on the sidelines of the UN session.

Mr Vajpayee is scheduled to pay a state visit to Russia in October and attend the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Australia in November. In December, he has to attend the Saarc summit in Kathmandu.

Pakistan watchers say India will insist on "proper preparations" before scheduling a second summit. Officials said it'll be futile to have another summit without extensive diplomatic interactions at ministerial and official levels.

In his letter to Mr Vajpayee, Gen Musharraf has referred to Kashmir and emphasised an early solution. Pakistani papers quoted the letter as saying: "The path to normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan leads through Kashmir".

The President also hoped that it would be possible for Mr Vajpayee to visit Islamabad "sooner rather than later".

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A RETROGRADE STANCE

THE UNION HOME Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's statement in the Rajya Sabha unequivocally ruling out 'autonomy' for Jammu and Kashmir reflects a rigid mindset that is recklessly insensitive to the concerns of an alienated people and, much more disquietingly, smacks of disregard of the solemn commitment the Centre had made to the State at the time of accession 50 years ago. While putting forth the somewhat hackneyed 'the clock cannot be set back' argument for rejecting the idea of a return to the pre-1953 position, Mr. Advani sounded condescending when he said that the Centre would be "willing" to consider granting of "special powers" to it, if demanded, as part of an overall devolution package for the States in general. In a sense, his enunciation is more in the nature of a reiteration of the position the Vajpayee Government had taken last year in the wake of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly's resolution seeking restoration of the pre-1953 Constitutional status as recommended by the State Autonomy Committee. In the context of the failed Agra summit — which floundered, inter alia, on the issue of 'cross-border terrorism', with Pakistan refusing to see the insurgency, even if unjustifiably, as anything but a 'freedom struggle' — Mr. Advani's hardline stance could only heighten the grave implications of the anti-autonomy line.

Any credible formulation for resolving the J&K imbroglio has to recognise that 'autonomy' in relation to it means much more than and vastly different from what is commonly understood by it or by the expression 'devolution of powers' to the States in general. Jammu and Kashmir's claim for autonomy, which is rooted in the special Constitutional guarantees provided to it at the time of the State's accession to the Union of India, has to do with the restoration of what it has lost to the Centre over the years for whatever reason. Whether the return should be to the pre-1953 or pre-1975 status is not really a critical issue. After all, one cannot be dogmatic about the cutoff year, given especially the organic na-

ture of the Centre-State relationship in a federal system. But the bottomline is that the 'autonomy' package should, apart from recognising the ground realities, respect the spirit of the Instrument of Accession, which is exemplified in the special provisions under Article 370. Given this context, the promise of 'special powers' held out by Mr. Advani to J&K sounds deceptive. Set as it is against the backdrop of the overall imperative of greater devolution of powers to States in the light of Sarkaria Commission's recommendations, the offer can only mean some extra weightage for the State in the sharing of powers in such areas of governance as finance and general administration. To make this proposition is to trivialise the Centre's sacramental obligation to J&K.

But then, the Vajpayee regime's responses to the autonomy-related issues of the insurgency-stricken State have always been conditioned by the ideological orientation of its major coalition partner, the BJP; after all the shelving of the party's commitment to the revocation of Article 370 is but a tactic to stay in power as the head of a disparate coalition. For instance, there was palpable non-seriousness in its attitude vis-a-vis negotiations with the Farooq Abdullah Government on the question of autonomy (which it initiated after having peremptorily rejected the Assembly resolution). No less striking an example was the totally unfocussed 'dialogue' initiative (with Mr. K. C. Pant as the designated interlocutor) which in its own way appeared to sidetrack the necessary focus on autonomy and other related issues. It is all right for New Delhi to seek to pin down Islamabad on the question of 'cross-border terrorism'. But, given the stark reality that the alienation of the people was inescapably the basic cause for insurgency to take root and flourish, the Vajpayee Government can ill-afford to pursue a policy line that obsessively concentrates on the Pakistan factor and skirts issues that require to be addressed for winning over the people.

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A MAJOR SETBACK

THE ALL PARTY Hurriyat Conference's 'no' to the offer of talks on the Kashmir problem, not totally unexpected though, is a major setback to the "dialogue" process initiated by the Centre over three weeks ago, with the designation of Mr. K. C. Pant as its official interlocutor. Given the unfocussed character and conceptual flaws of the initiative, the Hurriyat leadership cannot exclusively be faulted for its negative response. Although Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat might appear superciliously dismissive of other groups when he used terms such as "all and sundry" and a "crowd," the core elements of his objection need to be taken into account. In seeking to involve people from "all walks of life" in the dialogue and inviting their views on ways of restoration of peace in the troubled State, the Centre has devalued and diffused the exercise, apart from exposing itself to the charge of being extremely casual about it. There is no way the Hurriyat's unsustainable and rather preposterous claim to recognition as the "sole representative" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir can be countenanced. But, at the same time, the ground reality of the umbrella outfit being a very important player in the State cannot be wished away either, if any initiative for finding a political solution to the vexed problem is to be meaningful at all. By bracketing every other group — non-government organisations, trade unions, social/religious association, etc. — with the Hurriyat and such other outfits having an immediate and direct bearing on the militancy-related issues and then requiring them to avail themselves of the "single window dialogue" facility, the Centre has in one stroke jeopardised the initiative's fruitfulness.

Closely linked to the APHC's rejection of Mr. Pant's formal offer is the stalled trip by its delegation to Pakistan, thanks to the Centre's unthinking refusal to clear the travel documents for the five-member team en bloc, the bone of contention being the inclusion in the squad of the Jamaat-e-Islami's Syed Ali Shah Geelani, known

for his strong anti-India sentiments. Having embarked upon the unilateral ceasefire and then having opted to persevere with the initiative against heavy odds, the Vajpayee Government should have, logically, enabled the Hurriyat squad's visit to Pakistan especially after the APHC had made clear that it had absolutely no intention of playing the "mediator" and its mission was aimed only at understanding the Pakistan-based militant groups' viewpoint and talking them out of the path of violence. All this may be too ambitious and it is very likely that nothing tangible comes out of the visit. But the negative fallout of the Government making an issue of the pro-Pakistani hardliner's presence in the delegation and not clearing the visit for that reason will be more damaging to the basic cause itself. The balance of advantage would seem to lie in giving the go-ahead signal to the Hurriyat mission.

The Hurriyat's response needs to be seen in the context of the fierce tussle between the pro-independence and pro-Pakistani elements in the 23-member conglomerate. The fact that, in the context of the Centre's ceasefire initiative and the people's craving for peace, the moderates in the APHC's top echelons could lay down the official policy line declaring Kashmir as a "political" problem — and, in the process, marginalise the likes of Mr. Geelani who insisted on giving it the "jihad" tag — is in itself a remarkably significant and positive development. Given the sort of pressures that these sections must have come under both from within the Hurriyat and outside, what with the real risk of a "sell-out" charge being hurled at them by the pro-Pakistani hardliners, they would indeed have to tread cautiously and adopt a strategy that does not undermine their own credibility. For its part, the Centre would do well to fashion its responses, in the immediate context, to the Hurriyat's pleas on the basis of a proper appreciation of its compulsions and imperatives.

Hurriyat's decision unfortunate, say Jammu leaders

By Sant Kumar Sharma
The Times of India News Service

JAMMU: Most of the political leaders based here termed as unfortunate the All Party Hurriyat Conference's decision not to participate in the talks with Planning Commission deputy chairman K.C. Pant. However, they also said that this was not unexpected as the Hurriyat did not have any independent stand and is managed by its masters in Pakistan.

State BJP chief Daya Krishan Kotwal condemned the Hurriyat saying its leadership was never serious about restoring peace in the troubled state. "The Hurriyat leaders were provided an excellent opportunity to clarify their position and put across their points of view. They have squandered away this chance and will rue it."

Kotwal added that this was not the end of the road as far as the peace process was concerned. He also said that the Hurriyat had been given too much weightage unnecessarily and this had gone to its leaders' head.

Sheikh Abdul Rehman of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), on

the other hand, expressed his unhappiness with the way in which the peace process had been handled so far. The BSP had been saying from the very beginning that honest and sincere efforts needed to be taken to resolve the Kashmir problem, he said. Although the Hurriyat's claim of being the sole representative of the Kashmiris could not stand the test of scrutiny, yet it could not be denied that it (Hurriyat) was definitely an important component of Kashmir's political leadership, he said.

Rehman said the government and the Hurriyat should be more flexible in their approaches and try to meet one another in a spirit of give and take. Only then would some solution to the vexed Kashmir problem emerge, he felt.

A leader of former Union home minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's People's Democratic Party (PDP) said the Hurriyat decision was a temporary setback. This situation would not last very long and the peace process might get an impetus soon, he said.

Some functionaries of the Panun Kashmir, representing the Kashmiri Pandit migrants, said the

Hurriyat response had vindicated their stand that the Hurriyat was not sincere in resolving the problem. "We have been saying all along that the Hurriyat is backing the gun-carrying militants and is virtually Pakistan's voice here," one of them said. "The response of the Hurriyat clearly shows how peace-loving they are though they make tall claims that they want the bloodshed to end," he added.

Some National Conference leaders, when contacted, said that chief minister Farooq Abdullah had already criticised the Hurriyat decision and that they had nothing more to add. "The CM is also our party president and he has articulated the ruling party's viewpoint comprehensively already," one of them said.

The state of disarray in the Congress could be gauged from the fact that no senior party leader was available for comments. Incidentally, the state party unit has been going through a rough patch due to internal turmoil and revolt against state Congress chief Mohammed Shafi Qureshi.

JKDFP deliberates on talks offer

SRINAGAR, APRIL 28. The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) today began formulating its response to the Centre's offer of unconditional talks on the Kashmir issue. Prominent citizens and intellectuals from Jammu and Ladakh, invited by the JKDFP chief, Mr. Shabir Ahmed Shah, would discuss the offer for two days as "we do not believe in outright rejection of such offers," Mr. Shah said before the meeting. "It is with this intent that we have invited 500 prominent persons to take note of their suggestions."

On Thursday, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference had virtually rejected the Centre's offer to talk to everybody involved, claiming that it was the "sole representative" of Kashmiris.

Mr. Shah's endeavour seemed to contest such an outlook. "We do not want to give an impression to the outside world that we are rigid. If we reject or take up the offer, we will give logic. Kashmiris want a peaceful resolution to the issue to which Pakistan is an im-

portant party." He urged Delhi to resume talks with Pakistan.

"It will be an open discussion. We will put Mr. K.C. Pant's (the Centre's negotiator) offer to the people and they will decide," Mr. Shah said. "While framing our response we will have to consider the sentiments of the Hindus in Jammu and Buddhists in Ladakh. These non-Muslim guests will speak their hearts out during the discussions."

ANC accepts invite

In a related development, the Awami National Conference (ANC) led by the former Chief Minister, Mr. G.M. Shah, accepted the Centre's talks invitation with a condition that Mr. Pant visit the State and see "reason" in Kashmiris' "wishes and national aspirations". "The ANC would have no objection or feel no hurdle to exchange its views with Mr. Pant to solve the Kashmir issue peacefully, equitably, honourably, democratically and permanently." — PTI

Picture on Page 8

Kashmiri groups criticise APHC

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 27. A prominent Kashmiri group based in London, Jammu Kashmir National Awareness Campaign, has expressed disappointment that the All-Party Hurriyat Conference has rejected the Government's offer for a dialogue. The Awareness Campaign argues that the Hurriyat could "start a process that could finally lead to tripartite talks".

In a statement faxed to *The Hindu* from London, the organisation's director, Prof. M. Adullah Raina, noted that "the Government of India has to demonstrate that it is serious and sincere in resolving the Kashmir problem and the Hurriyat has to come forward with confidence, courage and trust."

According to Prof. Raina, in every struggle there is time for con-

flict and time for peace. It is duty of the resistance leaders "to take steps to save the lives, property and honour of the people. There is no justification for perpetuating the conditions in which we lose precious lives everyday." At the same time, Prof. Raina suggests that the Indian Government "must concede the Hurriyat's just demand for issuing travel documents" so that these leaders could visit Pakistan. "The Government of India will have to create conditions for the Hurriyat leadership to negotiate with Pakistan as well, as it controls more than one-third of Jammu Kashmir State."

Even before the Hurriyat leadership had formally rejected the Vajpayee Government's offer of talks, Lord Avebury, President of the Friends of Kashmir — an extremely influential voice — has

castigated the Hurriyat for its "sole representative" claim. In statement earlier this month, Lord Avebury pointed out that "the APHC claim to be the sole voice of the Kashmiri people, though within its own ranks there is a split between Syed Geelani and the others over their attitude to the ceasefire."

Although they claim to be an umbrella organisation of all political parties and groups, the only one of their constituents which has a grass-roots membership is the Jamaat-e-Islami. The Mirwaiz of course has his own following, but they are not organised as a political party."

Lord Avebury deplored the APHC's "proprietary attitude, which denies the legitimacy of opinions outside their own circle, including those of linguistic and religious minorities."

THE HINDU

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Bhatt was
misquoted,
claims
Hurriyat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 27. — The All Party Hurriyat Conference today denied reports quoting the APHC chairman, Professor Abdul Ghani Bhatt, that talks with the Centre were not possible unless the team was sent to Pakistan.

Reports from Srinagar quoted Prof Bhatt as saying: "We are ready to enter into a dialogue with the Centre provided our five-member delegation is allowed to visit Pakistan first to hold talks with the mujahideen and the government there".

However, contrary to this statement the APHC spokesman here, Abdul Majid Bandy, said that the chairman was "misquoted". Speaking to **The Statesman**, Mr Bandy said: "There seems to be some kind of a misunderstanding. There is no condition that the members of APHC should be first sent to Pakistan. The chairman was just implying that had the team been sent to Pakistan it would have created a conducive atmosphere."

Mr Bandy said that APHC has not rejected a dialogue with the Centre. "Our only point is that the political parties and the NGOs whom the government is inviting, their stand is well-known. They are the Centre's voice. So what is the point in inviting such people?"

THE STATESMAN

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Lord of hackers guns for India over Kashmir

Pramit Pal Chaudhuri
New Delhi, April 27

THIS YEAR is set to become a record for anti-Indian hacking with 160 websites defaced in less than four months. Leading the charge is a little-known hacker group called the Silver Lords which has wrecked 23 Indian websites in the past six days. The Silver Lords place a red and black image on the sites they hack, leaving the words: "Silver Lords: For the Freedom of Kashmir."

The Silver Lords seem to be for an independent Kashmir. They have also attacked one Pakistani website, global.net.pk. While Kashmiri hacktivism is not unknown, it has never shown this degree of cyber aggression.

Most hack attacks against Indian sites are by Pakistani or Islamic groups like GForce Pakistan or Harkat-ul-mOs. Such groups have been responsible for two-thirds of the anti-India attacks this year.

The screen names of five Silver Lords are known: MaDDoNa, macviz, ScorpionKTX, Lord

Choo3s and f0ul. According to Srijit, the screen name of India Cracked, a Singapore-based website that monitors hacking, the group left an e-mail address silverlords@yahoo.com at one attack.

The Silver Lords have hacked Indian sites intermittently before, but never showed any political leanings. MaDDoNa, in a recent solo attack on the site of Guru Nanak Dev University, said nothing about Kashmir and even left a note on how to repair the site.

Srijit, analysing previous attacks by ScorpionKTX, says he "seems to be connected to Brazil." This is of interest, says Ravi Prasad, who runs c4i, a site on internet security and terrorism, as Brazil is a centre for mercenary hackers. They are recruited over the internet by governments and political groups to attack specific sites in other countries.

This makes it likely the Silver Lords were recruited, probably in the past three months, to attack India-related websites by Kashmiri activists or even Pakistani

agencies. "They may have been asked to attack a few Pakistani sites to make it seem they were Kashmiri," said one expert. The Silver Lords sent e-greetings to GForce and Pakistani Hackerz Club in earlier attacks.

Pakistani hacker groups sprang up after the Pokhran II tests and after Western hackers stole nuclear test data from the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre. GForce was the first such group. The newest group is the World's Fantabulous Defacers. Prasad says these hackers are believed to receive encouragement from Pakistani intelligence groups. GForce, in an interview, admitted they are given lists of Indian sites to deface over the net. The Defacers arose after Pervez Musharraf came to power and are abusive of Nawaz Sharif.

All of last year, according to India Cracked, 131 Indian websites were hacked. This year's tally is heading for well over 650. "It really doesn't look like a good year for Indian websites," says Srijit.

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Hizb threatens to step up Kashmir operations

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 27. The United Jehadi Council Chairman and the chief of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Syed Salahuddin, has said that his organisation would step up its operations against the Indian forces and installations in Kashmir if the Indian Government is not willing to declare Kashmir a disputed territory and signal readiness for a tripartite dialogue.

In a statement issued here Syed Salahuddin hailed the decision of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to reject the offer of talks on Kashmir made by Delhi and maintained that "result-oriented talks" are possible only if Pakistan is also involved in the process.

The Hizb chief said activists of his organisation would use 'sophisticated' weapons to target the Indian forces and installations. He said the recent operation code named 'Al Fatah' on April 23 and 24 carried out by his organisation should serve as a warning to the Indian Government.

In a separate statement the self-styled 'central commander' of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Abdul Rehman Dakhil, has said that no third option and back-channel diplomacy would be accepted on the Kashmir issue. He said that India had no capability of stopping the Fidayeen (suicide missions) in Kashmir.

He said that very soon, the Fidayeen group of the Lashkar-e-Taiba would create a 'new history'. Mr. Dakhil said that the United States had no

interest in resolving the Kashmir issue. He alleged that a conspiracy was being hatched to eliminate the political leadership of Kashmir.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad the 'deputy supreme commander' of the Hizbul Mujahideen, Maulana Javed Kasuri, has warned that any pressure on jihadi outfits in the name of a dewatering campaign would not be tolerated.

Mr. Kasuri has said that the statements of the Pakistani Interior Minister, Lt. Gen. (retd.) Moinuddin Haider, regarding 'jihadi' outfits could have a negative impact and Gen. Pervez Musharraf should take strong notice of these statements. He has also warned the Indian Government that if it caused any harm to Syed Ali Geelani or any other APHC leader, leaders like Mr. Bal Thackeray and Mr. L.K. Advani would also not be spared. He said the Indian ceasefire was a drama only to provide some relief to its forces.

In a related development, leader of the Kashmir Dukhtaran-e-Millat, Asia Indrabi has said that Kashmir's accession with Pakistan was the only solution of the long-standing Kashmir tangle. In his telephonic address to the Nawai Waqt (Urdu daily) Forum, she said the Hurriyat's visit to Pakistan would be harmful for the Kashmir cause as some of the leaders wanted to visit Pakistan only to convince the Mujahideen to accept the ceasefire.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2001

INSISTS ON PAK. VISIT; WON'T BOARD A 'CROWDED TRAIN'

Hurriyat rejects talks offer

SRINAGAR, APRIL 26. The executive committee of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference today rejected the Centre's offer of talks on Kashmir, saying the alliance of 23 parties is not ready to join a crowded train which goes nowhere. "We are ready to enter into a dialogue with the Centre provided our five-member delegation is allowed to visit Pakistan first to hold talks with the mujahideen leadership and the Government there," the chairperson, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, told a press conference. He said New Delhi must accept the Hurriyat as the only representative body of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Prof. Bhat said the Centre's negotiator, Mr. K.C. Pant, invited the National Conference and the Bharatiya Janata Party, which are ruling partners, and some other organisations which "existed only on paper and did not represent the people of the State".

"We call it a crowd, and while talking to a crowd you will be shouting," Prof. Bhat said. "Such a process of talking would lead nowhere."

Extending the metaphor, he said, "We do not want to board a train which goes nowhere, we want to board a train which moves towards the destination. We want the talks should be initiated with a purpose, obviously with an objective to achieve a breakthrough. If the Centre wants



Hurriyat leaders (from left) Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Moulvi Umer Farooq, and the chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, discuss a point during the final round of the executive committee meeting in Srinagar on Thursday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

to talk for the sake of (having) talks, we won't be party to it."

Separate talks

"We are prepared to talk to India in New Delhi, Pakistan in Islamabad and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in 'Azad Kashmir,'" Prof. 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 a new leaf. We have to involve the Pakistan Government and the militant leadership in the talks for an ever-lasting solution to the Kashmir issue."

Asked specifically whether the Hurriyat was accepting or rejecting the invitation for talks extend-

ed by the Centre's negotiator, Mr. K.C. Pant, he said "I leave it to you to decide."

Emphasising the tripartite framework, he said, "The Governments of India and Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir need to sit together and find a way out."

Asked how he would convince a 'third party' that the Hurriyat was the only representative party when the BJP was popular in Jammu and the Buddhists in Ladakh, he said it was the decision of the majority which ultimately prevailed. "Let the Government of India hold a plebiscite. Since it is as good as elections it will decide who stands where... If the people

of Jammu and Kashmir decide to join India, we will withdraw our demand."

Asked whether the mission to Pakistan should follow talks, Prof. Bhat said, "Yes, as this is the first step towards purposeful talking to achieve some results." On why the Hurriyat wanted to meet militant leaders in Pakistan when it claims to represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Prof. Bhat said "we want to consult them to work out a formula". What was the formula? "I will not give you the details of the formula beforehand." — UNI, PTI

Betrayal, says Farooq

In New Delhi, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, said the APHC had betrayed the people of the State yearning for peace by rejecting the Centre's offer for talks. "The APHC is not the true representative of the people of the State. There are many other political parties who can contribute to the peace process," he told reporters.

Dr. Abdullah said the Hurriyat was working on directions from the neighbouring country. "Last evening senior Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani had met the Pakistan High Commissioner, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, and today they rejected the offer for talks." The peace process will continue despite these minor hiccups, he said. — UNI

THE HINDU

27 APR 2001

27 APR 2001

Pakistan trip first, talks later, says Hurriyat

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, April 26.— The executive committee of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference today rejected the Centre's talks offer on Kashmir saying it is not ready to join the crowded train which goes nowhere.

"We're ready to enter into a dialogue with the Centre provided our five-member delegation is allowed to visit Pakistan first to hold talks with the Mujahideen leadership and the government there," the APHC chief, Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, told a press conference. He said New Delhi must accept the Hurriyat as the sole representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the Centre's negotiator, Mr KC Pant, has invited

the National Conference and BJP which are ruling partners, and some other organisations, which exist only on paper and don't represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

"We call it a crowd and while talking to a crowd you'll be shouting," Prof Bhat said. "Such a process of talking led to nowhere."

He said: "We want that talks be initiated with a purpose, obviously with an objective to achieving a breakthrough. If the Centre wants to talk for the sake of talks, we're not a party to it."

When a reporter said the government India challenges the representative character of Hurriyat, he said: "Let's hold a plebiscite. If the people of Jammu and Kashmir decide to join

India, we'll withdraw."

"Holding of plebiscite is equal to elections", he said, adding let the government of India test the popularity and representative character of the Hurriyat". To a question if Hurriyat claims that it represents the people of Jammu and Kashmir why it wants to meet militant leaders in Pakistan, Prof Bhat said: "We want to consult them to work out a formula". The J&K chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, today said the APHC had betrayed the people of the state by rejecting the talks offer.

He said Hurriyat leaders should first hold talks with Mr Pant and then insist on visiting Pakistan.

■ Photograph on page 8

THE STATESMAN

27 APR 2001

27 APR 2001

Pak., terrorist outfits hail APHC decision

27/4
by B. Muralidhar Reddy 11/13

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 26. Pakistan and Pakistan-based militant organisations have welcomed the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) decision to reject the offer of talks made by the Indian Government.

The chief spokesman of the military government and press secretary to the chief executive, Maj. Gen. Rashid Quereshi, described the decision as a "step in the right direction" and said that the earlier India recognised "ground realities" in Kashmir, the better it would be for the resolution of the conflict.

"It has been the contention of Pakistan that there are three parties to the dispute and it is not possible to resolve it unless all of them involved," he said.

Maj. Gen. Quereshi said that if India was "really sincere" in addressing the Kashmir issue, it should take steps to pave way for all the three parties to sit down and talk. "The APHC has done the right thing".

He said that "half hearted and insincere" attempts would not lead anywhere and alleged the ceasefire declared by India was being observed more in breach than in practice.

He claimed that while the guns on the Line of Control have fallen

silent on account of the policy of "maximum restraint" being adopted by the Musharraf Government, the situation inside Kashmir remained the same. "Kashmiri people continue to be the target of Indian forces despite the ceasefire".

The Hizb-ul Mujahideen spokesman, Mr. Salim Hashmi, expressed happiness over the decision of the APHC and said it vindicated the stand taken by his organisation ever since it withdrew the unilateral ceasefire it announced in July last year. "This was precisely the reason that compelled us to review our ceasefire. We are not opposed to dialogue but we believe that if it is to be meaningful it must involve all the three parties".

Mr. Hashmi said that the Indian Government should allow the Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan to enable it interact with all the concerned to pave way for a tripartite dialogue.

The Lashkar-e-Taiba spokesman, Yahya Mujaheed, also echoed the same sentiments. He said that India should be not only prepared for an unconditional tripartite dialogue but should withdraw its forces from Kashmir to create the right atmosphere for resolution of the dispute.

Statistics show 17% increase in violent incidents in J&K

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 25 APRIL

THE TOTAL number of violent incidents in Jammu and Kashmir registered a 17 per cent increase in the post-ceasefire period. Civilian and militant casualties, however registered a decline in October-December 2000 as compared to July-September 2000.

The picture was grim for the security forces according to statistics in the annual report of the Union home ministry for the year 2000-01. While violent incidents against the uniformed personnel in the Valley rose from 36 in July-September 2000 to 55 in October-December 2000 (the ceasefire was announced on November 19, 2000), the casualties were constant at 113.

According to the ministry of home affairs (MHA) document, the militant activities of various underground groups and ethnic tensions over the year 2000-01 kept the conditions disturbed in large areas of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and some areas of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. However, left-wing extremism declined in Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

The annual report spoke of a 9 per cent decline in communal incidents. It however admitted "some increase" in the incidents of attacks against Christians and their institutions during 2000. The explosions caused by IEDs planted in churches across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Goa have been mentioned, as is the success of the Central and state agencies in identifying the outfit — Deendar

Anjuman — behind the blasts.

A comparison between the statistics of militant violence in Kashmir for calendar years 1999 and 2000 shows an improvement in the situation as far as civilian killings are concerned. While the number of terrorist incidents during 2000 (3074) was almost equal to that in 1999 (3071), the figure for civilians killed showed a decline from 821 in 1999 to 762 in 2000. The number of militants' casualties rose significantly from 1,075 to 1,520, the highest in the last five years, over the corresponding period. According to the annual report, the number of militants killed would have been much higher but for the Ramazan peace initiative undertaken from November 28, 2000.

As for the security forces, they suffered 482 casualties in 2000 as compared to 408 last year due to specific targeting by the militants. However, the ratio of security personnel to militants killed improved from 1:3.3 at one point to 1:4 just before the Ramazan ceasefire began. According to sources in the MHA, this figure has fallen to nearly 1:2 in the post-ceasefire period.

What is particularly galling is the revelation in the MHA report that the recruitment of local youth by the Kashmiri militants had received a slightly better response during 1999 and 2000. "With these efforts, certain defunct tanzems like Al-Jehad, Al-Barq and Tehrik-ul-Mujahideen are sought to revived, while the existing Hizbul Mujahideen and Al-Badr are being strengthened," says the report.

The Economic Times

26 APR 2001

More anti-ultra forces for Jammu & Kashmir

Vishal Thapar
New Delhi, April 23

THE DEFENCE establishment has decided to raise the strength of the specialised counter-insurgency wing of the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir, the Rashtriya Rifles, by 30 battalions.

Highly placed sources told *Hindustan Times* that the plan was approved after being discussed at the Army commanders' conference, which commenced in the Capital today.

to review the prevailing security situation in the country.

"The objective is to gradually withdraw regular army formations from internal security (IS) duties in J&K," a senior army officer said. At the moment, 117 battalions of the Army are deployed in Kashmir.

The RR was raised in the early 1990s as a para-military force with a dedicated counter-insurgency role in the troubled State.

Thirty-six RR battalions have been raised and deployed since then, and the addition of 30 more units would almost double its strength over the next five years, leaving a proportionate number of regular Army units free to be deployed along the line of control for their primary role of safeguarding the frontiers and preventing infiltration.

Recently, it had also been decided to designate the RR as a regular component of the Army in an effort to increase its operational effectiveness.

At the five-day bi-annual conference which began today, the top brass of the Army, comprising the Chief of Army Staff, S Padmanabhan, Vice-Chief Vijay Oberoi, six Army commanders, principal staff officers at the Army Headquarters and directors-general of all branches held a closed-door review of the security scenario in the country, and the operational preparedness of the Army.

Defence Minister Jaswant Singh also addressed the conference. New developments, and the "entire spectrum of war", including army doctrines in a nuclearised environment, and joint operations with the air force and navy are to be discussed. Each theatre commander, followed by the principal staff officers, will make presentations.

Air Force and Navy chiefs, besides the defence secretary, will also address the gathering. The Air Force and Navy Commanders conferences concluded last week.

The last two days of the Army commanders' conference will be devoted to deciding promotions and postings of senior officers. A board chaired by the Army chief,

and comprising the Vice-Chief and the six commanders, will recommend to the Government promotions of brigadiers to the rank of major-general, and those of major-generals to lieutenant-general.

Meanwhile, five people, including a woman special police officer (SPO) and two counter-insurgents nine, were among five killed in Kashmir today. A PTI report adds that nine others, including five BSF personnel were injured as militants triggered four powerful blasts and targeted security camps and patrols across the Kashmir valley.

The sudden spurt in militant attacks, including two aimed at the lives of a congress leader and a senior police officer and an abortive bid to blow up a satellite radar station, is viewed as an attempt by militants to influence the decision of the Hurriyat Conference, which met here to chalk out a response to the offer of unconditional dialogue by Centre.

Militants shot SPO Shafiqah at Herdov-Malpura in Baramulla district.

Terrorists fired two rockets to blow up the radar station at Chrar-e-Sharief in Badgam district of central Kashmir but the rockets missed the target and hit a building housing the BSF troops instead.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 APR 2001

Hurriyat mum after first-round talks

Srinagar, April 21

THE HURRIYAT Conference today failed to reach a consensus during the first round of talks to shape the conglomerate's response to the Government's offer for talks.

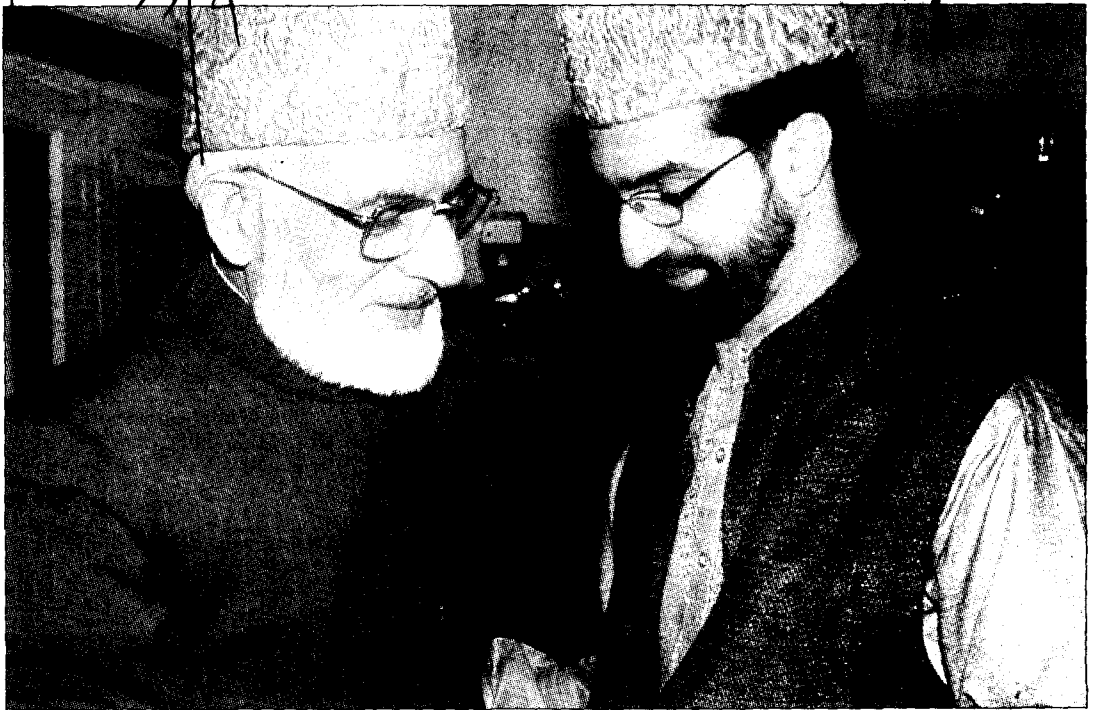
The Hurriyat's general council will again take up the matter on Monday. At the end of the working committee meeting today, Hurriyat leaders were reticent on its outcome. But sources said most of the members doubted the Government's sincerity about resolving the Kashmir dispute through dialogue.

Hurriyat chairman, Abdul Gani Bhatt, only said three members each from the seven-party executive expressed "free, frank and fearless" views on the Centre's offer.

The views expressed today will be discussed again at the Hurriyat's executive meeting scheduled for later next week, he said.

The working committee consists of three members each of the seven-party executive council. The general council comprises all the constituents of the 23-party conglomerate.

Besides Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Qazi Ahmadullah and Sheikh Ali Mohammad represented the Jamaat-e-Islami in today's meeting. Abdul Gani, Haji Ghulam Nabi Sumji and Shabir Ahmad



AFP PHOTO

APHC leaders Syed Ali Shah Geelani and (right) Moulvi Umer Farooq at the working committee meeting.

Dar represented the Muslim Conference.

The Awami Action Committee team was led by its chairman and executive member Mirwaiz Moulvi Umer Farooq.

Serious differences had sur-

face within the Hurriyat over the Centre's offer for talks. Some of the constituents openly favoured dialogue.

But others said talks had no meaning without the involvement of Pakistan.

The Centre recently announced the nomination of KC Pant, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, to negotiate with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of peace in the State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 APR 2001

A creeping chill in the Valley



A confrontation in the streets at Narbal, north of Srinagar.

THE CENTRE'S latest move of naming the Deputy Chairman, Planning Commission, Mr. K. C. Pant, as its chief interlocutor for holding dialogue with Kashmiri political parties and groups has not evoked any enthusiasm in the Valley. The move, aimed at injecting political content into the ongoing unilateral ceasefire, is being seen here by a cross-section of people as one which does not have the potential of turning into a fruitful exercise.

After being named as the chief negotiator by the Government on April 5, Mr. Pant sent out formal invitations last Sunday to MPs, MLAs from the State, political parties and others, including the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) urging them to participate in the peace dialogue. He has even held a first round of consultations with the former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Syed Mir Qasim, a veteran Congress(I) leader of the State.

The "unconditional" dialogue is being offered to all the parties such as the National Conference, the Congress(I), the BJP, trade unions, NGOs, social and religious groups and panchayat members in a bid to restore peace in the border State, gripped by militancy and violence for the past 12 years.

While the Centre sent out a signal that talks would not be restricted to any one organisation, it also

underlined the widely held feeling that the ceasefire, despite extensions over the past four months, and the peace process delicately entwined around it had reached a dead-end.

Reactions to the appointment of Mr. Pant as the Centre's negotiator have been along predictable lines. If the Congress(I) and the BJP have welcomed it, so has the National Conference of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah. The Chief Minister has described it as a positive development in the peace process.

The separatist groups and militant organisations have rejected it and the Hurriyat Conference is yet to firm up its formal response to the invitation it has received from Mr. Pant. The Hurriyat is meeting again in the coming week to finalise its response but observers here say that differences of opinion among its leadership have left it in a dilemma: whether to talk or not to talk.

The Hurriyat Chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, has described the latest Government move as a "mere formality" and a "time buying tactic". Clearly, the Hurriyat does not want to be a part of the "crowd". Prof. Bhat says: "You have to be guided by stark political realities on the ground. However, if the Government considers that engaging parties, individuals, groups and even panchayat mem-

bers, relevant or irrelevant, can help maintain peace and resolve dispute, let them go ahead. We will feel delighted."

While the Hurriyat Conference believes that peace will return automatically once the Kashmir problem is resolved, the Government has maintained that restoration of peace is crucial to the amicable solution of the Kashmir issue.

The Government has said that the doors for dialogue are also open for Kashmiri organisations, currently engaged in militancy in the State but are desirous of peace. The indication clearly points to the Hizbul Mujahideen though Mr. Pant has not named the organisation. The Hizb Salar-e-Ala, Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, was quoted in a local newspaper as saying that the Kashmir issue could only be resolved through dialogue. For neither can militants ever drive the Indian troops out of Kashmir, nor can Indian security forces wipe out militancy in the State.

Political observers here say that the Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire declaration of July 24, 2000, had given rise to hopes that the road to peace though strewn with rumblestrips could be travelled but the withdrawal of ceasefire on August 8 dashed all such hopes. The pro-Pakistan outfit had laid down a demand for tripartite talks — involving India, Pakistan and Kashmiris.

There is little enthusiasm among Kashmiris about the Centre's appointment of Mr. K. C. Pant as its pointman for the State, reports Vinay Kumar.

Similarly, the Vajpayee Government's initiative to declare a unilateral ceasefire during the holy month of Ramzan in November was also seen as a goodwill gesture by the people in the State. By the time Muharram came to be observed early this month when the Centre offered to hold unconditional dialogue with Kashmiri parties and groups, people here are harbouring doubts about the sincerity and the entire purpose behind undertaking such an elaborate exercise without setting out any time-frame.

"The general feeling that something positive will happen has gradually evaporated over the past four months. Even Hurriyat had welcomed the ceasefire initially but failed in securing the permission from the Centre to travel to Pakistan. Earlier, the Centre had outrightly rejected autonomy resolutions, passed by the State Assembly. This also came as a blow," says Mr. Tahir Mohiddin, editor of a Srinagar-based weekly. He makes out a case for giving political space to moderate elements, be they on any side of the spectrum — whether in the Hurriyat or in the militant organisations or in the National Conference.

With militancy in Jammu and Kashmir laced with 'jehadi' fervour, political observers warn of dangerous consequences if ultra-fundamentalists are allowed to take control of things. From the time when the first "fidayeen" (suicide squad) attack took place at Badamibagh cantonment area in November 1999, such attacks have become deadlier and more daring.

Recently, a fierce gunbattle erupted at the heavily-guarded Srinagar Airport when a CRPF security picket was attacked by a six-member Lashkar suicide squad and only last week two members of a 'fidayeen' squad hit at Srinagar's busy Lal Chowk area. "How did one of the militants escape? The attack could have been deadlier, it is a grim reminder of the shape of things to come," says a



Mr. K. C. Pant with Syed Mir Qasim... the negotiator makes his first move.

shopkeeper of the adjoining Residency Road.

A cross-section of people here, including businessmen, academics, showed a remarkable maturity in talking about the situation in the State. "We know that a free Kashmir will be difficult to sustain and we are also familiar with the economic mess and political instability prevailing in Pakistan. We are also aware that Indian security forces are not going to leave and militants are not going to stop their fight. But who is suffering in this scenario, only the people of Kashmir who are facing a host of hardships for their survival," says Mr. Aizaz, a shopkeeper of Batmaloo area of Srinagar.

Whether Mr. Pant is able to make any headway or not in Jammu and Kashmir, people here appeared convinced of the personal integrity and sincerity of the Prime

Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, in taking steps which could lead to peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. "Mr. Vajpayee here and General Pervez Musharraf across the border are best suited to take concrete steps in resolving Kashmir issue. The two sides may have their compulsions but they should give up rigid stances and work for a peaceful settlement of the problem," a shopowner in the posh Residency Road said.

With the summer setting in and the winter remaining mostly dry, the coming days are sure to pose new challenges on the ground to the security forces in terms of checking infiltration, thwarting suicide attacks and preventing militant strikes in the State. At the same time, the process of dialogue will also be hopefully on. Will hope float in Kashmir or will it be yet another summer of discontent?

Hurriyat-speak

"I do not believe in conditionalities, I am guided by the ground realities," says the Hurriyat Conference Chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat.

THE ALL-PARTY Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of 23 political parties of separatist outfits, has described the Centre's latest offer of political dialogue as a mere "formality" aimed at buying time. Though the Hurriyat could not firm up its response to the Centre's invitation for dialogue despite a marathon meeting of its executive on Tuesday, there are clear indications that it is miffed at being treated as a part of the "crowd" of political parties, NGOs, trade unions, panchayats and others invited for the dialogue.

In a free-wheeling interview to *The Hindu* at his home in Srinagar, the Hurriyat Chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, made no attempt to hide his feeling



Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat

that the Centre's offer of dialogue failed to address the core issue. In his opinion, peace would automatically return to the State once the Kashmir problem was solved.

Prof. Bhat felt an opinion was shaping up in India that if a bold initiative was taken and Pakistan and the Hurriyat Conference were engaged rather than the "crowd", there could be a way out in solving the Kashmir problem.

Recalling the time when the unilateral ceasefire was declared five months ago during the holy month of Ramzan, Prof. Bhat said it was a declaration of intent on the part of the Prime Minister to address the Kashmir issue with imagination. "Mr. Vajpayee's musings from Kerala referred to going beyond the beaten track. We, therefore, responded fairly positively. India had taken a step, it was for Pakistan to follow suit. Peace returned to the LoC not to the Valley," he said.

He said the Hurriyat decided to undertake travel to Pakistan

with a view to consolidating the peace process. "The Government of India too agreed, saying if the Hurriyat Conference seeks to visit Pakistan, the Government will have no objection and it was on January 25 that the Prime Minister said the Ministry concerned was looking into travel documents of the Hurriyat leaders and there would be no delay in issuing the passports. It speaks volumes of the Indian Government's commitment. For one reason or the other, the visit to

Pakistan never happened. We want permanent peace to happen but peace cannot happen in a vacuum. Therefore, we have to boldly address the root cause."

The Hurriyat Chairman said he was ready to go beyond the APHC constitution. "I do not believe in conditionalities, I am guided by the ground realities. The initial gains of the ceasefire have withered away. The Government is withholding passports to all the seven members of the Hurriyat Executive and blocking the path to Islamabad — a path which could have led to peace and prosperity of people in the South Asian region."

In his view, the top political leadership in New Delhi should be concerned about the future course that events may take. "If India is a nuclear power, so is Pakistan. If you feel concerned, why not accept sombre political realities."

He said the Centre knew that alienation of the people in Jammu and Kashmir had deepened irretrievably. India and Pakistan had fought three wars over Kashmir and if it pushed the two neighbours to yet another confrontation, it would result in a total disaster. "To be honest, I feel more concerned about India and Pakistan rather than Kashmir."

Hurriyat meets to discuss Centre's offer of talks

SRINAGAR, APRIL 21. The working committee of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today deliberated the Centre's offer of holding talks with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir but apparently failed to arrive at any consensus. The matter would further be discussed by its general council next week.

After the four-hour meeting, the Hurriyat leaders maintained a studied silence over the outcome. The APHC chairman, Mr. Abdul Gani Bhat, said three members each from the seven-party executive expressed their "free, frank and fearless" views about the Centre's offer. He refused to give further details but said the matter would be discussed at the general council meeting of the 23-party conglomerate on Monday.

The views expressed at the working committee and general council would be discussed at the Hurriyat's executive meeting slated later next week, he said.

However, APHC insiders said a majority of the participants doubted the sincerity of the Centre in resolving the Kashmir issue through peaceful negotiations.

In New Delhi, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, advised the APHC to respond positively to the Centre's offer of talks.

Talking to presspersons after the signing ceremony of the \$one billion power project between the State Power Development Corporation and the National Construction Corporation of Norway, Dr. Abdullah said, "If they (the Hurriyat) do not participate in the talks,



Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat and Syed Ali Shah Geelani (right) discussing a point during the executive committee meeting of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar on Saturday.

— Photo: Nissar Ahmed

they will have missed the bus. It is only through negotiations that normality can be achieved in the State."

Queried on the security risks to the Norwegian personnel involved in the project's execution,

he said there would be no such problem. He clarified that the French consortium had abandoned the Dulhasti project not because of any security threats, but because of the cost escalation.

— PTI, UNI

NEW DELHI

22 APR 2001

Hurriyat likely to spurn Centre's dialogue offer

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, April 20

ALL-PARTY HURRIYAT Conference has apparently decided to spurn Centre's dialogue offer through its interlocutor, K C Pant.

Indications are that all the seven parties, forming the executive council, the apex decision-making body of the amalgam, are in no way ready to accept the offer in the present form.

The amalgam has set out on a comprehensive exercise to effect consensus not only within the 23-party conglomerate but also among the separatist parties and leaders operating outside the Hurriyat.

A meeting between a team of Hurriyat leaders and Shabir Ahmad Shah, Naeem Ahmad Khan and Azam Inquilabi (all functioning outside Hurriyat) at Mirwaiz Omer Farooq's residence on Thursday is stated to be a part of that exercise.

Sources said that Sahbir Shah assured the Hurriyat team, who included Mirwaiz Omer Farooq, Qazi Ahadullah of Jamaat-e-Islami and Bashir Ahmad Butt of the JKLF, that he would not participate in the dialogue unless the Government fulfilled some of the basic conditions.

Shabir Shah, who was earlier reported to have agreed to take part in the talks, has sought Pakistan's participation in the dialogue, which New Delhi is unwilling to accept. Naeem Ahmad Khan, who heads the pro-Pakistan National Front, is also reported to be holding similar views.

The Hurriyat is convening the meeting of its 21-member Working Committee on Saturday followed by general council's session on Monday to discuss the issue. Islamic Students League,



Jaish-e-Muhammad chief Abu Hijra (centre) and his guards at a hideout on the outskirts of Srinagar.

AFP PHOTO

Jammu and Kashmir Mass Movement, Muslim League, Unjaman-e-Shar-e-Shian Muslim Khwateen Markaz and Jamia Masjid Auqaf besides Kashmir Bar Association, which are the most active components among the general council are quite opposed to holding any dialogue with New Delhi.

The otherwise moderate groups too find it least meaningful to go in for talks in the present form.

Observers maintain that this extreme posture is, in fact, a damage-control exercise of moderates, who had heavily suffered in terms of credibility and commitment during their recent tussle with hardline Jamaat-e-Islami

leader Syed Ali Gilani.

The Jamaat leader's hardline approach had not only militant group's support but also influenced a large section of common people and intelligentsia. And quite reverse to it, the views of moderates were assumed as a "sell-out".

This acted as a compelling force to the Hurriyat not only to keep back Gilani (the amalgam had asked Jamaat-e-Islami to withdraw Gilani and replace him with some other representative) but even to fall in line with him.

"They can't afford any more deviation", said apolitical analyst, "and only way out for them to refurbish their image is to keep away from the dialogue".

US curbs could go soon: Celeste

New Delhi, April 20

THE BUSH Administration could lift economic sanctions slapped on India in the aftermath of Pokhran II within three to six months, outgoing US Ambassador Richard Celeste said here today.

"I won't be surprised if it happens in the next three to six months," Celeste told US reporters during a get together.

The influential Indian caucus of the US House of Representatives had said the Bush Administration had indicated it would move towards lifting the sanctions.

Celeste, who would leave for Ohio next week, today called on L K Advani at his office here. Emerging from a 15-minute meeting, Celeste told reporters that his tenure in India was an "extraordinary" one replete with "exciting" moments at times.

"Often there has been exciting times ... Overall it has been very good," the outgoing envoy said.

PTI

SC ruling in Samba case

THE SUPREME Court has stayed Delhi High Court's judgement exonerating several Army officers of espionage charges in the Samba spy case.

A Bench headed by Justice S P Bharucha admitted the Centre's petition challenging the High Court order.

The Centre appealed that the High Court had erred in appreciating the evidence in the case and should not have interfered with the court martial proceedings against the former Army officers.

HTC, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 APR 2001

Hurriyat leader meets Sattar

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

HO-13 21/4
ISLAMABAD, APRIL 20. The All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leader and Chairman of People's League, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, who is here on a private visit, called on the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, and went out of his way to express his gratitude for the support being given by Pakistan to the people of Kashmir in their "struggle for the right of self-determination."

The very fact that Mr. Sattar chose to receive the visiting Kashmiri leaders immediately on his return from China is an indication of the eagerness on the part of the military establishment here to host Sheikh Abdul Aziz. It was an unscheduled meeting between the two leaders.

Known for his pro-Pakistan stand, Sheikh Abdul Aziz made full use of his one-and-half-hours of interaction with Mr. Sattar to sing praises of the efforts of Pakistan to enable the Kashmir people realise their goal of right of self-determination.

Right from the moment he landed on the Pakistani soil Sheikh Abdul Aziz has been unabashed about his pro-Pakistani sentiments. Soon after he landed at the Lahore airport he declared that Kashmiris were fighting the Indian forces for accession of Kashmir to Pakistan.

The following day he went one step further and said that Pakistan's nuclear programme was the na-

tional asset of every Kashmiri and a ray of hope for the safety of the entire Muslim world.

An official statement issued by the Pakistan Foreign Office on the meeting of Mr. Aziz with Mr. Sattar said that former told the latter that the people of Kashmir were determined to continue "their struggle for the right of self-determination promised to them by U.N. resolutions." Mr. Aziz lauded the initiatives taken by Pakistan for reduction of tensions and commencement of a peace process for a settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people and denounced the "intransigence" of the Government of India in responding to the moves by the Musharraf government.

The statement said Sheikh Abdul Aziz regretted India's policy of not allowing the APHC leaders to come to Pakistan for consultations. Mr. Aziz is among the five members nominated by the APHC Chairman, Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, to visit Islamabad on behalf of the Hurriyat for consultations on resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

Mr. Sattar reiterated Pakistan's firm support to the Kashmir cause and opposition to "Indian attempt to impose a military solution in Kashmir". Sheikh Abdul Aziz, who has come here to attend the wedding ceremony of his brother on April 22, intends to stay in Pakistan for a period of three weeks.

THE HINDU

21 APR 2001

Trust the first victim

Militant attacks on the Sikh community in the Kashmir Valley have eroded their confidence and bonding with their Muslim neighbours. Many of them would much rather leave like the Kashmiri Pandits, says H BULA DEVI

55-8
SUSPENSE is palpable in Chittisingpora. This village in Anantnag, which was the target of a gruesome attack on 20 March last year, seems eerily quiet. Only the chirping of crickets was heard and a few farmers in colourful turbans could be seen tilling the land. At least, these were signs of life. Thirty-five Sikhs, including farmers and retired Army personnel, were gunned down in a row, a day after Holi. The scars from that incident remain. In this one year, no formal inquiry has been ordered.

Everything looks the same, except that the Sikhs are migrating to Jammu and other places. Almost all the victims' families have migrated from the Kashmir Valley because only the women and children have survived. The security forces' presence is of no consolation to the valley's Sikh population. Having to live under the shadow of the gun, this community has suffered so much that they don't want to live in their blood-stained land anymore.

The situation is the same at Mehjoornagar in Srinagar district. The ratio between the Sikhs and Muslim population is equal. The Sikhs are traumatised after the killing of six members of their community by unidentified gunmen. They are just buying time, waiting to move out of the valley to a better/safer place.

19/3
It, perhaps, will not be too long before the Sikhs, like the Kashmiri Pandits, are flushed out of the valley, a challenge which the government is trying to tackle



tooth and nail, but failing miserably. For this community, their agricultural land was the main reason for staying put in the militant-infested valley. But now things have gone beyond their tolerance level.

Out of fear, the people of Chittisingpora are selling their land. The trend which started in the fringe areas have made inroads into the interiors.

To counter the militants, the Hizbul Mujahideen being the most active in the area, the government had urged the villagers to form village defence companies and offered to arm them.

But the villagers did not want their boys to take up arms in self-defence and later enter the arms race. "That would affect the psyche of our children for the worse," said a Sikh leader of the Akali Dal (Badal). Anti-Muslim sentiments are clouding the children's minds. "We don't talk to them. We keep our distance from them and move in a group with boys of our community only," said a group of school children in a choked voice. The villagers are panic-stricken and their confidence is at a low ebb.

On 31 March, several trucks came from Jammu and other places to ferry them. They were, however, persuaded to stay back. "We don't want to leave, but the situation is such that we have been compelled to leave the region," said an elderly villager. Since they see no future for themselves here, the resentment against the other community is mounting. A sense of mistrust is brewing and the divide between the two communities only widening.

"The faith and trust that we had in one another are on the wane... We depended on each other. But all that is changing because of the situation that has been created," said the villagers of Chittisingpora and Mehjoornagar.

The bloodbath that took place in Mehjoornagar is said to be an act of vengeance. According to one theory, following the incident in

which two State Task Force men from the Sikh community were mistaken to be some other persons and allegedly killed by a Muslim autorickshaw driver, the "revenge was taken blow for blow".

But the other theory is that it was a "plain, targeted attack by militants on the Sikh com-

munity to create panic". With such attacks, the bonhomie that bonded the two communities is evaporating and mutual trust is a thing of the past.

The author, who is Special Representative, The Statesman, New Delhi, was recently in Kashmir.

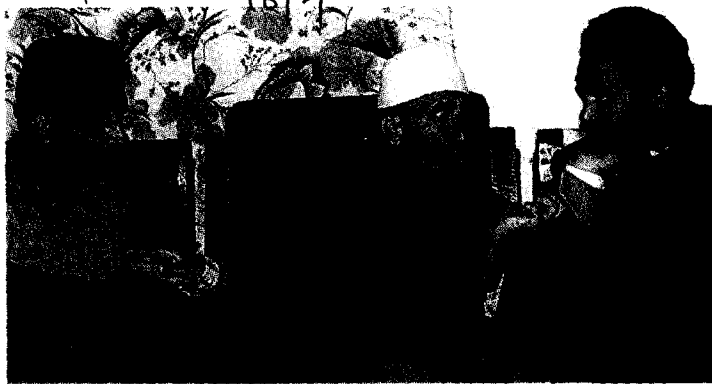
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Hurriyat invited, but undecided

SRINAGAR, APRIL 17. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference today received a formal invitation from the Centre for dialogue on the Kashmir issue but could not firm up its response despite six hours of deliberations by its executive council.

The Hurriyat chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, told reporters here after the meeting, "We have received the invitation for dialogue from Mr. K.C. Pant, Centre's chief negotiator, to hold a dialogue with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of peace in the State." The executive council meeting remained inconclusive but it was decided to hold a working committee meeting on Saturday followed by a general council meeting on Monday, Prof. Bhat said.

The Hurriyat working committee consists of five members each of the seven-party executive council; the general council comprises all the constituents of the 23-party conglomerate of separatist outfits, besides the seven executive members.



Senior Hurriyat leaders (from left) Mr. Bashir Ahmed Tota, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat and Mr. Bashir Ahmed Bhat discussing the Centre's talks offer in Srinagar on Monday.

— Photo: Nissar Ahmed

Prof. Bhat claimed that the Hurriyat had overcome differences with its executive member, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, leader of the Jamaat-e-Islami, and that the issue be treated as a "closed chapter".

He said Mr. Geelani would take part in future meetings of the executive. Today's meeting as-

sumed significance as serious differences gripped the Hurriyat over the issue of holding talks with the Centre with some leaders favouring dialogue and others opposing it.

The Hurriyat had earlier said dialogue should be preceded by a visit of its delegation to Pakistan. — PTI, UNI

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

Hurriyat undecided on dialogue with Centre

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

SRINAGAR: The Hurriyat Conference on Tuesday received a formal invitation from the Centre for a dialogue on the Kashmir issue but could not firm up its response despite six hours of deliberations by its executive council.

Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat told reporters here after the meeting, "We have received the invitation for a dialogue from K.C. Pant, the Centre's chief negotiator to hold dialogues with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir for restoration of peace in the state."

With the executive council deliberations remaining inconclusive, it was decided that the Centre's offer would be discussed at a meeting of the working committee on Saturday and, subsequently, in the general council on Monday.

According to a spokesman of the Hurriyat, a conglomerate of 23 separatist outfits, the leaders largely supported "meaningful and constructive" talks and suggested that the issue of responding to the Centre's offer be discussed in the APHC working committee, comprising 35 members, and in the general council.

The Hurriyat had earlier spurned offers for talks, saying such an exercise should be preceded by a visit of its delegation to Pakistan.

It is learnt that at Tuesday's meeting, some of the executive members favoured accepting the offer for talks, while others disagreed. The seven members who attended the meeting included Abdul Ghani Bhat (chairman), Abdul Ghani Lone, Bashir Ahmad Bhat of the JKLF, Qazi Ahadullah

of the Jamiat-e-Islami, Molvi Umar Farooq and Bashir Ahmad Tota.

Speaking to this newspaper, Mr Bhat said, "The Centre intends to talk to irrelevant persons and not the right parties to the Kashmir dispute." He said the Centre must address the core issue of the Kashmir problem, which required the involvement of Pakistan. "We want the talks to be serious, purposeful and sincere," he added.

The APHC chairman said they had proposed to undertake a visit to Pakistan and then hold talks with the Centre, but the Centre had withheld permission for the Pakistan trip despite Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's commitment on January 25.



Abdul Gani Bhat

indiatimes.com POLL

YESTERDAY'S POLL RESULTS

Do you think Congress will bring a no-trust vote against the NDA Govt?

Yes	No	Can't say
50%	47%	3%

6,738 VOTES IN ALL

* The poll reflects the opinions of Net users who chose to participate, and not necessarily of the general public.

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KASHMIR is a melting pot for its known and unknown groups. Each leader of these groups is trying to cut a niche for himself in the bigger political negotiations in the international arena. This is ironic.

They claim to be people's representatives but the people don't have faith in them. Whether it is Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah or leaders of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, none of them has the people's mandate, each one's popularity is limited to his own segment.

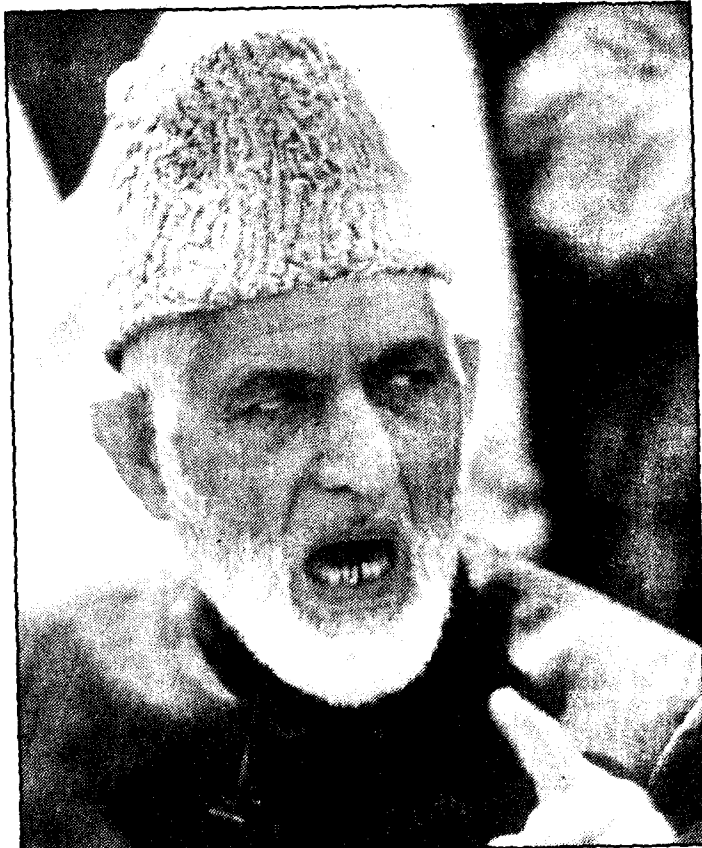
But there is one thing. The people of Kashmir may not like him, may even wish the worst for him but when it comes to gathering the crowd, Dr Abdullah does manage despite his credibility being zero among the masses. Similarly, the Hurriyat leaders do not represent the people in the real sense but they do reflect the people's discontentment. Their progress report is based on the fact that it is the only forum left to express people's disillusionment with the government as a whole.

As a result, notwithstanding the fact that the people of Kashmir do not trust any of these leaders, they are caught in a Catch-22 situation. They have to choose between the devil and the deep sea.

In the absence of a strong Opposition, what the Hurriyat could do for the people of the state is not reflected in their physical work. One reason is because they lack unity. Their views are not focussed on a particular goal. Each has his

The wait for a leader

During discussions with the Hurriyat leaders, H BULA DEVI finds out that though they partly represent people's disillusionment, ideological differences within the All Party Hurriyat Conference are so deep-rooted that infighting takes up most of their time



Syed Ali Geelani, senior executive member of the APHC. Regrets that each party in the umbrella body has its own agenda.

own agenda. As a result, there is a vertical split in the Hurriyat and there is no one in this amalgamation of 23 parties who gives time to the people.

For them, the priority has changed for the present. The effort is more on sorting out their internal problems first. Because the more they delay in doing so, their visit to Pakistan gets postponed. It's like a chain reaction.

As the confusion is prolonged, the murkier it becomes in Srinagar and the Vajpayee government gets enough breathing space to think about the next step.

The Hurriyat leaders are running against time. Their aim was to visit Pakistan at whistle speed but one of their own leaders has become an impediment. It would be suicidal if they delayed solving their problems because they would fail to capitalise on the international pressure that had been built.

While Srinagar has become a political cauldron where all sorts of political activities carry on, nobody seems to be bothered about those who are living in far-flung places infested with militants or those who are forced to shelter militants and get bashed up by the security forces as a result. They are in a no-win situation.

The leaders appear on the scene only when some adverse incident occurs like the one at Haigam or the alleged

custodial death of a 65-year-old *tangawala* at Shupian tehsil.

None of these leaders is ready to speak in public about the factionalism which is brewing within the APHC. But in private, each of them spill the beans without any embarrassment or hitch.

Initially, they all admit that ideological differences have been there from the beginning. But gradually one realises how deep-rooted the ideological differences are when they start spewing venom at one another.

"Here I am banging my head on the wall every day with the Government of India and there he talks about accession to Pakistan. He is just hell bent on this issue and is becoming a spoke in the wheel," says a prominent leader of the APHC irritably, without naming the Jamaat-i-Islami leader, Syed Ali Geelani, who is an executive member of the APHC.

"We all want *azadi*, and if not independence then possibly accession to Pakistan but that does not mean he (Mr Geelani) should remain rigid in his point when the ball has started rolling and a process has begun," he argues.

The supporters of Mr Geelani, a pro-Pakistani and fundamentalist leader, tears apart other Hurriyat leaders. The six other executive leaders of the APHC say Mr Geelani "is behaving in such a fashion because he feels he is getting sidelined. It is not so. Even today, he has enough backing of the people to crush others."

Mr Geelani's supporters argue: "They even say he (Mr Geelani) is getting old and looking for some elbow space in the whole political framework. Look at the way they function. They don't even go to the people with their agenda. The Hurriyat executive had decided that nobody will participate in the panchayat elections but did they go to the people and tell them about it? Never. Look at their personal behaviour. They just want to be in the limelight."

Mr Geelani says: "There are ideological differences which have been there from the beginning. Islam is a complete code of life. Islam is our faith and it should not interfere in the political agenda... But each one now seems to have his own political interest, they give priority to their own party."

APHC Chairman Abdul Gani Bhatt is not in favour of accession to India. He says in a guarded manner: "If options are left between accession to Pakistan or India, I may not vote for India but that is my personal view and personal opinions don't matter when you

have to take a unanimous decision based on what the people of Kashmir want".

While Mr Geelani argues that the APHC leaders should pursue their resolution which doesn't talk about accession to India, Mr Bhatt cites the UN resolution which moots accession to either Pakistan or India.

The most secular voice with a clear vision is that of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who is also an APHC executive member. He says, "It is primarily a political movement but has Islamic dimensions... There are the Advanis and the Geelanis all

over."

If there is any common ground for the APHC leaders, it is their support to the armed movement in Kashmir. "Why should we ask them to lay down their arms? We support them, at least, till we are able to talk to them and understand their point of view and that is possible only if the Government of India allows us to visit Pakistan."

The APHC is in a quagmire, entangled in its internal politics. It is the voice of the people's disillusionment but lacks the support of all sections of the masses. The National

Conference government does not back the APHC because it is an indirect threat.

There is not one leader in Jammu and Kashmir who can be called a leader of the masses. In such a situation, it is clear that it is the politics within the state which is depriving the people of their "right to live with honour and dignity".

(To be concluded)

(The author is Special Representative, New Delhi, who was recently in Jammu and Kashmir.)

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2001

Shabir Shah ready for talks, wants Pak role

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Shah, who is president of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP), on Monday expressed his readiness for talks with the Centre provided they were "meaningful".

However, he suggested that Planning Commission deputy chairman K.C. Pant, who is representing the Centre at the talks, should simultaneously engage Pakistan in the dialogue so that the entire process could be finetuned to achieve a breakthrough.

Mr Shah said it was high time that the government showed its sincerity and talked to "actual leaders who opposed Kashmir's accession" rather than talking to parties like the Congress and the National Conference.



Shabir Shah

Mr Shah said, "Another issue is that India should hold talks with Pakistan." On India's condition that Islamabad should stop cross-border terrorism before any process of dialogue could begin, Mr Shah said, "Big men should have big hearts, and when Prime Minister Vajpayee undertook the Lahore bus trip, this process was on. Delhi should give up its rigid stand and engage in meaningful talks with its neighbour."

Mr Shah urged the Centre to "understand the language" of Pakistani military ruler General Pervez Musharraf, who has expressed his willingness to hold talks. He said, "I am not emphasising tripartite talks, but a consensus needs to be evolved among India, Pakistan and the people of the state, in a bid to find a solution to the problem.."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 APR 2001

U.S. stand on Kashmir ambiguous: Pak.

WASHINGTON, APRIL 16. Pakistan today took strong exception to the "ambiguous stand" of the United States on the Kashmir imbroglio, saying it amounted to giving India an upper hand on the issue. 10-14

The U.S. stand that it would enter the scene only if all parties to the crisis accepted its mediation, amounted to giving India a veto on all peacemaking efforts in Kashmir, said Pakistan's Ambassador to the U.S., Ms. Maleeha Lodhi, in a hard-hitting interview to a community Internet programme.

She said the U.S. was welcome to redefine its relationship with its Cold War adversary India as long it was done in a fair and even-handed manner.

"It is not a zero-sum game as far as Pakistan is concerned. It is not a question of them or us." The U.S., she said, was free to rework its relations with countries in the South Asian region but certainly not at the expense of Pakistan. 17/9

Ms. Lodhi was obviously irked by the red carpet welcome rolled out to the Defence and External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, here last week.

Mr. Singh, besides having an unscheduled meeting with the President, Mr. George Bush, met all his three foreign policy advisers in a day.

"The need is for Washington to persuade India to accept a democratic solution to the dispute, which lay in the Kashmiris being accorded an opportunity to decide their future themselves," she said.

On the nuclear situation in the subcontinent, the Ambassador said Pakistan was not interested in an arms race.

India's nuclear policy was status-driven while Pakistan's policy is security-driven; New Delhi wanted a seat on the big table while Pakistan is content with what it had, she said. —
UNI

THE HINDU

Only carrots, no sticks

INDIA may have gained international mileage by extending the ceasefire thrice and even managing to slightly tilt US impression in its favour by taking the bold step in Jammu and Kashmir, but at whose cost? Is the morale of the security forces still as high as it used to be prior to the ceasefire?

The *jangbandi*, as they call the ceasefire in Kashmir, has not been accepted by the militant outfits till date. So, the no-initiative combat has only been from the Indian side. It is, however, chipping away at the morale of the security forces.

With frisking and checking at every post reduced to zero, infiltration has increased, resulting in free movement of militants in the Kashmir Valley. Their proximity to police posts and Army camps has increased as a result and records show that the number of attacks has risen. The *fidayeen* (suicide squad) attacks have also been on the rise.

Although Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has said that if the militant outfits commit any act of terrorism, "then the security forces have clear instructions to act decisively and defeat such intensions".

But at the ground level, have these instructions reached those who are managing the show? No security personnel is ready to spill the beans in public. But a few in the far-flung areas of the Valley — where home-grown militants and foreign mercenaries are active — say they have read about such directions in the newspapers. The official order has yet to reach them.

"We cannot go by what the newspapers or the TV news bulletin say. We haven't received any instructions to be pro-active and we are bound by the instructions that come to us from our higher-ups," said a senior military officer in a remote area.

Jammu and Kashmir has been on the boil for longer than one would care to remember and ground realities continue to be given short shrift. Between politicians spurred on by rhetoric, disgusted guardians of law and order, militants who bash on regardless and a general public which feels it has been at the receiving end for far too long; the ceasefire to pave the way for peace talks has been largely unproductive, as H BULA DEVI discovers in this first of a four-part serial

forces are bound to lose some of their men and may be some civilians. They want to avoid such a situation".

Whether it is the BSF, CRPF or the Army, the stress under which they operate cannot be overlooked. They routinely walk many kilometres — sometimes the boys walk an extra 10-12 kilometres if there are culverts planted on the route.

With the militants increasingly using sophisticated weapons, security personnel are transported in vehicles.

"Even if improvised explosive devices are planted in the culverts while my boys are walking, I will at the most lose just two or three of them but not as many as 20-25 of them," said an officer. For many in the security forces, it is a losing battle. But for the militants it is the opposite.

Life in the state, specially the Valley, is becoming gloomier by the day. In the absence of cordon-and-search operations, life has become easy for them. They are able to enter the cities and remote areas without any difficulty and target police control rooms, posts and Army units.

On 1 March, a Colonel and two soldiers were killed and a Brigadier was injured. Who pressed the trigger?

According to some security personnel, the "beggar" sitting behind a vendor's cart, covered with a blanket. He used to be an informer of the security forces. But later, the 60-year-old man turned out to be a "hero" of the Hizbul Mujahideen and a resident of Pakistan.

Although ceasefire is a means to start the peace process, if India continues to show only carrots and not sticks, the situation in the Valley is only going to deteriorate.

(To be concluded)

(The author, a Special Representative of The Statesman, New Delhi, was recently in Jammu and Kashmir.)



MAJOR ATTACKS DURING CEASEFIRE

28 November to 27 December

28 Nov : 3 soldiers killed in Dooru mine explosion in Anantnag.

22 Dec : Suicide attack at Red Fort.

First extension

16 Jan : Attack on Srinagar airport by Lashkar-e-Taiyaba

Second extension

9 Feb : Suicide attack on police control room, Srinagar.

10 Feb : 15 villagers killed in Rajouri.

13 Feb : 7 cops killed in Kokkernag.

Third extension

1 March : A colonel and two soldiers killed, a Brigadier injured.

2 March : 17 cops killed in Rajouri.

4 March : 4 soldiers killed in Baramullah.

5 March : Soldiers killed in *fidayeen* attack on a Rashtriya Rifles camp in Surankot.

Even when the security forces have accurate information that the militants would be in a particular house and the exact time is made available to them, they stay put instead of getting into the act.

"So many times we have got definite information through our Int (Intelligence sources)

but we are bound by the instructions," said the officer. This, despite the top brass's claim that every post is under instruction to take decisive action.

It is popularly believed that rather than gaining an advantage, the ceasefire has only done damage to the security forces and their

morale has taken a nosedive. According to one theory, India has lost enough soldiers in the Kargil battle; it doesn't want to lose any more.

Observers believe that even after receiving definite information, the forces' go-slow is probably "intentional" because in an "encounter with the *fidayeen*, the security

Pant sends invitations to Kashmir groups for talks

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15. The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, named by the Government to hold dialogue with all sections of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, today extended first set of invitations to several leaders and groups, including the Hurriyat Conference.

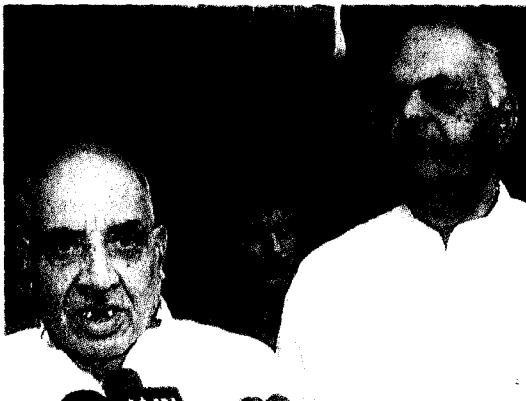
Mr. Pant held first round of discussions with the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Syed Mir Qasim. "This is the first of the series of formal talks. Mr. Qasim is an old friend. Initial discussions with him are still continuing," Mr. Pant told reporters at his residence here today.

The first lot of invitations has been sent to the MPs, MLAs, MLCs from the State, the All Party Hurriyat Conference, two groups from Kargil and one from Ladakh. An invitation was also sent to Mr. Shabir Shah, the former Hurriyat leader, who has floated his own front. "I have sent invitation for peace talks in a spirit of honesty and sincerity. This is a serious effort and no attempt should be made to trivialise it".

Repeatedly referring to the April 5 statement of the Government, which set the agenda for the dialogue as "Peace and how it may be attained in the troubled State", Mr. Pant said the more than a decade-long violence had disturbed the life there. Ruling out talks with Pakistan-based militant outfits, he said doors were not closed for Kashmiri militant groups, but did not name any.

The dialogue would be held under the ambit of the April 5 statement which said that "doors are open for the APHC to join in the talks. The doors are also not closed for Kashmiri organisations which are currently engaged in militancy in the State but are desirous of peace."

Expressing eagerness to comprehend fully the so-



The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Syed Mir Qasim, and the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman, Mr. K.C. Pant, addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Sunday.

— Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

cial and economic dimensions of the Kashmir problem, Mr. Pant said the importance of embarking upon a political dialogue should not be played down. Asked if the Hurriyat Conference would join the dialogue, Mr. Pant said: "There is a need to renounce the culture of gun and grenade. Everybody desirous of peace is vital, so is the All Party Hurriyat Conference. I have invited them and hope they will join the talks."

Asked if he had set a time-frame for the dialogue, Mr. Pant said that he had not set any targets. In his invitations, Mr. Pant said in order to find permanent peace in the State, it was the responsibility on "all of us who are genuinely interested in ending the strife and suffering of the people" to join the talks.

See also Page 13

THE HINDU

16 APR 2001

Need for international attention

By Harish Khare

LONDON: Early this month, about two dozen "Kashmiri" groups, based in various parts of Britain, converged in London to pool their energies in engaging British law-makers and opinion-builders on the need for international attention to the Kashmir issue. Though none of these groups can claim to be a "mass" organisation of the Kashmiri Diaspora, availability of modern means of communication does enable these groups and individuals to drum up interest and attention, if not decisive support, from the critical elements in the British establishment and public opinion.

Naturally, the groups have definite views and ideas about the current state of play in Kashmir. To begin with, no one is prepared to concede that the All-Party Hurriyat Conference ought to be accepted as the sole representative of the Kashmiri struggle. "The APHC does not represent Ladakh, does not represent Jammu, does not represent Gilgit, does not represent Baltistan, does not represent Mirpur, Muzaffarabad; nor does the APHC represent the Buddhists, Sikhs, Dogras, Hindus and the other communities," points out Mr. Zuber Ansari of the JKLF.

The refrain is that the APHC has been too narrowly based in one region and one religion and, therefore, cannot be accepted as a genuine representative of the entire Kashmiri "nation". The Kashmiri Diaspora, especially seeking sustenance from the liberal ambience of western democracies, would reject any exclusionist pretensions. "In any case, the APHC is too much maligned, too much affiliated, and too much compromised," asserts Prof. Zafar Khan of Luton.

Inexplicable decision

At the same time the Kashmiri groups are amazed at the extraordinarily clumsy decision of the Vajpayee government not to let the APHC delegation visit Pakistan. In particular, the groups find totally inexplicable Mr. L. K. Advani's opposition to the inclusion of Syed Ali Shah Geelani in the proposed delegation. "By this single blunder, the Government of India has propped up the hardliners like Geelani; new oxygen has been given to Geelani while the others have been shown to be less committed to the Kashmiri cause," says Mr. Shabir Choudry bitterly.

It follows, then, that the Kashmiri Diaspora rejects any suggestion of a religion-based division of Jammu and Kashmir. "How can any one forget the horror of 1947? Why repeat history in Jammu and Kashmir? What about the Muslims in Jammu? How many times are the Muslims going to be uprooted? Instead, all those like the Pandits who have left the State must come back," suggests Dr. Abdullah Raina of the Jammu Kashmir National Awareness Campaign.

If the Kashmir Diaspora is unwilling to be lured by the religion-wallahs, it is also unwilling to accept the bilateralism as an instrument of resolution of the Kashmir problem. The argument is simple: bilateralism all these years has not worked, the military establishments in Pakistan and India would not allow any resolution of the conflict because each needs an "enemy" to carry on its bureaucratic empires, on both sides there are vested interests who

KASHMIRI DIASPORA - II

have developed stakes in the status quo, and, above all, bilateralism keeps the Kashmiris out of the picture.

Self-determination must

"We are committed to a re-unification of the entire State. A genuine, unfettered exercise in self-determination is a must. Any suggestion of accepting the Line of Control as the international border is a non-starter for us and for the people of Kashmir. Our very *raison d'etre* does not permit us to accept the status quo," notes Prof. Zafar Khan.

"India and Pakistan can cut a deal, cutting out the Kashmiris, but it will not bring any peace to Kashmir or the region," warns Kwaja Mustaq Hussain of Bradford. For him "status quo is not a principled position. We are a divided nation, and should be given justice."

If bilateralism is not acceptable or workable, then there has to be some kind of involvement of the international community. And this is precisely what the Kashmiri groups seek to achieve. By focussing on human rights violation, abuse of civil liberties, use of military force, denial of civic rights, and the danger of nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan, these groups hope Britain and now the

European Parliament would hear them out.

Not that these groups are unaware of the complexities that must be sorted out before there can be movement forward. All recognise that violence must stop before a dialogue can start, that both India and Pakistan have a legal position in the dispute, and that both India and Pakistan have denied the Kashmiris their due. However, the expectation is that the onus is on India, especially in putting an end to "custodial killings" and other excesses. The emphasis is on confidence-building measures by India to convince the Kashmiris of the sincerity of its present quest for peace; concrete steps such as the release of political prisoners, scaling down Indian military presence to the 1989 level, and start of a political dialogue are talked about.

Audacious plan

The most concrete and most audacious plan for "an amicable, equitable and judicious" resolution of the Kashmir problem is suggested by Prof. Zafar Khan. This plan includes India and Pakistan agreeing to involvement of the international community, which would then form an "international Kashmir committee", consisting of representatives of the United Nations Security Council, Germany, Japan and the Organisation of Islamic Conference; second, internal administration of both sides of the LoC would then be the responsibility of this international Kashmir committee; third, India and Pakistan should withdraw their military forces to basic minimum from the entire Kashmir; fourth, a five to 15 year neutral international administration; and, lastly, at the end of that period, the people of the entire Kashmir should be asked for their views whether they want to be with Pakistan, India or an independent Kashmir.

There is a recognition that both India and Pakistan are saddled with weak governments and may not be ideally equipped to take any hard decision. All the more reason for the Kashmiri Diaspora to mobilise the international community to force the two countries to act. The Britain-based Kashmiri Diaspora is convinced that the 21st Century is the century of integration of divided communities and divided nations, and its own "nation" would inevitably find its own rhythm of reunification.

(Concluded)

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10 APR 2001

Pant begins Kashmir talks on low key

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: The proposed political dialogue on Kashmir is officially under way with the Union government's trouble-shooter K.C. Pant announcing that the first round of talks began on Sunday. He has issued letters seeking the participation of various leaders from Jammu and Kashmir in the dialogue. Yet, Mr Pant, the deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, had only a semi-retired former J&K chief minister, Mir Kasim, to talk to on day one.



K.C. Pant

Mr Pant has ruled out any involvement of Pakistan-based militant groups in the peace process. But he said doors were not closed for Kashmiri organisations, implying that militants based in the Valley could participate in the talks. "I don't think I should name these organisations," Mr Pant said when asked which militant leaders

he would talk to. ¹⁶⁷⁴
 As for the absence of All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders and the choice of Mr Kasim as his first interlocutor, Mr Pant said Mr Kasim was a respected elder whom even the APHC leaders held in high esteem.

Mr Pant appeared confident that the Hurriyat's soon-to-be-held executive committee meeting would not take a negative attitude and would join the process. But he did not clarify if they would be allowed to travel to Pakistan as they had been demanding. "We will get to know why they want to visit Pakistan only after the talks begin," he said.

Shortly before the scheduled press conference at Mr Pant's residence, Mr Kasim, who looked ill, drove in and was holed up with Mr Pant for about 20 minutes. But Mr Pant refused to comment on his interaction with Mr Kasim.

Sangh Parivar ups ante on Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Barely a week after Union home minister L.K. Advani claimed before the Liberhan commission that what stood at the site of the now demolished Babri Masjid was actually a temple, RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan told a Bajrang Dal rally here that the government must remove all obstacles in the path of the temple's construction by March 12, 2002.

The Sangh Parivar's 'Dharma Raksha Sammelan' was clearly timed to coincide with the eve of the resumed budget session of Parliament. More than 10,000 Bajrang Dal supporters were presented with trishuls and they pledged to build temples at the Babri Masjid site and at the sites of two historic mosques in Varanasi and Mathura.

indiatimes.com POLL

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16 APR 2002

Hurriyat called after tame start

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 15: Choosing a cipher to formally launch the Kashmir talks, the Centre today invited the Hurriyat leadership and a handful of peripheral groups to the table.

In the first of a series of planned meetings, the government's interlocutor on Kashmir, K.C. Pant, spoke to a former chief minister, Mir Qasim, whose mass base in the strife-torn Valley has shrunk over the years.

Pant's road map for the peace talks, unveiled at a news conference, suggests that he does not plan to meet immediately the militants who matter in the Valley.

The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which had announced a surprise ceasefire last year, is not on Pant's agenda yet. He has issued a broad invitation to militants, saying they are welcome if they want peace. He ruled out the possibility of holding talks with Pakistan-based militant groups, which means hawks like the Lashkar-e-Toiba, are out of the ambit.

Pant has known the octogenarian Qasim for long — this could be the sole reason for picking the former chief minister to break the ice — but the meeting is not expected to achieve much.

Emerging from Pant's house, Qasim said he would not be acting as a mediator on behalf of the government's negotiator with the Hurriyat.

Pant warned against expecting a breakthrough overnight and was non-committal on whether the talks would help improve the ground situation in the Valley before the government ceasefire expires on May 31.

Though Pant did not say so, the government is open to involving the Hizb, primarily made of Kashmiris of Indian origin, in the peace process. The main hurdle in the way to the talks is the fact that it is run from Pakistan.

"We have issued letters inviting various political parties, parliamentarians, legislators and groups like the Hurriyat for talks without any preconditions," Pant said, echoing what home minister L.K. Advani had said a few days ago. "Let them come and talk to me. Let me also understand why they want to go to Pakistan," Pant added.

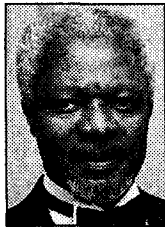
The invitation indicated that it was addressed more to the Hurriyat than to the other fringe groups. But it is still not clear how the government proposes to iron out the differences within the Hurriyat leadership.

The Centre had reservations on sending the entire leadership for talks to Islamabad and refused to sanction the travel documents of hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani. The Hurriyat is also wary of the government's moves. Pant, however, struck a conciliatory note. "The Hurriyat has always been advocating talks without any pre-conditions and we have not set any conditions. So, let them step forward."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Annan rejects Pak plea to help end Kashmir row

DHAKA: U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on Wednesday rejected Pakistan's plea to use his good offices in finding a solution to the Kashmir issue, firmly telling Islamabad that it was not possible unless India also desired so.



Kofi Annan

On the eve of his three-day visit to India, Mr Annan said that during his talks with Pakistan's President Rafiq Tarar and military ruler Gen Pervez Musharraf in Islamabad "it was obvious they wanted to prepare the U.N. to be a third party to assist" in resolving the issue.

"Obviously Kashmir is very much on their minds and they would want to, they are very keen to talk to the Indian authorities about this," he said.

Mr Annan had rebuffed on Sunday Pakistan's demand for implementation of the U.N. resolution on Kashmir saying a solution to the issue could only be found through the Lahore declaration by exercising restraint, wisdom and through constructive steps from both sides.

"My own position as secretary general is that my good offices are always available since I took over. I have not hesitated to assist wherever my intervention would be useful. But for my good offices to be effective, it has to be acceptable to both countries and that clearly does not exist at the moment. So I explained this to them," he said.

Mr Annan said there are two options — either the two neighbours talk directly or they talk through the assistance of a third party. "Since the latter is not feasible at the moment, the Pakistani leadership hope that India would engage and the talks would be resumed," he said.

About India's prospects of getting a permanent seat in an expanded U.N. Security Council, Mr Annan said it was an issue for the member-states of the organisation to decide. "At this stage we don't know the nature and extent of the reform or the size of the expanded Security Council," he said. "I would hope that in the next two years or so we would be able to actually move forward with the reform."

The U.N. chief said the record of the international community to achieve nuclear disarmament was not encouraging. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 MAR 2001

Persisting with the peace process

By Amitabh Mattoo

MORE THAN a hundred days after the unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir was initiated, there is growing cynicism at the lack of progress of the peace process. Even otherwise well-informed commentators on Kashmir have given up on the Government's new initiative. On the surface, there is indeed scope for disappointment. The level of violence in the State has not gone down in any significant manner. In fact, more policemen and civilians have been killed in the first hundred days of the ceasefire than were killed in the hundred days immediately preceding the Ramzan initiative. Only in terms of militant deaths, do official figures record a decline. The Kashmir Valley has witnessed vocal streets protests at alleged custodial deaths, and some influential observers have even described the mood as being reminiscent of the early 1990s when the militancy commanded popular appeal. The security forces, reports suggest, are increasingly becoming frustrated at being forced into passivity, and are angered at the free run given to militants. And there are still no signs of a formal dialogue between the Government and Kashmiri separatists. Is it time then to call off the new Kashmiri initiative?

Far from it. Any systematic and clinical evaluation of the last three months would recognise that not only have tangible gains been made, but also that it would be disastrous for New Delhi to abandon its initiatives at this critical stage. Moreover, as should be clear from the experience of other peace processes, the most visible dividends are rarely publicly flaunted and are not known until after the process has been brought to a successful closure.

At the very least, the Ramzan initiative has had considerable success in four areas. First, consider the international impact. Nearly every Government of consequence has supported the ceasefire, and explicitly demanded that militant groups controlled by Pakistan reciprocate the move, to help create an atmosphere conducive for a dialogue. It is easy in these heady days to forget that through much of 1990s, New Delhi waged a fierce diplomatic battle in international forums to prevent an internationalisation of the Kashmir issue, even as it was repeatedly castigated for human rights violations by its security forces. Nearly all of Indian diplomacy had degenerated into being a defence of New Delhi's Kashmir policy. Fortunately, the situation has now

15/3
A special task force should be appointed to initiate and further a political dialogue and monitor and assist in governance and development activity in Jammu and Kashmir.

dramatically changed, at least in part because of New Delhi's recent initiatives. Not only are there few, if any, supporters of Pakistan's Kashmir policy, but there is also increasing international recognition that the army of Islamic jihadis could unleash terror even beyond South Asia. The U.N. Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, has, on the soil of Pakistan, declared U.N. resolutions on Kashmir irrelevant and unequivocally expressed his support for the bilateralism emphasised in the Lahore Declaration. No longer does the Government of India need to feel besieged internationally on Kashmir, but it must also recognise that a continued imaginative and sensitive handling of the province, domestically, could win it even greater support internationally.

No less important are the gains on the ground. Only contrarians can deny that the popular sentiment against violence is slowly but surely translating into a powerful constituency. Evidence of the momentum in this direction is not found in the predictable shrieks of the vocal minority, but in the attitudes of the subdued and often seldom heard majority. It is this bulk of Kashmiri public opinion that is showing signs of resistance and making a brave effort, away from the public eye, to recover Kashmir's traditional non-violent ethos. Indeed, if the most important purpose of the ceasefire was to provide a sense of relief to the Kashmiris, it has, to a great extent, succeeded. Despite aberrations, there have been few cordon and search operations, and most independent observers recognise that the ceasefire has brought about a perceptible change in the quality of life of the average Kashmiri.

Equally significant is the gradual isolation of the elements perpetuating violence. While the security forces have not been guilt free, it is clear to Kashmiris and the international community that most of the violence has been perpetuated by two non-Kashmiri militant organisations: the Lashkar-i-Taiba and the Jaish-i-Mohammad. Both organisations are led, manned, financed, trained and controlled by forces in Pakistan and have less than a tenuous

link with elements that lie at the very heart of the Pakistani establishment.

Finally, New Delhi's new initiative has forced the separatist alliance, the All Party Hurriyat Conference, to introspect, clarify its understanding of the problems of Kashmir and isolate elements within it that are clearly following an imported agenda. Not only did most leaders of the Hurriyat welcome the ceasefire, but also wanted the unilateral ceasefire to be converted into a multilateral one that would silence all the guns in the State. This was the stated aim of the Hurriyat's proposed visit to Pakistan. Most important, however, was the manner in which the majority of the Hurriyat executive rebuked attempts by Mr. Ali Shah Gilani of the Jamat-i-Islami to give a religious colour to the political problems in the State. The most important attempt in this direction was the forthright interview given by the prominent Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, to the Srinagar-based Urdu Weekly Chattan in January, which unfortunately received little play in the national media.

These gains cannot, however, hide the obvious failures of the process and three are clearly visible. First, the local police, especially the Special Operations Group, have not abided by the letter and spirit of the ceasefire. One of the biggest sources of past estrangement of the Kashmiri people from the Government of India is the perceived duplicity in the latter's behaviour. The only way to prove this impression false is by demonstrating that there is no disjunction between Government posturing and the reality on the ground. A decision to announce a unilateral ceasefire would have anticipated that the level of violence would increase, pro-India elements would be targeted, and that militants may get the opportunity to regroup. But the political gains from the initiative were thought to be, as they obviously are, greater than these short-term tactical reverses, which can easily be overcome. It was particularly outrageous, therefore, for the State's police chief to declare, in a recent interview, that may be the Army cannot indulge in combat operations but the

police will continue to work. If the local political leadership is backing the police, it is time that the Chief Minister is read the riot act. Personal ambitions cannot be allowed to hijack the Government's bravest initiative on Kashmir in recent years.

The Government of India has also given the impression that it does not have a clear road map for the process, and that hardliners within its own ranks are forcing it into a one step forward and two steps backward approach. The continued focus, and often contradictory statements, on the trivial issue of whether or not to give passports to members of the Hurriyat delegation, and the controversy over the differences between the Prime Minister's Office and the Home Ministry, are just two examples of the Government's failure to present a united cohesive front that is in full control of the process.

The failures of the Hurriyat cannot also be glossed over. Although the leadership has managed to resolve some of its internal contradictions, the Hurriyat still seems to be out of step with the public mood. The need of the hour is not the conspiratorial politics of the boardroom, but to demonstrate real chutzpah — a quality admittedly rare in Kashmiri politics. Only the ability to take calculated political risks will help the Hurriyat remain politically relevant and in tune with the reality that the popular sentiment in the Valley is overwhelmingly against violence and for a peaceful resolution of all problems through a dialogue. And a meaningful dialogue with New Delhi is the only way to move the peace process forward.

What next? The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has indicated that all parties concerned from Jammu and Kashmir will be invited for a dialogue. This is an important signal that must not, however, be allowed to be frittered away by including those nationalist groups which have no real relevance in the politics of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, a special Task Force, which is constituted by the highest political authority of the country and enjoys its confidence, and is dedicated full time to Jammu and Kashmir, must be appointed immediately. The Task Force should be made responsible for initiating and furthering a political dialogue and monitoring and assisting in governance and developmental activities.

(The writer is Director, National Security Programme, JNU, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

'J&K ultras follow ISI code'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 14. — Halfway through the three-month ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, the Army is getting mixed signals. The militancy is still continuing on a reduced scale but there are reports of a "code of conduct" suggested to the militants by the ISI, the Pakistani intelligence agency.

Top army officials said they picked up information about this "code of conduct" from across the border. Apparently, the ISI has suggested to the militants, most of whom have been trained, equipped and financed by them not to commit terrible atrocities against civilians.

"We have to see how carefully the militants adhere to this code of conduct.

"Many of them are rogues or adventurers and not holy warriors as they are made out to be and they could be less agreeable to cutting down on their activities," a senior officer said.

The militants' lack of discipline would mean attacks would continue and officials are not ruling out a civilian massacre though they acknowledge that the number of major explosions have come down to a very large extent.

This is significant as these explosions often cause a large number of casualties.

Army officials felt that the code of conduct may be part of a realisation that a big massacre of civilians during the ceasefire would mean bad publici-

ty. There are pockets in the Valley where people are thriving of the militancy and aren't warm to the foreign militants — people who have come from Pakistan occupied Kashmir or Afghanistan — and atrocities on civilians would make them even less popular.

They added that a ceasefire does not mean that anti-militancy operations in the Valley are over. They are continuing, keeping in mind certain constraints. Operations would be different if the ceasefire ended, as would be the results.

"We could, for instance, cordon off a village and search it thoroughly but actions like that tend to make you unpopular," a senior officer said.

Also, "collateral damage," a euphemism for civilian casualties would increase dramatically if the ceasefire ended. More militants would be killed but more casualties among securitymen would also occur.

"Even now, we are encountering the foreign militants but if there is a local Kashmiri Hizbul Mujahideen militant among them, we don't spare him," an official said.

The Line of Control is now largely quiet with very little shelling going on but Army officials said the situation could persist till there is some political compromise.

"Pakistan needs to show they have won a small victory.

If the Hurriyat is allowed across, it may be a face-saving gesture for them. But it is all a political decision," an officer said.



The body of Mohd Sultan who was allegedly killed by soldiers at Kreeeri in Pattan, J&K, on the night of 13 April. — AP/PTI

In search of a homeland MD 8

By Harish Khare

NOTTINGHAM (U.K.): Have you ever seen a flag of Kashmir? Of course, everyone knows the State of Jammu and Kashmir has a flag of its own, and it flutters, along with the Indian tricolour, proudly atop the Secretariat in Srinagar. The flag of Kashmir, on the other hand, is waved here in Nottingham, a major centre of "Mirpuri" concentration, whenever a moment of Mirpuri pride is to be celebrated. One such occasion is inevitably provided when Mr. Jawed Khaliq, a professional light-weight boxer and a local Mirpuri lad, takes on his rivals in the ring. And the man who waves the Kashmiri flag most fervently is a man named Mr. Mohammed Ishaq.

A factory hand who lives modestly in The Meadows, a working class area, Mr. Ishaq is heading, in the Nottingham area, the drive among the Kashmiris in England to register themselves as a "Kashmiri ethnic group" in the British 2001 census. Mr. Ishaq's endeavour is part of a "Kashmir National Identity Campaign". This seeks to impress upon the Kashmiris' need to "be recognised in their own right as equally as any other community and not be labelled as Indians or Pakistanis."

Perhaps this sense of a Kashmiri identity was always there among the Kashmiris here, but the "civil conflict" since 1990 back home has intensified the quest for an ethnic identity. And this quest is seen as entirely legitimate by the Kashmiris in an officially-conceded multicultural Britain. "Just as Palestinians have Jordanian passports or Egyptian passports and have not ceased to be Palestinians, just because Kashmiris are constrained to have Indian or Pakistani passport does not make them lose their Kashmiri identity," argues Kwaja Mustaq Hussain of Bradford.

Ethnic identity

This imaginarily constructed Kashmiri homeland would include districts of Mirpur, Kotli, Bhimber, Muzaffarabad, Gilgit, Baltistan, Srinagar, Jammu, and Ladakh. And this Kashmir would belong equally to all Kashmiris — Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Gujjars,

and all other groups who once lived in Kashmir until 14 August, 1947.

However, if multicultural Britain provides a hospitable ambience to construct a Kashmiri ethnic identity, independent of India and Pakistan, this very hospitality enjoins the Kashmiri Diaspora to reject the raging violence as a way out of the "Kashmir problem". As Prof. Abdullah Raina of the Jammu Kashmir Awareness Campaign notes regretfully, "the Kashmiris all over the world are now branded as terrorists and fundamentalists; but we are not like that." The rejection of violence is the refrain among various Kashmiri groups, owing loyalties to different personalities and patrons. Implicit in this rejection is a disassociation with jihadi violence as well as disapproval of Indian security forces' measures. The "bottom-line" for the most passionate advocates of an independent Kashmir is that the "gun won't do". There is a feeling, though, of helplessness that the vendors of violence have tak-

KASHMIRI DIASPORA - I

en over the "struggle": "We are not in a position to control the jihadis just as we are not in a position to control the Indian Army," argues Kwaja Mustaq Hussain.

Non-sectarian society

Also, the daily living experience in a multicultural Britain makes the Kashmiri Diaspora reject any suggestion of a sectarian Kashmir. "I believe in a non-sectarian society," says Mr. Shabir Choudry, of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (U.K. and Europe). He asserts: "This is not a religious issue. This is not a conflict between Islam and Hinduism nor a confrontation between Islam and Buddhism." This sentiment, too, is the common refrain among all the groups.

Contrary to the unvoiced perception in India that all Kashmiris are pro-Pakistan, leading voices in the Kashmir Diaspora are keen on rejecting the suggestion. Says Mr. Shabir Choudry: "I have argued at a press conference in Islamabad that my agenda is liberation of

Kashmir, other than that I have no bone to pick with India. If there are people who want to unfurl their flag on the Red Fort, then find a route through Lahore and Amritsar, not through Srinagar."

Another articulate voice comes from Prof. Zafar Khan, Senior Lecturer in Community Relations and South Asian Studies, at the University of Luton. "We have the greatest of respect for people of India and Pakistan. In terms of the wider objective of re-assertion of Kashmir sovereignty, we are equi-distant from both. But I must add that while I can speak against Pakistan's policies in Mirpur or Muzaffarabad, that freedom (to criticise Indian policies) the Kashmiris do not enjoy in Srinagar or Jammu. In my occasional articles in the Pakistani press I refer to "Azad Kashmir" as "Pakistan-occupied Kashmir".

"Both sides are keeping us gulam; the Kashmiris back home on both sides have not tasted azadi," argues Mr. Mohammed Ishaq, matter-of-factly. He, in fact, loses no opportunity to question official Pakistani claims to play the patron to the Kashmiris. In recent months he has agitated against a local community organisation, Muslim Hands, trying to raise funds for training centres in "Occupied Kashmir" for wives of "martyrs".

Karachi Agreement

Mr. Zuber Ansari, of Birmingham, identifies himself as "secretary-general of the JKLF for the Pakistan-occupied Territory of Jammu and Kashmir". He points out that the Karachi Agreement of 1949 remains very much the governing law which virtually denies any voice to the Kashmiris in their own affairs in the so-called Azad Kashmir. "Let us not even talk of the Northern Areas."

The overwhelming sentiment among the Kashmiri Diaspora scattered across Britain is to carve out a homeland of their own and not allow their ethnic identity to be swamped in either the Pakistan's religious appeal or India's secular nationalism. As a Diaspora, the Kashmir Diaspora is relatively young and is prepared to wait for a favourable configuration of international forces.

THE HINDU

15 APR 2001

Extending the silence in the valley

On February 23, the government of India yet again extended the unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by another three months. Despite the pessimism prevailing in the neighbourhood and the expected rejection of the ceasefire by the non-Kashmiri militants, the extension is the logical, correct and courageous path to peace in the troubled valley.

A state can bring peace to a politically or socially disturbed region if it follows a chosen route with firmness and resolve. An uncertain policy is the antithesis of successful counter-insurgency operations. It breeds confusion in the security forces and the people who want to help them, thereby blunting the states' tools. If ceasefire is the route, it should be followed with determination.

There are really only two successfully proven methods to overcome an insurgency. One is by increasing the levels of financial corruption to such degrees that the support base of the insurgents is bought out from under their feet. The British put this method into operation in Malaya in the Fifties and subverted the insurgency from within. The British won, and the communists lost.

The other method is to raise the level of violence to unbearable proportions so that the unarmed population that sustains the insurgency surrenders to the might of the state. This was the method adopted by Pakistan during the Baluch uprising in the Seventies. Memories of the violence still haunt the pastoral Baluch as they move from one place to another. Many never even

went back to Pakistan. None of these methods, however, was adopted for tackling the insurgency in Kashmir.

The government of India was initially taken aback by the scale and sophistication of the insurgency in Kashmir when it broke out in end-1989. As is its wont, it did not read the warning signs properly. The Indian state took about two years to get its counter-insurgency machinery in place and functional. And it was not until the mid-Nineties that it appeared to have some kind of a grip on the situation.

It was relaxed, by default, when the Kargil war began in May 1999. In the months that followed Pakistan's defeat on the heights of Kargil, it seemed that the scale of militancy had swung back to what it was in 1990. It was only after another six months that the state managed to get back in control of the situation. It was in that environment that the Indian prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, offered his historical Ramadan ceasefire initiative. After all, a state can only offer a ceasefire to insurgents if it is in control of the situation.

India reached this far in its counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir without using money or violence. There might have been excesses, but never as part of a pattern. In fact, even helicopters were not used in the valley until the end of 1999. If India has reached this far, it is because of conditions prevailing within the disturbed state itself. It needs to be remembered that both insurgency and operations to counter it are entirely dependent on the will of people, who can either sus-

The ceasefire might after all prove to be the route to peace in a Kashmir which is gradually turning its back on violence, writes Manvendra Singh



The guns won't fire

tain an insurgency or defeat it. In the jungles of Malaya, the lure of money defeated the call of the communists. And in the arid landscape of Baluchistan, the firepower of the Pakistani state broke the spirit of the Baluch. In Kashmir, the plodding operations of the security forces, willing to take casualties, broke the determination of the people who thought independence was just round the corner. They also gave up for another reason.

The difference between the Kashmir insurgency and that elsewhere is the involvement of the external factor

— the role played by another state. The Kashmiri will broke when Indian determination was juxtaposed with Pakistan's unwillingness. Having convinced the Kashmiris that the Pakistan army would move in to open the road to Muzaffarabad and Islamabad, the general headquarters in Rawalpindi did not stir an inch into the valley. When the Pakistan army did move after a decade, it was on the heights of Kargil, far away from the soul of the insurgency — the valley.

Its defeat there was the last straw for the Kashmiris. The people turned

away from the militants and violence. No opinion poll is required to prove that point, just a refresher of what Abdul Majid Dar, the *salaar aala* or chief commander of the Hizbul Mujahedin, said at that historic press conference last July, would suffice. "It is a fact that without the assistance of Pakistan, it was not possible to sustain the movement. But we are sons of this soil and no other person can understand the sufferings we are undergoing...The fact is that this is an indigenous movement and all the Mujahedin commanders with me are locals...We conducted grassroots surveys for two and a half months before taking this decision and we have the consent of the local people," said Dar. No more evidence is required to press the case.

Pakistan, however, refuses to accept this evidence. If further proof is required, one should take the simple instance that since the initiation of the ceasefire, the Hizbul Mujahedin has not undertaken any operations against the security forces. Claims of operations by the Hizbul Mujahedin are being made in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, not by the local commanders in the valley.

That should serve as ample corroboration of Dar's theory on the "consent of the people" and in which direction that assent lies. Pakistani groups, not the Kashmiris, have launched the militarily insignificant, but tactically outrageous suicide operations. They have also been targeting unarmed Kashmiris. Of the seven who have died recently, most were killed by the Pakistan-based *jihadis*.

Which raises questions once again about the policy Islamabad is pursuing over Kashmir. Pakistan's continued rejection of the ceasefire and unwillingness to rein in the *jihadis* that it has unleashed, shows an unsavoury truth — the inability to see beyond the use of violence as a negotiating tool.

The state of Pakistan has become wedded to an approach to international relations that was once characteristic with regard to Afghanistan. Diplomacy through blackmail is a recipe that proved to be successful in the Eighties for reasons that simply don't exist today, neither in the region nor in the world. And if Pakistan has become habituated to this practice, it is because of a belief in the inviolability of its nuclear weapons status. It continues to hold the world at a ransom on the basis of its overt nuclearization.

The rejection of the path to peace in Kashmir is an outcome of that vanity, as is its unwillingness to make sense out of the Afghanistan imbroglio. The world does not owe Pakistan a favour for Afghanistan and the departure of the Red Army in 1989, as Islamabad deludes itself. The nuclearization of Pakistan is in itself a favour bestowed on Islamabad by Washington with interest compounded many times over.

Pakistan has used this recipe to bluff the Kashmiris, who have since seen through it. India called the bluff over Kargil, and Pakistan blinked. It is a matter of time before the world calls Pakistan's bluff. But it may be too late by then for Pakistan to retrace its steps.

“Pakistan's continued rejection of the ceasefire and its unwillingness to rein in the jihadis show that it cannot see beyond violence”

POST FACTO



“The confidence of investors suffered a setback following the recent incidents. Under powers conferred under the Sebi Act, we have taken the measure to immediately restore investor confidence”

D.R. MEHTA, CHAIRMAN, SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE BOARD OF INDIA

“Sebi acts only at the behest of the finance minister”

A BROKER

“We do not expect any payment problems as over 50 per cent of outstandings are covered with margins”

A.N. JOSHI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BOMBAY STOCK EXCHANGE

“I don't want to talk right now”

DEENA MEHTA, FORMER OFFICIATING PRESIDENT, BSE

Govt prepares line of action for J&K

Bharati Jain

NEW DELHI 13 APRIL

THE GOVERNMENT is not in favour of wasting time in getting a dialogue on Kashmir underway while the Hurriyat Conference insists on permission for its team to travel to Islamabad before considering engaging itself in talks with the Centre.

Union home minister L.K. Advani, who has embarked on a meticulous planning of any future moves on the Kashmir front, is consulting members of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) on what should be the government's line of action when the current phase of cessation of operations against militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir expires by May end.

The government is keen to start the formal process of talks even with groups like Panun Kashmir, besides representatives of Ladakh and members of local pan-chayats, even as the Hurriyat sorts out its differences on whether or not it should make the dialogue conditional to permission for its team to travel to Pakistan.

The deliberations between the



SUNNY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN: People in the Valley enjoy a day at the Mughal Gardens after it was thrown open to visitors for Baisakhi on Friday. — PTI

optimism that the stalemate over the Kashmir issue may be ending. One relates to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's statement during his visit to Islamabad last month asking India and Pakistan to resume dialogue in the light of the Lahore Declaration of 1999 for resolution of all differences, "as the UN resolutions cannot be enforced in the absence of cooperation from both the parties."

The observations of Mr Annan rule out a mediatory and active role for the UN as far as resolution of the Kashmir issue is concerned. Stating that the UN resolutions on Kashmir including the one calling for plebiscite in the Valley state, could not be enforced given the differences between the two parties, Mr Annan had asked New Delhi and Islamabad to return to the spirit of the Lahore declaration by exercising "restraint, wisdom and taking constructive steps."

Observers feel Mr Annan's insistence on keeping the UN's role as "peripheral" in resolution of the Kashmir dispute would take the sting out of Pakistan's persistent demand for the right of self-determination of the Kashmir people.

MHA bosses and NSAB members, a session of which was held on Thursday, essentially focus on inputs and reactions from different agencies regarding the scenario in the Valley state.

The initial reactions of various Kashmiri groups and organisations to the government's recent offer of talks, to be held by its newly-

appointed interlocutor K.C. Pant,

ranging from dismissive to outrightly hostile are being taken stock of to work out the timing and modalities of the proposed dialogue.

According to senior government managers, two developments over the last month have contributed to the government's

Ties with Iran will not be at cost of Kashmir peace: PM

By Smita Gupta

The Times of India News Service

TEHERAN: Looking relaxed at the end of his three-day visit to a country he last visited in 1978 as the then Janata Party government's foreign minister, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee emphasised that India's burgeoning relationship with Iran would not be at the expense of the peace initiatives being made back home with Pakistan.

"We are strengthening our relationship with Iran, but it will not be at the expense of any other country. Of course, the depth of the relationship between India and Iran makes it special," he said.

In the PM's diplomatic ambivalence, aired, incidentally, in response to a question as to whether India was "trying to drive a wedge between Pakistan and Iran", lay the message of the first trip that a BJP Prime Minister has undertaken to an Islamic nation other than Pakistan in this region—that India would not just like to gain leverage with Pakistan, whether on the Kashmir issue or on the proposed Iran-India gas pipeline link, but would also reach out to other Muslim countries without remaining stuck in the Pakistan syndrome.

Answering a question on the proposed gas pipeline, and

whether India still maintained that both the land and sea options were open because the Iranians were pressing for the overland Pakistan route to, which India remains opposed, the Prime Minister said, "Iran wants to sell and we want to buy. We must work together for a long-term, secure arrangement. If we had good relations with Pakistan, and we have tried very hard to establish good relations..

So, any decision on the gas pipeline project will have to be taken in the light of this situation."

If Mr Vajpayee's Iran trip and the Teheran Declaration, which sets the agenda for a new partnership—including brand new initiatives to improve trade and commerce, a commitment to energy cooperation and the desire to work together to check the Taliban—have, as reports suggest, not gone down well with Pakistan, his meeting with Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei should give the saffron establishment back home something to think about.

Referring to his meeting with Iran's supreme leader, Mr Vajpayee said, "His wise counsel and encouragement for the promotion of our bilateral relations will be a source of strength as we work towards this goal."



THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 APR 2001

Spot the difference XTC-8 10/9

On either side of the Line of Control lie two Kashmiris which seem remarkably similar. It's only after visiting both sides that one starts to realise how artificial the divide is

HOW DOES Jammu and Kashmir look like on the other side of the LoC? I have often been asked this question ever since my return from Pakistan and Pakistan occupied Kashmir. "Just as beautiful" is my standard reply.

Undivided Kashmir not only has a past but it has a future as well. The Indian and Pakistani Parliaments have passed unanimous resolutions vowing to finish the 'unfinished agenda' of 1947 in the state. Fifty-three years of separation have not, however, totally eclipsed the similarities between the Kashmir Valley and Jammu on one side, and Muzaffarabad — the capital of 'Azad Kashmir' — and Mirpur on the other. The weather, language and the dress is the same and many feel that the state should be reunited.

The same Jhelum flows in most parts. Families get sentimental on either side of the LoC recalling the old days even after two generations have passed since Partition. The signs of 'development' are also identical. There is hardly any industrial activity or business enterprise worth its name. Politics seems to be the main bread-winner for many on both sides of the fence. However, unlike in Srinagar or New Delhi, where most of the pro-Kashmir leaders have suffered for their cause, those on the 'other side' live in posh localities and move around in foreign vehicles.

There is fervour for 'independence' in Muzaffarabad too. This was made evident at a public meeting in the Khursheed Hall where Kashmiri youths raised slogans to silence those eulogising Pakistan. That is when one learnt that more than 15,000 Kashmiris have crossed over into PoK during the last 12 years from the border towns of the Valley. Most of them live in refugee camps and complain about the lack of facilities which they expect from an Islamic State — much like the Kashmiri pandits in India.

The venue of the meeting was named after K.H. Khursheed, a former president of 'Azad Kashmir' who was chosen by Jinnah as his private secretary before Partition. He died in a road mishap. There is a tomb built in his memory which many locals say does not reflect his simple way of living. Alongside his tomb is the *mazar* of Moulvi Yusuf Shah, the late pro-Pakistan Mirwaiz of Kashmir.

The present Mirwaiz of the Valley, Moulvi Umar Farooq, is a descendant of Moulvi Yusuf Shah. The latter's son is a businessman in Pakistan and has not

sought the coveted title of Mirwaiz as, according to him, the hereditary seat of authority as a Mirwaiz is in Srinagar where he traditionally delivers sermons in the Jama Masjid.

Despite Islamic extremists calling the shots in the undivided state on the whole and the Hindu fundamentalists doing the same in Jammu, there are small islands of secularism. Mirpur seems to be one of them. As I am called upon to speak at a public meeting in this prosperous PoK town, I am taken aback for a moment not expecting such an invitation.

There are protagonists of Pakistan and Jammu and Kashmir all around and I feel that I have landed in a jam. However, I muster up enough courage to say: "Trust me that after meeting you I am convinced that a line created by religion, power and terrorism can't forever divide the people." There is a thundering applause which leaves me rubbing my eyes in disbelief. The myth that the people in PoK would have stopped looking beyond their religion was shattered for me that moment.

On our side, Jammu city happily remains a fine example of secularism despite grave provocation. Those in power, both in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, must enjoy the confidence of governments in New Delhi and Islamabad respectively for their survival.

Barrister Sultan Mahmood.

the 'Prime Minister' of PoK, had been elected on Benazir Bhutto's mandate. But he can afford to annoy Pervez Musharraf only at the risk of losing his office. He has chosen the safe course. He claims to lead an 'azad' territory but swears that it is part of Pakistan.

Farooq Abdullah, in the past, would dub the BJP as a communal party. In its earlier *avatar* as the Jan Sangh, the latter would dismiss him as a 'traitor'. Both have forgotten this for the time being.

But the similarities end here. A major difference is in the way militants operate on either side. In Muzaffarabad, they openly flaunt their local headquarters — be it of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen or even the Hizbul Mujahideen. They carry guns but do not kill the locals. They do not fight each other either.

In Indian Kashmir, most of the militants hardly know where their headquarters are. They kill each other and get killed themselves using guns that do not belong to them. That foreign militants also kill them is a recent realisation.



LONG LINE OF CONTROL: BSF border patrol

Another chance in Kashmir?

By Salman Haidar

119-12

A NEW phase has opened in Kashmir with the Government's call to all parties to start talking. Appointing Mr. K. C. Pant to conduct the dialogue gives weight to the call, for a senior political personality like him will be expected to have the necessary backing and support. With his appointment, there should be a single authoritative reference point to express and explain the Government's purpose, thus putting an end to the confusing and sometimes contradictory briefings that have so often come from different high sources. The earnest effort in Kashmir that has so long been expected may perhaps finally be taking shape.

It is nevertheless an unconscionably long time since the Ramzan ceasefire first opened the way. That was a brave and hard won decision, and the equally laudable resolve to extend the ceasefire till the end of May deserved all the warm welcome it received. But much of the goodwill and expectation has been eroded for lack of follow up. In the public gaze, the Indian authorities became strangely passive after the first moves. Not so the militants who intensified their efforts through suicide attacks and massacres of civilians. The ceasefire inevitably came under pressure, and with it the move towards peace. By itself, the ceasefire is no more than a starting point. It has to be fitted into a larger effort, a well-considered and convincing plan to handle the complex problems of Kashmir. Of that, till now there has been little sign. Perhaps the advent of Mr. Pant will mark a new prospect.

Hopes of early dialogue after the Ramzan ceasefire failed to materialise owing in good measure to the Hurriyat's insistence on sending its team to Pakistan for prior consultations. Though the Indian authorities ultimately agreed that a team could go, its composition became a problem — who was to be allowed to go, who was to have a passport, these became the key concerns. There was the fear that if Syed Ali Shah Geelani was part of the team, he would be lionised by Pakistan, which in turn could affect the Valley and

The wise course at this point would be to engage with Pakistan in bilateral talks... Without measures that create confidence on both sides of the divide, nothing will be achieved.

unbalance the talks. Mr. Geelani's visit as part of the Hurriyat team remains a sticking point. But in truth this is a subsidiary issue that has taken the focus away from the substance of the problem. Even if he goes and Pakistan calls out the crowds for him, it may prove no more than a nine-day-wonder: indeed, if whipping up a frenzy in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad was all it takes, Pakistan would long ago have walked off with the prize. Today, it would be best to let the Hurriyat choose its own representatives and send them wheresoever it pleases, for the real test will come in the talks themselves and not in any moves before or after.

There are many looming questions about the talks. Even devising a format is a tricky matter — all Kashmiri parties are invited and accommodating them in a single process will take much ingenuity. There are sharply divided opinions on critical issues such as enhanced autonomy for the State, where the different regions have different interests. It is also likely that for some of the opposition groups, especially those who take their cue from Pakistan, the only aim of talking would be to advance their demand for secession. There is the overweening question of defence and security to which New Delhi can never be blind. And there are many other knotty issues. Putting all these varied, and often contradictory, concerns into one process of discussion is a most onerous task, more especially when the different parties are riven with mutual distrust and suspicion. If the talks do get going in any real earnest, it is bound to be a very long haul. Stamina and a sustained sense of purpose will be needed from all sides.

Where a crucial gap remains in the Government's strategy is in the matter of talking to Pakistan. We seemed at one stage to be edging round to it but now

appear to have moved away. The persistence of Pakistani backing for violence in Jammu and Kashmir remains an insuperable obstacle. India's strong objection is only to be expected, and is fully justified. But if we are to get anywhere, some harsh realities have to be taken into account. Pakistan is very unlikely to end its cross-border activity as a prior condition for dialogue, for that would be a decisive loss of leverage on the 'core' issue. It will therefore persist with its current strategy, even if that means no bilateral dialogue, and this in turn will affect the peace effort within Jammu and Kashmir. There is scant chance of bypassing Pakistan in building for peace in Kashmir. It is instructive to look again at last July's ceasefire which was aborted at Pakistan's insistence when it felt that it was being pushed onto the sidelines. Pakistan will be similarly disruptive this time too if it feels it is being bypassed. These realities need to be recognised and the wise course at this point would be to engage with Pakistan in bilateral talks.

What shape can an Indo-Pakistan dialogue take? For one thing, it need not be an open, full dress affair. Private channels can be more useful in the early stages. An agenda for bilateral talks already exists, listing a number of topics, among them Kashmir. Over the years, Pakistan has maintained that while there may not be equal progress on all the subjects discussed, there must be some progress on all of them. That is to say, Kashmir is not to be snowed under a welter of subsidiary issues. One must assume that this will remain its approach whenever we begin to talk to each other.

On Kashmir, one must expect a slow haul. There is no obvious common ground and little scope for diplomatic wizardry to bring the two sides together. Hopes that the talks could be focussed on

an effort to convert the LoC into a mutually accepted international border are misplaced. For Pakistan, this would be a defeat that even the military catastrophe of 1971 could not compel. Realistic and attainable goals should be aimed at, a series of incremental measures to ease the current dangers — keep the two sides engaged and advance by degree towards a broader settlement. To try to rush towards a final conclusion would only invite a setback. In the early phase, perhaps what can be procured is a substantial slowdown of infiltration from Pakistan, which will permit the bulk of the Indian Army in Jammu and Kashmir to return to the barracks. In addition, limited arrangements for people and goods to cross from one side of the LoC to the other would be worth pursuing. Simultaneity in taking such steps, which obviously benefit all sides and foreclose no options for the future, could be acceptable to public opinion in both countries. And initial agreement on such issues would encourage both sides to search for mutual accommodation and compromise on more difficult subjects.

But if issues of sovereignty or self-termination are to be the starting point of the discussions, then nothing but strife and confrontation will ensue. Such basic issues can only begin to be approached when a measure of confidence has been built up between the parties. Pakistan may fear that partial improvement is all that India seeks, and it may therefore insist on pushing its entire agenda from the start. This would be a bad mistake. Without measures that create confidence on both sides of the divide, nothing will be achieved.

Whatever the difficulties ahead, the decision to extend the ceasefire and now the invitation to all parties to talk can bring genuine hope for a better outcome. This requires a sense of clear purpose in New Delhi about the course and outcome it seeks. It is a vast and immensely complicated prospect before the Government. Let us hope that it is geared up to meet the challenge.

(The writer is a former Foreign Secretary.)

THE HINDU

30 APR 2001

VHP will train 3-lakh youths to fight Pak-sponsored terrorism

JAMMU: The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said on Sunday that it would recruit 30 lakh 'Bajrang youths' and train three lakh of them to fight Pakistan-sponsored militancy in the country.

"We will recruit 30 lakh 'Bajrang youths' and train three lakh of them throughout the country from September this year to fight fundamentalist outfits sponsored by Pakistan, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir," international general secretary of VHP Parveen Bhai told journalists here.

However, the method to fight the fundamental forces would be fully democratic and not violent. He said that the remaining 27 lakh youths would be trained in phases.

The training would be imparted at 28 places with 10,000 youths each taking part in these, he said, adding that they would be sent to different states to perform their duties.

Nearly 50,000 youths would be recruited from J&K alone for the training, he added. Terming the

Kashmir issue as religious, he said it was wrong to consider it a political issue. "We have differences with the government over the issue of talks in Kashmir. We support a political initiative. But you cannot talk to people holding guns and killing civilians and security forces ruthlessly in the state," Mr Bhai said.

In a related development, Kashmiri Pandits have dubbed as 'vague' the Centre's announcement to hold talks with Kashmiri groups, while the state Congress asserted it would have nothing to do with the dialogue if it was concentrated on the Hurriyat Conference.

Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Forum, another Kashmiri group, said the Centre's decision to hold talks came too late. "We welcome the government's announcement to hold talks and nomination of K.C. Pant for the purpose. But if the proposed talks are to concentrate on the Hurriyat, then we are out of it," J&K Pradesh Congress president

Mohammad Shafi Qureshi said in Delhi.

Asserting the Hurriyat was not the true voice of the people and was non-existent in most parts of the state, Mr Qureshi said the conglomerate of 23 separatist organisations had contradictory views on various issues.

The Hurriyat does not have any support in most of the state, particularly in Ladakh and Jammu, he said, advocating involvement of all mainstream political parties in talks.

Stating Kashmiri Pandits were an essential party, Panun Kashmir spokesman Ramesh Manvati asserted "without our involvement, any talks will be meaningless and fruitless."

"Ours is an ethnic community whose roots can be traced as far back as 5,000 years. We are also the main sufferers of the on-going militancy, making us an essential party while deciding the future of Kashmir," he said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 APR 2011

Lone wants talks to be delinked from Pakistan trip

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 APRIL

WITH A section of the Hurriyat leadership wanting to delink their travel to Islamabad from talks with the Centre, the differences within the secessionist conglomerate have become sharper.

Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat has rejected the Centre's proposal for talks with Kashmiri groups. The Centre had said that its representative for the state K.C. Pant would talk to all peace-minded Kashmiri groups.

Mr Bhat, in his reaction to the Centre's offer, had made the clear-

ance of visas for the Hurriyat delegation a pre-condition for any talks with New Delhi. He said that until the delegation was allowed to go to Pakistan, it would not hold any talks with the government. But this position is now being contested by other Hurriyat leaders.

Senior Hurriyat functionary Abdul Ghani Lone, on Sunday, termed Mr Bhat's comment as "his personal view" and said a decision on opening negotiations with the Centre could only be taken after a meeting of the executive body of the 23-party conglomerate. While Mr Bhat said the Centre's offer was only a "gimmick," and fellow lead-



Abdul Ghani Bhat: The cracks are showing

er Mirwaiz Omer Farooq dismissed it as "pointless" because it had come too late, Mr Lone said he felt talks held the real key to resolving the issue.

On its part, the government has made it clear that a Hurriyat team would not be allowed to visit Pakistan with hard-liner, pro-Pakistani leader Syed Ali Geelani as part of it. A known anti-India hawk, it is felt that his clearance will result in his becoming a pro-pagandist for Islamabad's military establishment.

When the Hurriyat executive meets to discuss the Centre's offer, it will thrash out differences with-

in the conglomerate on whether the proposed visit of the delegation should be linked to opening a peace dialogue. It may not be easy for the Hurriyat to let go of the opportunity, given that the Centre's invitation concedes to their long-standing demand for unconditional talks.

As for the Centre, it is unlikely to dilute its stand on allowing the Hurriyat delegation to travel to Pakistan with the inclusion of Mr Geelani. As is evident from the statement, the government has been careful to aim its talks offer at a cross-section of Kashmiri groups or organisations, rather than lim-

iting its options to just the Hurriyat.

It may take some time for these groups to come out in support of the Centre's initiative, considering that the Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Forum, Panun Kashmir and other groups are still confused about their role in the proposed talks.

Militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba have already rejected the Centre's olive branch. However, Jamaat-e-Islami, one of the major constituents of the Hurriyat Conference, and its armed wing Hizbul Mujahideen are yet to offer a reaction.

The Economic Times

9 APR 2001

Dialogue on Jammu & Kashmir

By K. K. Katyal

The first reactions to the Government move for a dialogue with the people of Kashmir are not heartening, but could be of use if the deficiencies, pointed out by various sections, are addressed properly.

119-12
9/9

IT IS hard not to be repetitive on Jammu and Kashmir. That is because there is no marked advance in the efforts, initiated from time to time, to resolve this issue. There will be no originality, it is confessed, about the comments on the latest plan of the Government "to embark upon political dialogue with all sections of peace-loving people of Jammu and Kashmir". The move comes several weeks after the first announcement of a ceasefire raised hopes of a quick follow-up to consolidate and build upon the peace process, and even then it is inadequate on more than one count. The first reactions are not heartening but could be of use if the deficiencies, pointed out by various sections, are addressed properly.

The Government's statement naming the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman, Mr. K.C. Pant, to hold the dialogue on its behalf envisages a process that is far too diffused and does not indicate a concise political plan for his guidance. Perhaps, there is one but has not been made public. Whether the latest move leads to a meaningful advance depends on the man (Mr. Pant) and his mandate. That he is qualified to be entrusted with the crucial mission is accepted but he cannot function in a vacuum.

The first reactions could be divided into four categories. One, the comments of the Pakistan Government and the jihadi outfits based in Islamabad, dismissing the official statement, even the ceasefire and the related steps, as gimmicks, as a stunt and questioning New Delhi's sincerity. Two, the views of the Hurriyat leaders who dwell on the importance of a visit by their delegation to Pakistan. Three, the small, moderate sections in Pakistan who do not reject the move outright and, while pointing out its inadequacies, say that "an offer, even though inadequate, is better than no offer and needs to be pursued". Four, the stand taken by a section of political parties and political scientists here who want the new move to be invested with a political content and its ambiguities and inadequacies removed so as to inspire confidence in the State. Mr. Pant would do well to heed the constructive suggestions made by those believing in the negotiation process. Of course, little could be done to satisfy those who continue to rely on the efficacy of the gun.

Mr. Pant is shrewd enough to realise that negotiations with the crowd — this is what the various categories of people, intended by the Centre to be involved in the dialogue, amount to — would lead him nowhere. He could treat his talks with these sections as a fact-finding exercise, and if this round leads to crystallisation of his thinking, it would have served a purpose, especially if he, at the subsequent stage, concentrates on fewer interlocutors. There are two broad aspects of the Kashmir problem — one, aspirations and the craving for greater autonomy on the part of those accepting the State's accession; two, the conduct of those who had taken to the path of violence for the "undoing of the wrongs of the past". The two strands may converge at some point later when discussions centre on the framework governing the State's relationship with the Centre, but, to start with, would remain separate. And both would need to be dealt with separately, not in a crowd but with small representative sets of interlocutors.

Some question the propriety of involving the State Government — the National Conference and other political parties, which accept the Indian Constitution. As one of the commentators rhetorically asked: "What is the point of talking to the State's Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, when his son is in the Central Cabinet and should be deemed to be a party to the latest official statement?" Citing the Mizoram precedent, they say the Centre talked to the Lal-denga party, which did not want to be part of India, and not others with whom there was no such problem.

This is necessary on two counts. One, those accepting the Indian Constitution want a new autonomy package and, as such, could not be left out. Two, their capacity to act as spoilers, in the case of progress in the talks with the extremists, is not to be underestimated. What happened when Dr. Abdullah queered the pitch at the time of the discussions, in the wake of the Hizb-initiated ceasefire last year, proves

the point. The concerns of the Hurriyat and others of its way of thinking are different and, as such, interaction with them may require greater attention.

The controversy over their demand to send a delegation to Pakistan has been unnecessarily allowed to snowball. Had they been allowed to go when the first request came, the issue would not have attracted much notice and the Hurriyat would not have acquired a larger-than-life image which, in turn, would not have created suspicions in New Delhi. On balance, it will be better to let them go than to block their trip, causing a strong sense of grievance and risking their non-participation in the dialogue. It will help the search for the solution at the internal level, strengthening New Delhi's hand in its dealings with Pakistan.

Though general and on widely-predicted lines, the Government statement calls for point-by-point examination. It does not recognise the Hurriyat as the sole representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This is an implied "no" to its plea for a visit to Pakistan for contacts with the militant outfits based there. The idea of a tripartite dialogue does not find favour, and the linkage between the resumption of the talks with Pakistan and the insistence on steps by it to curb cross-border terrorism stays.

One need not read between the lines to come to these conclusions — which are evident from the plain reading of the statement. It hopes for the participation of "representatives of all walks of life from among the people of Jammu and Kashmir", — the State Government, all political parties, non-government organisations, trade unions, social and religious bodies from all the regions of the State. This clearly amounts to rejection of the Hurriyat's claim to speak exclusively on behalf of the Kashmir people. It wants to send its delegation to Pakistan before deciding on its participation in the talks with the Centre. This is not acceptable to New Delhi as is

evident from this formulation — "The Government notes that the APHC has all along taken the position that talks should be unconditional. Now that the Government has agreed to hold talks in the interest of early restoration of peace, it is for the APHC to consider whether it would not be inconsistent for them to set preconditions for the dialogue." As for the "repeated requests from Pakistan" for talks with India, the Government reaffirms its faith in a "bilateral dialogue" and, in support of this line of action, mentions the Shimla Agreement and the spirit of the Lahore Declaration.

In the last four months or so, New Delhi indicated its willingness for Kashmir-centric talks. What else, for instance, was the meaning of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's musings? Especially this portion — "India is willing and ready to seek a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. Towards this end, we are ready to recommence talks with Pakistan at any level, including the highest level" or "In our search for a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem, both in its external and internal dimensions, we shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past. Rather we shall be bold and innovative designers of a future architecture for peace and prosperity for the entire South Asian regions." It is a significant departure even from the approach, envisaged in the Lahore Declaration which spoke of the agreement "to intensify efforts to resolve outstanding issues, including Jammu and Kashmir".

In the past, the stress on "bilateral talks" with Pakistan was meant to signify India's opposition to any bid to internationalise the problem or to a third party role, as suggested by Islamabad. Some in the West, too, were sympathetic to this idea but, sensing India's resistance, veered to support for bilateralism. (Even China, "Pakistan's friend for all weathers" shifted from its earlier line, to advocate direct talks). Because of the change in the mood of the world community, Islamabad mooted tripartite talks, involving India, Pakistan and "representatives of the Kashmiri people".

New Delhi rejected that idea — and if there was any doubt about its stand, that would have been dispelled now. Having done that, India would do well to give up its hesitations in resuming the bilateral dialogue with Pakistan.

THE HINDU

9/9

Abdul Ghani sees lone peace hope in Vajpayee

HT-9

9/4

HT Correspondent
Jammu, April 8

ABDUL GHANI Lone today said there is hope of finding a solution to the Kashmir dispute as long as Atal Bihari Vajpayee remains Prime Minister.

In an exclusive interview to *Hindustan Times* this morning, the APHC leader said: "Anything can be expected — an accord or any other solution as long as Vajpayee is there." Lone was leaving for the crucial meeting of the APHC in Srinagar.

With his image of a moderate having the support of the majority in the Hurriyat executive, Lone is clear that the colossal sacrifices of the Kashmiris would not be allowed to go waste.

Lone, at whom the latest talks offer from Delhi seems to be targeted, stressed that doubts persist about the offer because the people of Kashmir have time and again been betrayed by their leaders.

The Peoples' Conference Chief reserved his comments on the talks offer. "Let's us see how things shape up," is all he said.

But he made it clear that the Government should have been more specific while making the offer and outlining its contours.

He seemed particularly unhappy that all parties were being invited for the proposed dialogue.

He said that is not the way to solve problems.

On KC Pant's selection as chief negotiator, Lone said: "I would not like to say anything since he has been named. He has a good background but how far he knows the art of negotiation is a matter of test."

When prodded further, Lone said the Government could have made a better choice.

The level should have been

upgraded.

It could have either been Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh or Principal Secretary to PM, Brajesh Mishra.

While skirting a question on what could be the possible solution to the Kashmir crisis, he said: "What I want is a firm resolution that could place Kashmiris out of the current situation. I want a situation in which Kashmiri Muslims find themselves as willing participants."

VHP 'army'

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad today said it would recruit 3 million "Bajrang youths", 50,000 from Jammu and Kashmir alone, and train 300,000 of them to fight Pakistan-sponsored militancy in the country, adds PTI.

"We will train three lakh youths from September to fight fundamentalist outfits sponsored by Pakistan, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir," international general secretary of Vishwa Hindu Parishad Parveen Bhai told reporters here. "However, the method to fight the fundamentalist forces would be fully democratic and not violent," he said.

The remaining 27 lakh youths would be trained in phases, Bhai said.

10,000 youths each would be trained at 28 different places, he said, adding, they would be sent to different States for performing their duties.

Terming the Kashmir issue as "religious", Bhai said it was wrong to consider it a political issue. "We have differences with the Government over the issue of talks in Kashmir."

"We support political initiative but you cannot talk to people who hold guns and kill civilians and security forces ruthlessly in the State," Bhai said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 APR 2001

Indian offer not serious: JKLF chief

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 8. Mr. Amanullah Khan, chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, has said that the Indian Government's offer of talks to all peace-loving people in Kashmir falls far short of being a "serious and result-bearing gesture" as it lacks the basic ingredients.

In a statement here, he said all that was needed to bring permanent peace to the region was to solve the Kashmir issue, the basic cause of the situation in the area since 1947.

Mr. Khan complained that the Indian offer made no mention of solving the core issue or doing justice to Kashmiris.

"It just talked of talks to establish peace which meant peace without justice and for that matter peace at the cost of justice, a thing no self-respecting Kashmiri would agree to".

If the Indian Government was really serious about bringing peace to the region, it must take concrete steps to solve the Kash-

mir problem. The best way of doing it without doing injustice to any of the parties involved in the issue, he said, was to implement the "JKLF formula".

To be implemented in five phases, it envisages the re-unification of the divided Kashmir with status of an independent nation for an initial period of 15 years with "a democratic, federal and secular system of government having friendly relations with both India and Pakistan".

It proposes an agreement with Kashmir's immediate neighbours not to violate its frontiers nor interfere in its internal affairs and that Kashmir would undertake not to let its soil be used against any country.

It also seeks a U.N.-supervised referendum in which the people of Kashmir will determine whether Kashmir should perpetuate its independence or become part of India or Pakistan, and that the popular verdict will be accepted by all concerned as the final settlement.

Differences in Hurriyat over talks

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. Serious differences have cropped up in the All-Party Hurriyat Conference over the holding of talks with the Centre on the Kashmir issue.

The Centre recently announced the name of Mr. K.C. Pant, currently Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, to negotiate with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir for the restoration of peace and this was rejected by the Hurriyat chairman, Mr. Abdul Ghani Bhat.

Mr. Bhat said that until the Hurriyat delegation was allowed to go to Pakistan it would not hold any talks with the Government.

However, senior Hurriyat functionary, Mr. Abdul Ghani Lone, termed Mr. Bhat's comment as "his personal view" and said a decision to this effect would be only taken when the executive of the 23-party conglomerate met.

Though Mr. Bhat has rejected the Centre's offer, it would be difficult for the Hurriyat to run away from the proposed talks as the Centre has this time offered talks without any preconditions, a demand of the Hurriyat.— PTI

THE HINDU

29 APR 1991

The Sunday Statesman

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J&K NEGOTIATIONS

25-8 A marathon to run

THERE would be no cause for despondency over the generally indifferent response of the known players in Jammu and Kashmir to the Centre's negotiation proposals, for such resistance conforms to their track record. The refusal of the likes of the Hurriyat and Hizbul to commence formal dialogue could in fact prove an opportunity to KC Pant to establish contact with the many other entities who do matter, but have never been in the frontline of political activity. Talking to others might in fact develop into a sort of pressure that would lead to the Hurriyat, for instance, coming round to the negotiating table at a later stage. It would also help the Centre make a comprehensive assessment of what would be acceptable to Kashmiris at large, not just its political figures. In many ways the choice of the negotiator is apt. KC Pant has both political and administrative experience, at the present juncture he does appear close enough to the centre of power to influence the decisions the government will have to take. Yet not being part of the government gives him room for manoeuvre, any suggestion he might make would not automatically amount to an official commitment. The government would do well to make clear to him the parameters within which he should operate, it would facilitate his talks and also minimise the risk of embarrassment. Like all those in public life, Pant is prone to relish media attention, but this assignment calls for keeping out of the glare of publicity as much as possible. Negotiations are a process, not an event, and in the initial stages the lower the tenor the better. "Going public" involves spelling out positions, and that can create complications before the outlines of any roadmap are drawn. The media would also be well advised not to rush to conclusions or expect quick results — it was precisely that which stymied the brief talks that had followed the HM's offer of a ceasefire.

Pant and the government might consider occasionally keeping the opposition parties posted on how the process is developing. While securing all-party consensus would be difficult, such consultations would avoid the creation of ego problems that often result in rash statements. The process would never take off if there was even a hint of suspicion that it was

Ideological pr
political exigenc

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WHAT is being called the end of ideology is having a curious effect on the culture of coalitions which is in rapid mutation, in the sense that there is now a clear dichotomy between political exigencies at the Centre and those determining political alliances in the states. Let's begin with the Congress. A short while ago, proximity to the Left was one of the premises on which its political strategy was based, a premise to which all other considerations of the local kind were subordinated.

There was, for instance, to be no alliance with the Trinamul in West Bengal. One thought there was some kind of vague ideological principle involved in the whole thing: the Trinamul was part of a BJP-led NDA at the Centre and allied to the coalition leader in the state. Due to the vacuum left by the disappearance of the third front, the Left had emerged as a kind of natural ally, secular and closer to the prevailing Congress point of view on economic issues. However, no sooner did Mamata Banerjee leave the NDA in the aftermath of the Tehelka expose, it became evident that the prospect of actually seizing power in West Bengal was much more enticing than building up a coalition at the Centre with people who were

THE STATESMAN

8 APR 2001

Hurriyat accuses Delhi of double talk, says Pak trip must precede talks

By OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Srinagar, April 6: The Hurriyat Conference on Friday accused New Delhi of changing stances and reiterated that it will not hold talks with the Centre's new point man, Mr K.C. Pant, before its proposed five-member delegation is allowed to visit Pakistan.

"It is not a condition but indispensable for achieving the goal," Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Butt said while reacting to the Centre's first formal offer of

holding an unconditional dialogue on the Kashmir issue. "No peace can be achieved in a vacuum and talking for the pleasure of it ends up nowhere," he asserted. Prof. Butt strongly feels that Thursday's declaration by the Centre was actually a deliberate attempt "to block our trip to Pakistan." He said, "Otherwise we should have gone to Pakistan, got back from there and talked to the Indians with open hearts." He added, "That, however, did not take shape and now the Indians have chosen to talk with a crowd in Kashmir — all the political parties, the

NGOs, and even individuals — but the process is very likely to consume years together and will produce nothing."

Prof. Butt told *The Asian Age* here: "No picking up a point man, no talking to a crowd, no unilateral ceasefire, gimmick, but determined wisdom and pragmatism will lead us to a breakthrough." He said the Centre should not waste time any more but accept the Hurriyat's idea of involving all the relevant parties in the peace talks — "Indian, Pakistan and, more importantly, the Kashmiris' genuine representatives."

He said he believed the Hurriyat suggestion was "equitable and sagacious" and should have not only been accepted but also worked upon by the Centre. "By now the results would have started coming in and I'm sure these would have been encouraging for all."

He said he believed that either Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who, he said, had committed himself to holding open talks with the Kashmiri leadership and had publicly said the government would have no objections to Hurriyat leaders visiting Pakistan, was losing his

grip on affairs, or his home minister was trying to project himself as the final authority in the NDA government and, perhaps, also as Mr Vajpayee's real successor. Prof. Butt then posed a question: "What does Mr Advani look for?" He then answered himself: "Probably delay and forget." He asserted that in contrast to this, the Hurriyat genuinely wanted to contribute towards achieving lasting peace in the state.

"By indulging in rhetoric alone we don't want to deceive ourselves, the people or future generations of our home-

land, but want to work hard towards the goal," he said, adding, "It is possible only when you accept the realities on the ground."

He accepted that all was not going well within the amalgam and its credibility was at stake due to infighting. Prof. Butt said: "I say the Hurriyat Conference is faced with a number of difficulties and challenges, most of these being we people speaking differently on issues in public." He also admitted that the amalgam leadership occasionally committed mistakes amounting to indiscipline.

THE ASIAN AGE

7 APR 2001

Kashmir groups reject talks offer

HT Correspondent & Agencies
Srinagar, April 6

THE CENTRE'S offer to open talks with Jammu and Kashmir separatists has found no takers. Major players, without whose consent, the initiative won't even take off, have virtually said no to the dialogue offer.

"No purpose would be served by entering into a dialogue with New Delhi unless it allows a Hurriyat team to visit Pakistan," Abdul Ghani Bhat, chairman of the conglomeration of parties said in Srinagar. He termed the Centre's offer an exercise in futility. "The way the Centre is dealing with the vexed Kashmir issue is without purpose. The Centre must fulfil its commitments first. We wanted to go to Pakistan. India agreed, but the visit never took shape because of the Centre's rigidity."

He added that the Hurriyat wasn't against the spirit of dialogue, one that would bring an everlasting solution to the Kashmir issue. "Only talks can

resolve this tangle," he said.

Dealing another blow to the initiative, the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba too rejected the Centre's offer. "There is no possibility of any such engagement with India. The offer is part of the political design to subvert the struggle," a the outfit said in a release faxed to a Srinagar newspaper.

Signed by Lashkar spokesman Abu Usama, the missive said: "India just wants to take the pressure off its security forces, but it won't succeed in this."

The Centre's talks initiative, from the beginning, looked suspect. In the first place, it came

full 138 days after its unilateral truce. To make matters even more difficult, K C Pant was nominated as the principal negotiator. Pant, Vice-Chairman of the Planning Commission, is an experienced political hand. But his skills as a negotiator in a conflict situation as vexed as this are unknown.

Kashmir watchers feel the Centre clearly delayed in proposing the talks. It would have made better sense if the offer came with the ceasefire announcement. It would have created pressure on the Hurriyat. "This would have made sense had the initiative come close on the heels of the ceasefire announcement," said Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, former Hurriyat chairman. "At this point of time, it all sounds so vague."

The Centre, observers, said had been forced to offer talks for the situation in the State has only been worsening. Since November 28, when the truce came into force, as many as 400 civilians and 170 security personnel have died in the Valley.

20 HURT IN GRENADE ATTACK

TWENTY PEOPLE were injured in a grenade attack in Bandipora on Friday. Militants lobbed a grenade on a BSF vehicle in a market at 11.30 am on Friday. The explosive fell short of the target and exploded on the road, causing splinter injuries to 20 civilians.

HTC, Srinagar

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 APR 2001

Talks offer a snub to Hurriyat, Pak

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 6. — The Centre has sent a clear message to the All Party Hurriyat Conference and Pakistan through its offer to all Jammu and Kashmir parties to join a broad based political dialogue that would explore how peace "may be attained in the troubled state".

The government has made it apparent that neither Islamabad's "tripartite dialogue" is acceptable to it nor does it consider the Hurriyat the sole representative of Kashmiri people.

While India has rejected Pakistan's tripartite dialogue and insisted on focussed bilateral dialogue in accordance with the Shimla agreement and the spirit of the Lahore Declaration, Pakistan's chief executive, Gen Parvez Musharraf, has virtually rejected the Lahore process saying it did not address the main issue of Kashmir.

According to agency reports, General Musharraf in an interview in Islamabad said: "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's just a process which would never have carried forward."

He said he had suggested to the former Pakistani government to include Kashmir in the final draft of the declaration. The draft, instead, gave the impression that Kashmir was a minor irritant between the two countries and that there were several other big issues between 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."

However, by dismissing Is-

lamabad's demand, New Delhi has thrown the ball on the other side of the border. It's now up to Islamabad to reject or accept the offer. Kashmir observers think the government could also be indicating that a focussed bilateral dialogue on Kashmir could be held after Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism and anti-India propaganda.

As for the Hurriyat, the Centre has rejected the notion that the Pakistan-backed umbrella group is the sole representative

■ See SNUB: page 8

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SNUB:

(Continued from page 1)

of the Kashmiri people. However, in the absence of any broad forum, the Hurriyat has become the voice of discontentment of various sections of J&K population.

The government's statement is indicative enough that if the Hurriyat tries to enforce "pre-conditions", such as visit to Pakistan before talks or tripartite talks involving Pakistan, it would not work. And if it insists on the pre-conditions, the Hurriyat will get totally "isolated", sources said.

In fact, it's believed the government has already identified 14 groups which have expressed willingness to hold talks with Mr KC Pant, government's interlocutor in the Kashmir peace process.

Hurriyat leaders, expected here next week, will have to take a unanimous view on the peace process. There is a division within the organisation. Pro-Pakistan leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, has been clamouring that Kashmir is a religious issue, while Mr Abdul Gani Lone backs Mr KC Pant (because of Mr Lone's insistence the government has appointed a fresh face as its interlocutor), and the Hurriyat chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Bhatt, is reportedly awaiting for Pakistan's endorsement.

Incidentally, while the Kashmir ceasefire was announced at the beginning of Ramzan month last year, the announcement for an expanded broad-based exploratory dialogue came on the Muharram day. It also came on the eve of the external affairs minister's meeting with the US secretary of the state, Mr Colin Powell, and defence secretary, Mr Donald Rumsfeld.

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SATURDAY, APRIL 7, 2001

A NEW "DIALOGUE COUNTER" 714

THE ONE POSITIVE aspect of the Government of India's open and broadspectrum 'invitation' for talks to peace-desiring sections of Jammu and Kashmir is that it is the Atal Behari Vajpayee administration's first attempt to inject crucial political content into the peace initiative set off by the unilateral ceasefire nearly five months ago. In designating the interlocutor for the dialogue — Mr. K. C. Pant, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission — the Government has sought to concretise its oft-declared intent to talk to any group pushing for peace in the State and, in the process, opted for parleys at a higher political level. But the problem is that, in the name of broadbasing the consultation process, the NDA regime has set up a 'dialogue counter', so to say, for people drawn from "all walks of life" to put forth their views on "peace and how it can be attained in the troubled State", and it expects non-government organisations, trade unions, social and religious groups, *et al.* to respond. The dialogue thus envisaged, which can be no more than a freewheeling exercise, regrettably suggests a casual and non-serious approach to a highly complex political problem, what with the Government declaring that the "doors" for talks are open for the All Party Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of 23 separatist outfits, as also Kashmiri groups that are "currently engaged in militancy in the State" but want peace to be restored.

In a way, the ambiguously framed scope of the 'talks' initiative is of a piece with the Vajpayee Government's track record in handling Jammu and Kashmir related issues (both on the domestic and foreign fronts) and it is characterised by ad hocism, inherent contradictions and a lack of cohesiveness. Take, for instance, the State's legitimate demand for Constitutionally-committed autonomy, projected by Dr. Farooq Abdullah's Government on the strength of an expert panel's report, or the more recent question of allowing a Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan in the post-

ceasefire context. The Centre's response dictated, as it has tended to be, by the political expediency of a particular situation, has been singularly devoid of consistency and has sent confusing signals to the point of straining credibility. In the case of the Hurriyat, particularly, the Government made an issue of the presence of pro-Pakistan Mr. Syed Ali Shah Geelani in the proposed delegation and scotched the visit by calculatedly placing it in the context of India's declared 'no-third-party-intervention' position, despite the fact that the APHC had made it clear that it never visualised any 'mediatory' role for itself. Although the Hurriyat team's visit may not yield any dramatic result, it would certainly have a tremendous demonstrative effect from India's standpoint by way of vouching for its sincerity in pursuing a political solution. Against the backdrop of the Centre's unyielding stand on the issue and the Hurriyat's high stakes in making the trip to Pakistan, the umbrella outfit's 'no' to the dialogue offer is only predictable.

As for the militant groups, including the ones that are supposed to be 'indigenous', such as the Hizbul Mujahideen, the response cannot be anything but negative as long as Pakistan is not brought into the picture. Not long ago, in December last, to be precise, while extending the 'ceasefire' on the first occasion, the Prime Minister had spoken of his Government's commitment "as the initiator of the dialogue process with Pakistan" and had promised to "initiate exploratory steps" as were considered necessary. What needs to be realised is that any dialogue initiative that seeks to address the core issues of the Kashmir problem can be meaningful only if it recognises the mutual complementarity of the internal and external tracks of the negotiating process. There is nothing in the "dialogue counter" model (as has been unfolded by the official statement yesterday and judged by the Centre's own trackrecord) to inspire one's confidence on this score.

THE HINDU

27 APR 2001

Centre has opened a Pandora's box: Lone

'Pattern of resolving conflict is being ignored'

By Dwarika Prasad Sharma
The Times of India News Service

JAMMU: People's Conference chairman and Hurriyat executive member Abdul Ghani Lone said here on Friday that the government had opened a "Pandora's box" by inviting "everybody" for talks with its representative K.C. Pant to restore peace in Jammu and Kashmir.

Speaking to *The Times of India*, he said, "The government has thrown the doors wide open so that any Tom, Dick and Harry can come and hold talks with it. Does the government want to minimise the importance of the Hurriyat Conference by keeping the National Conference and the sangh parivar in good humour?"

Mr Lone said the government this time was "deviating from the established pattern of conflict resolution, which has been followed here and is being followed globally".

Elaborating, he said there were two parties to the "conflict" which needed resolution and which had necessitated the holding of the dialogue. The Indian government had been maintaining that Kashmir was a part of India, while "the people of Kashmir have been saying that it is a disputed territory", Mr Lone said.

"The National Conference and other groups being invited have accepted the accession as final, while the Hurriyat has not. So the two parties to the conflict are the government of India and the Hurriyat and the dialogue should be between the two."

Mr Lone said this "pattern of conflict resolution" had been followed in Punjab with Longowal and in Mizoram with Laldenga and was being followed in other north-eastern states. He said the "same pattern" was followed in South Africa, Palestine, East Timor and Kosovo, and was now being followed in Sri Lanka.

Asked how the Hurriyat could claim to represent the views of Ladakh and Jammu, Mr Lone repeated that only the Hurriyat disputed the Indian stand that the accession was final. If during talks with it, he said, the need was felt that people from a "variety of regions" should be involved in the dialogue, "the decision about that could be taken at that time (by key parties —the Hurriyat and the government)."

Hurriyat passport issue cannot be wished away

By Siddharth Varadarajan
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Hurriyat's decision to spurn any dialogue with the Centre until a delegation of its choice is allowed to visit Pakistan has thrown cold water on the Vajpayee government's latest Kashmir move.

In any case, Thursday's offer of unconditional talks to the Hurriyat was a pretty timid step when measured against the bold military decision the Vajpayee government took last November in declaring a unilateral ceasefire. The Centre has not explained why it has taken four months to come up with this political initiative, especially when the situation on the ground—in terms of valley opinion—

is considerably less favourable to it today than it was in the initial phase of the ceasefire.

In fact, the unwarranted delay and the muddle over the Hurriyat leadership's demand for passports are both products of the lack of policy coherence in New Delhi, with the Prime Minister's Office and the Union home ministry at loggerheads with each other.

Though home minister L.K. Advani has dug in his heels and ruled out a Hurriyat visit to Pakistan if their delegation includes the "hardline" Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the PMO tends to take the view that such a delegation can do no harm. Sharp cleavages have opened up within the Hurriyat in recent

months, especially after Mr Geelani's description of Kashmir as a "religious" rather than "political" problem, but PMO officials feel it will be counter-productive for the government to try and force a split between him and the rest of the APHC leadership. In any case, they say, there is no way Mr Geelani's rivals can afford to go to Pakistan without him.

At the heart of this policy dissonance lies a more fundamental difference of strategy—Should the Centre merely string the Hurriyat along in order to score political points at home and abroad? Or, should it seriously engage the umbrella grouping with a view to turning the situation in Kashmir around?

The Centre's designated negotiator, K.C. Pant, is equally suited to play both roles and the Hurriyat leadership, in fact, fears he will tie them down in lengthy discussions that will lead nowhere.

2 killed, 15 hurt in J&K violence

The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: Two civilians, including an auto driver, were killed in a crossfire between militants and the security forces at Narbal on the Srinagar-Gulmarg road— 15 km from here late on Thursday evening. Elsewhere, 15 civilians were injured when militants lobbed a handgrenade in Bandipura in north Kashmir on Friday.

The first incident took place when an autorickshaw was caught in the crossfire between militants and the security forces near Gagarpora in Narbal on the national highway on Thursday.

In the other incident, militants hurled a handgrenade at a bus stand in Bandipura in north Kashmir on Friday, injuring 15 civilians, the police said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 APR 2001

Centre ready to talk peace with all J&K groups

H BULA DEVI & SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 5. — The Centre today announced that the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman, Mr KC Pant, would be the chief interlocutor between the government and Kashmiri groups, including those outside the state.

Talks are expected to begin in a couple of weeks, sources said. Apart from inviting the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, the announcement gave an indirect message to organisations like Hizbul Mujahideen to come to the negotiating table. Though Mr LK Advani had ruled out talks with the Hizbul, the government said today, "doors are not closed for Kashmiri organisations which are currently engaged in militancy but are desirous of peace."

The government is ready for talks with expatriate Kashmiri elements who took up guns but now want peace. Talks are open to London-based Kashmiri organisations, here about three months' ago on Track II diplomacy. Besides the state government, political parties, NGOs, trade unions, social and religious bodies from all regions of J&K will be involved.

Reacting to the announcement, APHC chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Bhatt, told The

BILL CLINTON

AHMEDABAD, April 5. — Mr Bill Clinton today ruled out playing a peacemaker between India and Pakistan but hoped the two neighbours would make peace. "I have no official capacity. I'm just a citizen. I wish they would make peace," he told journalists when asked if he would broker talks between the two countries. — PTI

■ More reports on page 8

Statesman from Srinagar that the Kashmir issue couldn't be resolved unless Pakistan was involved in the talks.

He said the government was committed to send them to Pakistan. "Now if the government chooses to breach its commitment, we cannot help it."

(Mr Pervez Musharraf told a private channel that Indo-Pak relations won't improve without addressing the Kashmir issue and dismissed as a "hoax" New Delhi's ceasefire, adds PTI.)

That Mr Pant was chosen (not Mr George Fernandes and BG Verghese) showed that an "acceptable" person had been given the charge. The choice has given a political face to 'Mission Kashmir'. A Hurriyat heavy-weight had proposed that a political person from the govern-

ment and not a bureaucrat should be the negotiator.

The government's announcement has given a faint warning to the Hurriyat which has all along been insisting on unconditional talks and pressing for a visit to Pakistan before talks. "Now that the government has agreed to hold talks in the interest of early restoration of peace, it is for the APHC to consider whether it won't be inconsistent for them to set pre-conditions for the dialogue."

Nomination of a chief negotiator cannot help achieve a breakthrough without determination, wisdom and pragmatism, Mr Bhatt said.

Mr Pant's selection marks a tactical shift in the Centre's response to Kashmir. It is being viewed as the end of an era when Mr Brajesh Mishra, principal secretary to the Prime Minister, dominated policy decisions through RAW and other wings.

Mr Pant enjoys the confidence of Mr AB Vajpayee and is close to Mr Advani, too. Choice of Mr Pant indicates the return of the home ministry's control over Kashmir. Mr Advani said a solution could be found if all groups were taken into confidence.

In Bangalore, Mr Vajpayee said tonight that the ceasefire in J&K had evoked a partial response and firing on the border had stopped, adds PTI.

SW
HIF
A change of guard

SO IT is official now. Calcutta University (CU) has slipped so low in the ladder of achievement that it might as well not be there at all. What was once the glory of not just Bengal but also the rest of India has failed to meet the criteria set by the University Grants Commission (UGC) for being called a centre of excellence. The decline has been taking place for years now. Politicisation of appointments, a transfer policy that often sees good teachers sent to bad colleges and bad teachers to good colleges, decrepit departments that lack even the most basic infrastructure and uncertainty about the publication of results have been plaguing the university over the years. Some of the colleges under the umbrella of CU notwithstanding (Presidency College, for instance, continues to be ranked among the top three colleges in the country in an annual poll by a weekly magazine), the university as a whole has simply failed to keep pace with the times.

For instance, the playwright John Osborne is the most modern of modern writers that one reads in the CU undergraduate syllabus for English Literature. Osborne's most memorable play, *Look Back In Anger*, premiered in London as far back as 1956. In comparison, in the English Literature syl-

labus at the undergraduate level at Jadavpur University (JU), the most modern writer one reads is the poet Seamus Heaney, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature as recently as 1995. It's not hard to see why CU does not come up to scratch. The university has failed to take into account the dynamics of a changing education system.

It is not entirely bad news, though. While CU has slipped, at least some institute in Kolkata is doing a great job. The UGC has announced that JU can now be counted among the five best universities in the country (the others are Jawaharlal Nehru University, Pune University, Madras University and Hyderabad University) and has been accorded the status of a "university with potential for excellence". Unlike its older, once-more-august neighbour, JU has fit itself into the framework of a fast-paced, fast-changing system. A decent infrastructure, autonomy in its functioning, good teachers (many of whom have joined JU after being disillusioned with CU) and interaction with other institutes have all combined to give JU a cutting edge in terms of education in the state. The baton of being the repository of talent in education has passed on from CU to JU. It was time for a change of guard.

Centre invites Hurriyat for talks without pre-conditions

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: In the first formal intimation of its desire for a political dialogue with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), the Vajpayee government on Thursday invited the Kashmiri militant group and others "desirous of peace" to talks without any pre-conditions.

An official statement announcing the government's decision said, "All sections of the peace-loving people of the state, including those who are currently outside it, should come forward and participate in discussions with the aim of attaining peace in Kashmir."

In the announcement made here through its Press Information Bureau, the Centre said that the dialogue offer, which would be conducted by chairman of the planning commission K.C. Pant, was unconditional

and that the Hurriyat should respond positively. "The APHC has all along taken the position that talks should be unconditional. Now that the government has agreed to hold talks in the interest of early restoration of peace, it is for the APHC to consider whether it would be inconsistent for them to set pre-conditions for the dia-

logue. The doors are open for them to join in the talks. The doors are also not closed for Kashmiri organisations which are currently engaged in militancy in the state, but are desirous of peace," the statement said.

Responding to the government's offer, Hurriyat executive member Abdul Ghani Lone said that they had not been informed that Mr Pant would be holding talks with various groups in the state.

However, he added, if steps were taken in that direction, "We will give a positive response."

Mr Lone said the Centre had "wasted" four months since the declaration of the unilateral ceasefire when "they should have come forward in a bigger way. Why was Mr Pant not nominated earlier for a dialogue?" he asked.

Meanwhile, Mr Pant's brief will be to talk not just to the Hurriyat and other groups opposed to Indian rule, but to "representatives of all walks of life from among the people of J&K".

The official announcement said, "More specifically, it is expected that besides the J&K government, all political parties, social and religious bodies from all regions of the state will participate."



THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 APR 2001

Police disallows two Mohurram processions in J&K

The Times of India News Service

eruption of militancy in 1989.

SRINAGAR: Barring a few incidents of clashes with the police in the Civil Lines area here, Ashoora processions were taken out in many Shia-dominated areas and concluded peacefully in different Imambadas on Thursday, the 10th day of Mohurram. The authorities, however, disallowed two Ashoora processions to be taken out here in view of the prevailing law and order situation. The authorities disallow the Shias to take out the Moharrum procession from the Guru Bazar and Abi Guzar areas ever since the

Divisional commissioner Khurshid Ganaie dismissed as baseless rumours that a blanket ban had been imposed on the taking out of the traditional processions in Kashmir. The police had sealed the areas falling in the Abi Guzar and Guru Bazar here on Thursday to prevent the people to take out the procession. Vice-president of Anjuman-e-Shari-i-Shian and Hurriyat leader Aga Syed Mehdi had on Tuesday threatened that the procession would be taken out.

Despite the restrictions imposed in Abi Guzar

near the Press Enclave here, some Shia youth appeared on Maulana Azad road in the morning to take out the procession, but timely intervention by the police saved the situation from taking a violent turn, an official spokesman said.

The police had on Tuesday resorted to a mild cane charge in Lal Chowk here when Hurriyat leaders Molvi Abbas Ansari and Javid Ahmad Mir of the JKLF with their associates tried to take out an Ashoora procession. Both the leaders were released in the evening after being kept in police custody for a few hours.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 APR 2001

Police teargas Muharram procession in Kashmir

Two Hurriyat leaders arrested

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, April 3

THE POLICE used force to disperse a Muharram procession today and took senior Hurriyat Conference leaders, Moulana Abbas Ansari and Javaid Ahmad Mir, along with 40 other persons, into custody.

Sources said Shia leader and Hurriyat executive member Ansari and JKLF vice-chairman Javaid Mir tried to take out a Muharram procession at Maulana Azad Road in civil lines area at 1.30 pm, in violation of a ban on such processions in the State capital.

Several hundred others joined them and as the procession marched towards Budshah chowk, the police stopped them. As the followers resisted, the police resorted to lathi-charge and fired tear gas shells.

Another Shia leader and chief of Nifaz-e-Shariat, Nisar Ahmad was also taken into custody, while leading a separate procession near S P College. Police arrested seven more Shia devotees at Dalgate.

The ritual Muharram processions taken out by Shia population, to commemorate the death of Prophet Mohammad's grandson, Imam Hussain in the 7th century AD, have come under a blanket ban in Srinagar since militancy erupted in the valley in 1989.

In other parts of the valley, however, the Ashoora processions remain undisturbed. Shia leaders have declared to defy the ban this year. Agha Syed Mohammad Has-

san, the vice president of the supreme Shia body Unjiman-e-Shar-e-Shain and a senior Hurriyat leader blasted the State Government for imposing ban on Muharram processions in the city.

In a press conference, he described it as "Government interference in religious rights".

He said they would defy the ban against all odds on Thursday, the 10th day of Muharram and the "devotees of Imam Hussain will take out the Ashoora procession". He said the procession would, as per tradition, originate from Abi Guzre in the morning and end at Ali Park in Zadibal in the evening.

The authorities have made elaborated security arrangements to enforce the ban. They contend that militants could disturb the procession to put blame on the Government.

Probe ordered

SOPORE ADDITIONAL SP Showkat Ahmad Malik has been asked to probe the police firing on a Muharram procession in Badgam district where seven people were injured on Monday. IG Ashok Bhan has asked Malik to submit his report at the earliest. Two persons sustained bullet injuries while five were injured in the stampede, which broke out when police fired on a Muharram procession in Badgam district.

HTC, Srinagar



A person performs 'Mattam' — walking on coals — at village Khanda in Jammu and Kashmir, on Tuesday.

Lashkar kills 3 securitymen

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, April 3

The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, whose Kashmir chief, Salahuddin, was gunned down by security forces last week, hit back today by attacking security forces at Bandipora and Rafiabad, killing at least three personnel, besides injuring half a dozen others.

Sources said Lashkar cadres ambushed a BSF party at Daramhama on Gurez-Bandipora road in North Kashmir at 8.00 am. A Border Security Force jawan, Prem Singh, died in the half-hour gunbattle and another paramilitary personnel, Ram Kumar was injured. Sources said that the militants managed to escape without suffering any casualty.

Half an hour later, Lashkar militants struck again in Rafiabad belt of Baramullah district, killing two army men and injuring four others.

Sources said the militants triggered off an improvised explosive device (IED) at Shaikhpora-Chonam road in Dangwach area of Rafiabad, when an army patrol of 28 Rashtriya Rifles was on the move.

The militants also fired on the patrolling army men with automatic weapons.

Official sources said that one Army personnel was killed and five other jawans injured in the incident. Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, however, claimed that 10 Army personnel were killed in the incident.

A caller identifying himself as spokesperson of the outfit claimed that two army vehicles were also destroyed in the incident.

This is the first confrontation between security forces and Lashkar cadres after security forces shot dead Salahuddin. A Lashkar spokesman said the cadres of his outfit would carry *Fidayeen* (suicide) attacks on Army patrols and convoys.

The 7th JAK LI killed three militants, described as local cadres of Moulana Aazhar Masood's Jaish-e-Mohammad, at Gogal Dara village in Tangmarg belt. Sources said that on a tip off, an army section sealed off the village and launched massive search operation. As the search party zeroed in on the militants' hideout, they came under heavy fire. The army personnel retaliated and killed three militants.

Security forces also shot dead a foreign militant, believed to be a Lashkar cadre, at Khan Sahab in Budgam district.

Militants made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of additional superintendent of police, Shoukat Malik, at Haigam late on Monday night, at the scene of the February 15 army shootout.

Police sources said the militants fired upon his vehicle when he was on way to Baramullah. Though he escaped the attack, an escort vehicle came in the line of the militants' fire, killing the driver instantly besides injuring four other personnel.

Centre's no to Hizb talks

HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi/Srinagar April 3

THE CENTRE today ruled out talks with pro-Pakistan militant outfit Hizbul Mujahideen and entrusted K. C. Pant with the task of initiating a dialogue with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

"We will hold talks with all parties in Jammu, Ladakh and the Kashmir Valley soon," Home Minister L. K. Advani said. Planning Commission Deputy Chairman K. C. Pant will be the Government's representative in the talks. Asked whether there was any possibility of talks with Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen, Advani answered in the negative. How soon would talks with the Kashmiri groups start? The modalities are being worked out, Advani said.

Pant, who has decades of administrative and political experience, has served as defence

minister and minister of state for home in the Congress regime.

Advani has said the talks could possibly begin in May with Kashmiri groups in India but ruled out a dialogue with Pakistan now. "We have already decided who will hold talks and how to proceed with it. But peace talks will be with groups in India," he told on BBC's *Hardtalk India* programme. "We do not propose at the moment to hold talks with Pakistan," he said. "I will certainly be monitoring the course of the talks as home minister. But the actual talks may be conducted others."

He said that the Government was determined to proceed with the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir. "The Government will pursue the peace process in Kashmir."

Government had extended in February the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by three months till

May-end, with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee expressing the Centre's readiness to initiate talks with various militant groups which abjure violence.

"We will not let the peace process be derailed, diluted or misused," Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha on February 22 while announcing the third extension of the ceasefire.

Lashkar attacks BSF party
The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, whose Kashmir chief, Salahuddin, was gunned down by security forces last week, hit back on Tuesday by attacking security forces at Bandipora and Rafiabad, killing at least three personnel, besides injuring half a dozen others.

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sonnel, Ram Kumar was injured. Sources said that the militants managed to escape without suffering any casualty.

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Two Hurriyat leaders arrested
Two senior Hurriyat leaders, meanwhile, were arrested in Srinagar today, for trying to organise a Muharram procession in the city, in violation of a ban.

Moulana Abbas Ansari and Javaid Ahmad Mir were taken into custody, along with 40 others.

Related reports on Page 9

Kashmiri leaders discuss steps to resolve crisis

HD-12

GENEVA, APRIL 3. Representatives of various political outfits in Jammu and Kashmir, including the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) met here informally, for the first time, to discuss the scenario in the State.

Though the meeting was organised to honour the London-based Kashmiri leader, Syed Nazir Gilani, for his research on Human Rights, it enabled a cross-section of participants to put forth suggestions for finding a solution to the Kashmir problem.

Organised by Sardar Shoukat Kashmiri of the United Kashmir Peoples National Party (UKPNP), the meeting was attended by Mr. G.M. Sati and Mr. Tahir Masood Mir of the APHC, Mr. Riyaz Punjabi, Chairman of the Autonomy Committee, Mr. Ashok Bhan, Kashmiri Pandit leader and lawyer, and several others.

Mohammed Mumtaz Khan, a Human Rights activist of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), now settled in Canada, also took part in the deliberations, which covered issues such as Human Rights violation.

Mr. Shoukat, now living in exile here, stressed the need for peaceful resolution of the problem, saying people from both parts of Jammu and Kashmir should meet to make valuable contributions for the promotion of peace. Supporting his views, Mr. Bhan said that violence would result in death and destruction. He also mentioned the problems of Kashmiri pandits, who had been forced to migrate.

However, Mr. Safi said that the U.N. Security Council resolutions could form the basis for the settlement of the issue. He also referred to Human Rights violation by security forces, a view endorsed by Mr. Masood. They said that the Indian Government was not serious in initiating talks with the Hurriyat.

Mr. Punjabi said that in the present context, it was not practical to implement the Security Council's resolutions. Mr. Gilani said that life should be conserved and everyone should contribute to the peace process.

Mr. Mumtaz Khan said that the geographical unity of Jammu and Kashmir should be maintained as

envisaged in Nationality Act of 1927. He also made mention of the Pakistani repression in Gilgit and Baluchistan. — UNI

Four killed in ambush

SRINAGAR, APRIL 3. In stepped up attacks on security personnel in the Kashmir valley, militants ambushed them at three places, including a vehicle of a senior police officer, killing four of them and injuring 10 others since Monday night.

Armed militants fired on police vehicles near Hygam on Srinagar-Baramulla NH last night when Additional SP, Sopore, Mr. Showkata Ahmad Malik, probing police firing on a Muharram procession at Magam in Badgam district, was returning to Sopore, an official spokesman said today.

While the driver of Mr. Malik's escort vehicle was killed on-the-spot, his four guards were seriously injured. Mr. Malik, however, escaped unhurt.

An army personnel was killed and five others injured when militants fired on their vehicles at Chatoosa-Watergam road in Baramulla district this morning, a Defence spokesman said.

However, a Lashkar-e-Taiba spokesman, claiming responsibility for the ambush, said ten security personnel were killed when militants detonated a blast.

In another ambush in Bandipora area of Baramulla, a BSF personnel was killed and a constable injured.

Elsewhere in the Kashmir valley, four militants and a counter-insurgent were killed during the period. Three militants of Jaish-E-Mohammad outfit were killed in an encounter with army personnel who, on a tip off, raided their hideout in Gogaldara in Baramulla district.

One foreign mercenary was killed and a special police officer injured in another exchange of fire between militants and a joint police team in Badgam district.

One counter-insurgent was shot dead by militants inside his shop at Bogulpora Chura in Baramulla district, he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

4 APR 2001

No J&K talks without Pak, say militants H-7

Muzaffarabad, April 2

PAKISTAN-BASED MILITANT groups today rejected India's plan to open talks with separatist leaders, saying that any dialogue without Pakistan to seek a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue would be futile.

"We have categorically told New Delhi that only three-way talks could help find a solution to this problem," said Salim Hashmi, spokesman for Kashmir's largest guerrilla group, the Hizbul Mujahideen. Hashmi dismissed Home Minister L.K. Advani's offer of dialogue to Kashmiri leaders as an attempt to hoodwink the international community.

Speaking on BBC's *Hardtalk India* programme, Advani had said India would hold talks with separatist leaders "perhaps as early as May". He ruled out talks with Pakistan, saying the Government would only speak to Kashmiri groups in India.

"Advani's announcement is nothing but farce," Hashmi said. The Hizbul spokesman said no lasting solution could be reached by ignoring Islamabad.

Another Kashmiri outfit, Harkatul Mujahideen, said India

was trying to mislead the world community by making "sham" announcements.

"India is not serious about a peaceful resolution to Kashmir," Harkat spokesman Amiruddin Mughal said. He pointed to the

way Hurriyat leaders who had wanted to visit Pakistan for talks were denied passports. "Any talks in which Islamabad and Mujah-ideen groups do not participate are a waste of time."

AFP

Pant may be Centre's man for talks

THE DELICATE task of holding discussion with Kashmiri groups next month is likely to be entrusted to K C Pant, currently Deputy Chairman Planning Commission, who has decades of administration and political experience behind him.

The move is likely to come soon as the Centre is proposing to hold the peace talks possibly in May. "We have already decided who will hold talks. But the talks would be with groups in India," Home Minister L K Advani said. He made it clear that, "we do not propose at the moment to hold talks with Pakistan."

It is likely that Pant will have a formal platform to conduct these discussions, sources said. One view here is that he would be appointed as a one-man commission for holding the talks with Kashmiri groups, they said adding, however, that the details were not yet clear. Pant's brief is also likely to include assessing the autonomy demand raised by the National Conference for which even the State Assembly has passed a resolution at the behest of the ruling NC.

Sources said, Pant's name had been conveyed to the Hurriyat leaders through non-government intermediaries. Despite the Hurriyat Conference, a conglomerate of 23 secessionist Kashmiri groups, rejecting any talks with the Centre prior to the proposed Pakistan visit of its delegation, the government has gone ahead with the move. A Hurriyat spokesman said, Pant's appointment, "would not influence the Hurriyat's policy, nor would it bring any change in its stand as the Centre has done nothing to ease the prevailing stalemate."

PTI, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

3 APR 2001

Lashkar chief Salahuddin is gunned^{29/3} down in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: In a major success in anti-militancy operations, Jammu and Kashmir police on Wednesday gunned down Salahuddin, the chief commander of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba outfit operating in the Kashmir valley. In recent weeks, Salahuddin had masterminded a series of suicidal attacks on the security personnel.

Salahuddin, who hailed from Lahore and was the most wanted militant, was killed in a retaliatory fire by the special operations group (SOG) of police who were attacked by him at Pohru near Nowgam in Badgam district of central Kashmir on Wednesday evening, inspector-general of police A.K. Bhan said.

A pistol and a wireless set were recovered from the possession of Salahuddin.

Mr Bhan said the deceased was the mastermind behind the recent suicidal actions of the outfit in the Valley. Lashkar-e-Toiba carried out six major strikes on the security camps and heavily-guarded installations in the Valley since January 16, when its six-member suicidal squad made an abortive attempt to storm the high-security Srinagar airport.

The latest suicidal attack carried out by the outfit was on a CRPF camp at Wazirbagh in Srinagar on March 26 which left four security personnel and two militants dead.

The militant was operating in the Valley with pseudo names of Nadim, Abdul Rehman, Tariq Mehmood and Obaida and was carrying a fake identity card in the name of Shabir Ahmad, the IG said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 MAR 2001

Farooq backs Sena's call to end ceasefire in J&K

By Ambarish Mishra
The Times of India News Service

MUMBAI: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah has endorsed the Shiv Sena's demand that the Centre should call off the unilateral ceasefire in Kashmir.

During talks with Sena leader Raj Thackeray in Mumbai on Sunday, Dr Abdullah upheld the saffron party's objection to the extended ceasefire.

Sena chief Bal Thackeray has been stridently critical of the Centre's Ramzan gesture last year, a move initiated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to buy peace with the terrorist outfits in J&K.

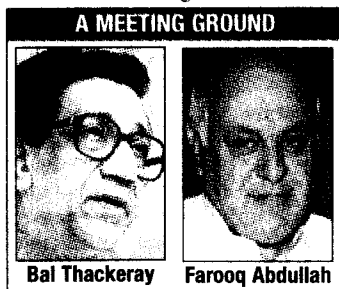
If Mr Bal Thackeray did not go for the jugular on the issue, it was because of his oft-stated policy that the Sena should not precipitate a crisis for the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government.

"Dr Abdullah was of the opinion that as a measure to contain cross-border terrorism, the ceasefire had outlived its purpose. He shared the Sena's view that the NDA government should put an end to it," Mr Raj Thackeray told this newspaper after a 90-minute dinner conclave with the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister.

Dr Abdullah is believed to have discussed the issue

with the Sena chief over the telephone.

Dr Abdullah is reported to have told Mr Thackeray that in the initial phase, the ceasefire had appeared to be a feasible move which had given a boost to



the process of establishing peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, the Indian armed forces had also needed some breathing space.

However, during the last few months, more and more infiltrators had been sneaking into the

state, thanks to the ceasefire, Dr Abdullah said.

Emerging from his talks with Mr Raj Thackeray, Dr Abdullah said that the Centre should now assume a "pro-active stance" vis-a-vis cross-border terrorism. However, he refused to elaborate further on the issue.

The Abdullah-Raj Thackeray meeting, held close on the heels of the 'armsgate' scandal, is not without significance as the Sena and Dr Abdullah's National Conference are constituent partners in the BJP-led NDA alliance at the Centre. The two parties have reiterated their support to the Vajpayee government in the wake of the defence deals scandal.

Union minister for heavy industries and Sena leader Manohar Joshi and Dr Abdullah spoke at the NDA's Sunday rally in New Delhi and extended the unstinted support of their parties to the Prime Minister.

Mr Raj Thackeray refused to comment on whether the Sena was soliciting support from other NDA allies in a bid to exert pressure on the BJP to adopt a tough stance on a number of national issues.

"During his next visit to Mumbai, Dr Abdullah will call on Balasaheb," Mr Raj Thackeray said.

Three CRPF men killed in Lashkar attack on camp

The Times of India News Service
SRINAGAR: At least three Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) men were killed and one was critically injured when three *fidayeen* (death squad) militants of the Lashkar-e-Taiba outfit attacked a CRPF camp housed in a hotel here at about 5.30 p.m. on Monday. One militant was also killed during the gun battle. The encounter was going on when last reports came in.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 MAR 2001

40-14
2/13

'Kashmir issue cannot be resolved at gunpoint'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 20. The Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr. Vijay K. Nambiar, has said the Kashmir issue could neither be resolved at gunpoint nor could India be forced to resolve the issue.

Addressing a gathering at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Nambiar said India could not be expected to present Kashmir to Pakistan on a platter. The issue could be resolved only through constant talks, keeping in view all ground realities.

Mr. Nambiar, who served as India's Ambassador to China prior to his current assignment, said the relations between India and China over the years had improved despite differences over a number of issues.

India and Pakistan would have to take steps to benefit from the relaxations to improve bilateral trade. The visa services of the Indian High Commission were being improved and the proposal to start sending visas through courier service was also being considered.

He said though India wanted to reopen the con-

sulate in Karachi, it was not possible unless Pakistan agreed to it. However, the proposal to start a camp office was under consideration.

Mr. Nambiar, currently on a tour to Karachi, told another gathering of businesspersons on Sunday, that the Indian Government had made a formal request to the Pakistan Foreign Office to allow it to operate a visa camp office in Karachi.

The Indian Consulate in Karachi was closed down in 1995, after a row between India and Pakistan over the alleged role played by members of the Indian Consulate in 'instigating' trouble in Karachi city. The decision had led to the closure of the Mumbai Consulate of the Pakistan Government.

There have been several representations from the people of Karachi for the re-opening of the Consulate as nearly 90 per cent of the applicants for Indian visas were from Sindh.

The Governments of Pakistan and India seemed to agree in principle on the need to re-open the Consulate offices but insistence on the part of Pakistan that it be allowed to operate from the Jinnah House stalled progress on the issue.

THE HINDU

21 MAR 2001

A ceasefire that is laced with fear and mistrust is not going to bring peace in Kashmir

Jitter bugs

BY A.G. NOORANI

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee's announcement on November 19 that the security forces would not "initiate combat operations against militants" in Kashmir won high acclaim and is invested with India's prestige. But the acclaim rests on expectations which Russia's statement on February 26 laid bare. India "has, once again, displayed its willingness to search for political means of settling the conflict and enter into negotiations".

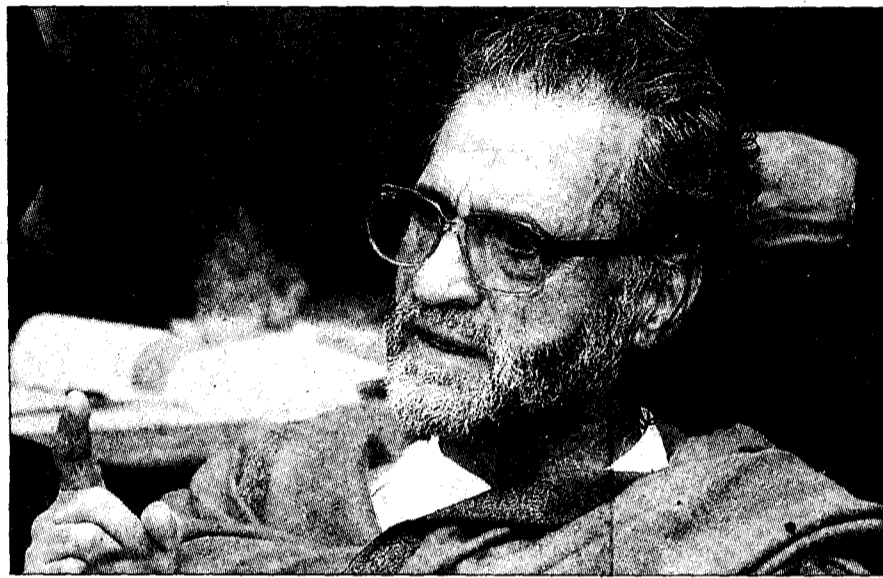
Four months are gone but no political moves have been made to sustain the process. A ceasefire delinked from parleys is a military solution which is inherently fragile. The PM's announcement envisaged "a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue". His Kumarakom *Musings* were detailed: "India is willing and ready to seek a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem. Towards this end, we are prepared to re-commence talks with Pakistan at any level, including the highest level, provided Islamabad gives sufficient proof of its preparedness to create a conducive atmosphere for a meaningful dialogue."

Specifically, it must "rein in terrorist organisations based on its soil". Internally, "the government will soon initiate talks with various representative groups in the state". That was two-and-a-half months ago. Missing is a considered route map which the government will follow to reach the goal.

The political underpinning has received less attention despite a strong consensus among the army brass that "ultimately there has to be a political solution to the problem", as the COAS, General V.P. Malik, said on the eve of his retirement. Political initiatives were necessary "to counter the alienation of the local population". His successor General S. Padmanabhan stated emphatically that "in the history of mankind no insurgency has been solved by any army". The retiring GOC Northern Command, Lt. Gen. H.M. Khanna, said pointedly on January 15: "The political leaders should now start the process towards a political solution during the ceasefire."

A ceasefire is unilaterally declared in one of two situations. Victors aim to secure acceptance of the status quo by marginal political concessions. The vanquished surrender to get a face-saving deal. India is in an ambiguous situation. Militarily, it has acquired overwhelming ascendancy, but pacification remains elusive.

Politically, the situation in Kashmir is far worse than it was before the outbreak of militancy. The Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire on July 24 rested on a tacit



LONE RANGER: Hurriyat member Abdul Ghani Lone

admission that the gun had failed. It would, however, be unrealistic for India to think that it can impose a political solution though every factor is in its favour bar the crucial one of alienation of the people.

A ceasefire buttresses the status quo and foils the designs of its revisionists, the militants. Not one country in the world supports a plebiscite or the state's independence. Even Pakistan's formulation, as that of the Hurriyat, is any settlement acceptable to all the three sides — India, Pakistan and the people of the state. In short, substantive negotiations. India's vital, non-negotiable interest — the state's membership of the Union — is not in question. What is in question is India's readiness to enter into substantive negotiations which address the aspirations and interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and to offer to its neighbour concessions real enough to make an accord based on Kashmir's membership of the Union acceptable.

The worst way to set about this is by talking of the end product rather than the process, imposing pre-conditions and airing wild fears. Instead, India must initiate with deliberate speed a pattern of parleys at various levels which strengthens the peace process and makes it irreversible. The calculus between peace and parleys is upset if fundamentalist positions are adopted.

For all the things the Hizb says for the record, it sets great store by the PM's initiative. While its chief, Syed Salahuddin,

told the Srinagar Urdu weekly *Chattan* that the movement is at a "delicate and decisive state", his spokesman, Mujahid Masood, wrote in January: "None can doubt the fact that Kashmir's freedom movement has now entered a negotiating phase which will be a decisive one." These are men who only last July offered to give up the gun.

With so much going in its favour, New Delhi presents a sad spectacle of fear and distrust, instead of assurance and earnest. Union Home Minister L.K. Advani's charge that the Hurriyat has "self assumed" a role of mediator between India and Pakistan was instantly denied by two of its leaders, Maulvi Umar Farooq and Yasin Malik. The Hurriyat's oft-stated purpose is "only to ensure that armed groups on the other side of the border also accepted the ceasefire offer and work towards peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue".

The Hurriyat has been attacked by the Hizb for scouting its ceasefire offer last July and welcoming Vajpayee's. A fine opportunity for imparting education to all concerned was missed by aborting the Hurriyat team's visit to Pakistan in January. Obviously, nothing was learnt from Abdul Ghani Lone's visit there in November or the home truths which his companion, *Chattan's* editor Taher Mohiuddin, told people there.

Here are some 'Lone formulations' as mentioned in *Chattan's* issue of January 29: no country (read, Pakistan), individual or organisation can set the agenda;

foreign militants have no right to frame policy; the political and diplomatic fronts are more important; and Kashmir is a political, not a religious, issue. The chief of PoK's Jamaat, Abdur Rashid Turabi, also regards it as a political issue to which a political solution must be devised. In Lone's views, people in both parts of the state are oppressed. But while there is freedom of protest here, there is none in PoK.

The editor's diary of a 20-day tour is instructive. *Chattan* has been, on varied counts, consistently critical of India, of Pakistan, the Hurriyat and the Hizb. Asked by PoK journalists about the state of the press in Srinagar, he told them that while it faces difficulties and the authorities discriminate in favour of its supporters, the Indian government does not direct them what to report and they are free to visit scenes of clashes or fires, unlike the press in PoK.

Asked about the present mood of the people, he said that while it was 90 per cent pro-Pakistani before the movement began, ever since Pakistan got involved and Kashmiris began 'dealings' (*lein dein*) with it, the situation has changed. Now money has assumed importance. He cited names of ranking Kashmiri leaders who got "disillusioned" with Pakistan.

If New Delhi had deliberated calmly, it would have permitted the Hurriyat's five-member team to go. If it were cynical, it would have insisted that Syed Ali Shah Geelani be taken along. Last July, he was able to get Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat elected chairman by four votes to three. By January 2, his strength fell to two — Sheikh Abdul Aziz and himself. The rest — Lone, Yasin Malik, Abbas Ansari, Maulvi Farooq and Ghani Bhat — voted to authorise the chairman to nominate the team. He nominated Messrs Geelani, Abdul Aziz, Lone, Farooq and Ansari.

Had it gone, the team would have taught and learnt a lot to every one's gain. The United Jihad Council had set up its five-member team to talk to them. The Hizb asked (January 1) the Hurriyat to make its agenda clear, adding it would not be accepted either as mediator or as advocate for the PM's initiative. The chief of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Hafiz Saeed, and of the Al-Umar Mujahideen, Mush-taq Ahmed Zargar, cast doubt on the mission. The latter called them (January 17) agents of RAW.

As against this, public opinion in Pakistan's elite has veered against the *jehadis*. *Dawn*, for instance, repeatedly asked the militants to accept the PM's ceasefire offer (December 20 and January 25).

To be concluded

Enough squabbling

HW-8
22/3

The bogey of tripartite talks must be abandoned if the Kashmir imbroglio is to be cleared. India must also do away with the 'Kashmir or nothing' approach

NONE OTHER than General Pervez Musharraf declared on February 7: "It (Kashmir) is not an Islamic movement. It is a movement of local people." Four days later, Aasiya Andrabi, chief of the Dukhtar-e-Mikeet, called him an infidel.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani was attacked by the Harkat-ul Mujahideen for 'interfering' in the militants' affairs by his offer of a ceasefire if India accepted that Kashmir was disputed territory. Since Kargil, Geelani has been out on a limb. Recent statements that the movement is religious in nature and the *jehadis* are welcome put him in a minority within the Jamaat, the Hurriyat and Pakistan as well.

Exposure to opinion there — not least to moderate leaders in PoK like Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan — will have a sobering effect. If the Pakistan establishment plays Geelani up for a disruptive role, it will stand exposed.

Meanwhile, an open-ended, continuous and serious consultative process should begin here. All the groups, in all the regions, should be consulted separately, not around the same table. Their agendas differ. Kashmir's assembly was elected in 1996 with a six-year term, thanks to a provision in the 42nd amendment it replicated and did not repeal. At some stage, Hurriyat leaders will have to contest the elections to demonstrate their representative credentials.

The bogey of tripartite talks must be abandoned. The sensible course to be taken was formulated by Syed Salahuddin in an Indian journal recently: "Let India and Pakistan start. They can involve Kashmiris later. Alternatively, Kashmiris and Delhi can start the dialogue... There must be an assurance that the three will meet during the decisive phase of the dialogue."

Obviously, no solution can last unless it is acceptable to the people of the state as well as to the governments of India and Pakistan. Politically, the people are the masters. Diplomatically, the governments are the main parties. India insists that 'cross-border terrorism' cease before talks are resumed.

Two bodies were named in the BJP executive's resolution and by Home Secretary Kamal Pandey — the Lashkar and the Jaish-e-Mohammadi (and implicitly its parent outfit, the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen). Their agenda is focused on Islamabad. Srinagar is a side-show.

E.N. Rammohan, the former DG of the BSE, stated last year that Pakistan has "not much control" over them.

Pakistan does not make a warlike effort to crush the *jehadis* for two reasons: the domestic consequences and lack of incentive. Zia-ul-Haq mounted the covert operation to make Kashmir a live issue. His successors, having realised the cost, would wind it up provided they get the face-saver of negotiations. When Vajpayee offered that, they were already on the road to Kargil.

The Lahore Declaration concealed a secret success. Prime Ministers Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif agreed not to reiterate "stated positions" — the UN resolutions or Kashmir's non-negotiable status — and appointed representatives as a back channel to explore the in-between ground on which an accord can be built. R.K. Mishra listened intently; Niaz A. Naik talked endlessly, possessed by old fantasies.

On March 31, 1999 Vajpayee, barely concealing his disappointment, asked Naik for new formulae. Significantly, the PM's 'musings'

declare: "In our search for a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem, both in its external and internal dimensions, *we shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past*. Rather, we shall be bold and innovative designers of a future architecture of peace and prosperity for the entire South Asian region." The PM told Mr Naik he sought a final settlement, not an interim one.

The present deadlock must be resolved speedily if the peace process is not to collapse. A new route map is required. There was no sense in asking foreign secretaries to talk Kashmir, which the Islamabad Declaration of June 23, 1997 enjoined. As Jawaharlal Nehru wrote to the cabinet secretary in 1953: "Nothing substantial can come out of a discussion of the Kashmir issue on official level. The only possibility is noting down various lines of approach without commitment."

The official level talks in November 1998 revealed that the Islamabad formula of working groups to discuss eight issues "in an integrated manner" has failed. The baby, however, need not be thrown away with the bathwater. Besides Kashmir, three other issues cry for a political solution: Siachen, Wular Lake and Sir Creek. They are limited in scope but their resolution will mark a significant change. These issues have been discussed threadbare for over a decade. On Siachen and Wular Lake, agreements were also reached. Details on each were filled.

However, in 1998, former Defence Minister George Fernandes declared that "India needs to hold on to Siachen both for strategic reasons and wider security in the region". This put paid to the agreed basis of mutual withdrawals. In January 1994, Pakistan backed out of its 1992 proposal and made the accord conditional on a Kashmir settlement.

On the Wular Lake, a written agreement was drawn up. Its text was set out in India's non-paper to Pakistan on January 18, 1994. In 1998, Pakistan tried to reopen the issue. It insists on arbitration on the Sir Creek boundary dispute.

India should propose resumption of a dialogue, but not immediately in the 1997 format. It is necessary to 'clear the air'. This must be first done politically, by arriving at a set of tacit understandings.

India must be ready and willing to begin substantive 'meaningful' talks on Kashmir. Their progress will depend on Pakistan's efforts to rein in the *jehadis*. India must abandon the 'Kashmir or nothing' approach.

Both sides must carry out the near decade-old accords on Siachen and Wular Lake and grapple with Kashmir. The nuclear issue, discussed hitherto through Strobe Talbott, will be discussed directly. Officials will deal with the rest. Why not invite Pakistan's Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar in order to thrash out the procedure and these basics?

Meanwhile, parleys with Kashmiri groups can proceed. New Delhi must, on its part, take drastic steps to end custodial deaths and ask Srinagar to rein in the Special Operations Group.

The Kumarakom 'musings' envisaged "talks with Pakistan at any level, including the highest". It would be unwise to wait till the foreign secretaries meet in May. The best course, therefore, is to invite Abdul Sattar before the peace process loses steam in order to prepare for a summit. //



The business of Kashmir

The alternatives to military force

Lt Gen (Dr) B.S. Malik argues why the ceasefire could be the first step towards peace in the Valley

It is interesting to see, that we all were very comfortable with "Fire" but ceasing fire or the "Ceasefire" has started a debate. It is perhaps a reflection of our times that we feel comfortable with the application of "Military Force", no matter what is the situation and what is likely to be the long term outcome, but feel uncomfortable when someone suggests a different approach.

Recently the anchors in a popular TV interview kept on, at the military personality till he conceded that the ceasefire was not working. They interspersed their report with views from a young journalist from Srinagar, to bolster their stand. I wonder if they realised that, till the Shimla agreement our troops were actually deployed on the "Cease Fire Line", called CFL, in the official parlance. It is after this agreement that we started calling it the Line of Actual Control or the LOC. It was this line, where the fire between the two armies ceased, making it the Cease-Fire-Line. Why it became CFL is well known and is not the subject of discussion presently.

Statistics are freely being quoted to support the view that the ceasefire is not working. The numbers, indeed tell a grim tale, but then, that is how they appear to a lay man. Also there are articles, talking of easy straight solutions to this complicated situation showing a correlation between unemployment and militancy. Contrary to the popular belief by some experts, a critical analysis of different terrorist campaigns shows that terrorism is rarely associated with rising unemployment or increase in the cost of

living; instead it is more frequently linked to good economic conditions. Christopher Hewitt maintains that "the policies of general amelioration are not effective in reducing terrorism". One may argue that his study is a little dated but nevertheless it covers the terrorist campaigns by IRA in Northern Ireland, ETA in Spain, Red Brigades/Front Line in Italy, the Tupamaros in Uruguay and EOKA in Cyprus.

The explanation is quite straightforward, in that, "Once terrorism reaches a certain level the daily life of the civilian population is significantly affected both by the terrorism itself and the counter-measures taken... they are unlikely to pay much attention to reforms, when faced with a variety of life-threatening situations. This probably explains, why Abdul Ahmed Ganai, the 'halka' president of the National Conference from Sonapa village was killed last month, despite all the developmental work sanctioned due to his efforts, in his village. A bund, a shop, a panchayat hall, a passenger bus stand and a wall for the park reported by the media.

We need to dispel another popular belief about the effect of the numbers of the security forces and the proposal to reduce the force levels in the Valley. It has been found that upgradation of the



History has shown it is tough for democracy to take roots in societies favouring violence. By design or default, Pakistan has started drawing a distinction between jihad and terrorism.

started believing and thinking, in opposite ways, despite our common culture. We have always been afraid of the loss of face in a typical oriental tradition and hence never attempted to face the reality. We refused to learn from recent histories of Germany, Vietnam, Europe, of the whole wide world. We hurt ourselves and feel this is the best way. Look at the regular bloodletting between various sectarian outfits both in Pakistan and India. We understand fight, war, hatred, Kargil. We do not understand or do not want to understand, that there is a way out of the cycle of violence.

Presently it is Pakistan, which is caught up in this cycle of violence more than India and the cause of this is not India but the recent history of South Asia and the history of its origin and may be the outside players. Not least, that since Zia there is a mental shift towards Islamic fundamentalism. Recent history has shown that it is difficult for democracy to take firm roots in such a situation. May be out of design or default but the Pakistani rulers have now started drawing a distinction between jihad and terrorism. Sipah-i-Sahaba (SSP) of Pakistan is now coming under increasing scrutiny for preaching hatred against the Shias. The ceasefire, is thus a light, more for the ordinary Indians and Pakistanis, the ones who get killed in Kargil and in the like conflicts, than for those who have ensured that there never was a ceasefire for their own good.

(To be continued)

MILITANT POWER

Misguided Kashmiris Must Be Won Over

By HL KAPOOR

THE Lashkar-e-Toiba, one of the most dreaded terrorist outfits, has stepped up its activities after the extension of the unilateral ceasefire till 31 May. The objective behind the announcement of ceasefire was to build international opinion in favour of India's sincerity in achieving peace in Kashmir by bringing misguided sections of the people to the negotiating table. Undoubtedly India won accolades from the world community and Pakistan, without losing time, announced a ceasefire along the LoC to neutralise the Indian endeavour. But it did not stop aiding and abetting terrorists operating from its soil.

There is information that Lashkar-e-Toiba is making a desperate effort to steal the limelight by setting up its bases in different parts of J&K and other parts of India, the capital being no exception.

Pakistan through the ISI is encouraging and funding the L-e-T to create chaos in the valley.

As is known, the L-e-T has set up suicide squads (fidayeen) and is busy training misguided youth in the valley and also across the border. It is hellbent on establishing its supremacy over other militant groups.

EXPANDING

It is well known that about a decade ago, the JKLF did receive arms and financial assistance to carry on its nefarious activities in J&K and destabilise the state administration. However, it failed to please its "masters" in Pakistan when it refused to advocate Kashmir's accession to Pakistan and "stood" for "Azadi". Pakistan did everything possible to slight it. The JKLF cadres were liquidated to a great extent and replaced by the Hizbul-Mujahedin, the Jaishe-Mohammed and the Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Earlier, L-e-T activities were confined to J&K. Now the outfit is making strenuous efforts to establish a base in Delhi and the north-east. It launched an attack on army personnel stationed inside the Red Fort, Delhi. The L-e-T was able to set up a base in South Delhi near the Jamia Nagar area where one of its members was killed in a police encounter. The base was set up with the sole objective of finding shelter before and after the attack. All the activities, including the attack on selected areas, were planned meticulously.

L-e-T terrorists are more sophisticated in their attitude

The author is a former Assistant Commissioner of Police (Class I), New Delhi.

and training and, as such, more ruthless. They are better armed and have set up their own intelligence network in the valley which often eclipses our own intelligence units.

It is, therefore, imperative that the police and the security forces should be armed with the latest weapons and the intelligence system improved. Adequate measures need to be

other so-called "jehadis" from collecting funds.

Pakistan has not even condemned the killing of the Sikhs by the L-e-T. No one has gained much from the ceasefire declaration and if anybody has gained, it is the L-e-T which has been able to regroup the splinter groups. Since the security forces are on the defensive, L-e-T men are in a good position to strike at will.

The L-e-T finds it easier to whip up communal trouble and create a sense of insecurity. Since the terrorists usually establish contact before launching an attack, it is worthwhile to keep an eye on potential communal agitators who may provide protection and information to them. In order to cope with the situation before it is too late, intensive combing operations should be launched all over J&K and elsewhere. Rewards may be announced and the

names of informers may be kept secret. The intelligence machinery must be geared up and the state CID/ Central intelligence agencies must work in unison.

RESPONSE

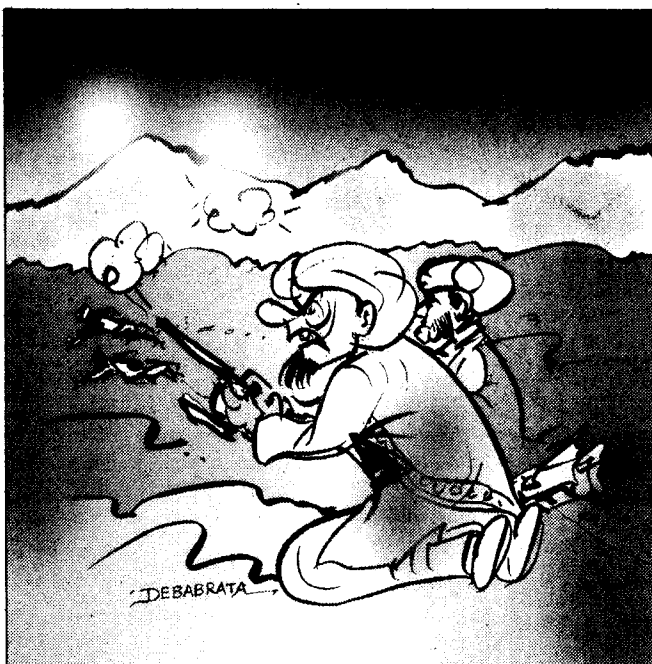
The extension of ceasefire announced by the Centre till 31 May has been welcomed by those who stand for peace. The need of the hour is to highlight the negative and insincere attitude of Pakistan. The government must intensify its efforts at the diplomatic level to urge the world community to exercise pressure on Pakistan to close the training camps.

There should be no delay. The security forces may be given a free hand, our brave army men are duty bound to carry out the government's order. But they cannot be expected to die.

Right-thinking people should come forward to counter Pak-sponsored propaganda. Kashmiris in general and political parties in particular should, in all fairness, stay away from militants.

They should not lose the opportunity of an extended ceasefire and should stand united against militant outfits. The central government should initiate talks with those who can influence Pakistan to come to the negotiating table after stopping cross-border terrorism.

The authorities should address the real problems of the people, i.e., employment, security etc. Misguided youth should be rehabilitated and provided jobs. Leaders must make the people aware of the usefulness of peace efforts. Once the people are won over, the ground will have been prepared for a durable peace.



taken to counter the espionage activities of the L-e-T and its propaganda in J&K. The L-e-T has never missed a chance to whip up the communal sentiments to ignite an already surcharged atmosphere in the valley.

Taking advantage of the ceasefire, the L-e-T men have stepped up activities to sabotage the peace process by indulging in the inhuman massacre of members of the Sikh community. This was aimed at creating a fear psychosis among members of the minority community so as to induce them to migrate.

L-e-T men have infiltrated into the valley and disguised as of local residents held violent demonstrations after the alleged shooting of civilians by the army at Haigam and Maisuma in Srinagar. The L-e-T was able to exploit the situation to misguide the youth who raised provocative pro-Lashkar slogans demanding "azadi".

INTELLIGENCE

The L-e-T has already expressed itself against the ceasefire without meaningful talks with Pakistan. Even Hurriyat leaders demanded that Pakistan be associated in the talks. Hurriyat leaders should instead ask Pakistan to stop aiding the Lashkar and other militant outfits to create a conducive atmosphere for talks.

According to reports, the L-e-T is also raising funds at the insistence of the ISI to pay compensation to members of the suicide squad who die in encounters with security forces. Pakistan's connivance is proved beyond any doubt as it has not stopped the L-e-T and

Fresh violence in Baramulla

Srinagar, March 26

CURFEW WAS reimposed on Baramulla old town today after violent mobs battled police on the streets during a short relaxation.

Seven people were arrested for stoking the riots that injured three persons, including two policemen, and forced police to carry out a baton charge and fire warning shots, officials said.

As the curfew was relaxed this morning, people from over a dozen localities came out on the streets to protest against the killing of a youth in Friday's CRPF firing and alleged burning of the Quran recently. When police tried to stop the mobs, the

protesters threw stones at them. The policemen responded by beating the mobs with their batons and teargassing them. The authorities immediately reimposed the curfew.

Curfew was, however, lifted early today from other parts of Baramulla town, including the Civil Lines area, after the situation improved, officials said.

Life returned to normal in Srinagar and elsewhere in the valley. Shops and offices reopened and traffic on the streets was usual. Curfew was lifted in Poonch town after a seven-hour relaxation yesterday. But police and paramilitary forces were at their posts around the town.

Security forces repulse attack on Awami leader's home

Srinagar, March 26

SECURITY FORCES repulsed an attack by militants on the house of Awami League leader Ghulam Nabi Ratanpuri at Gabarpora in Pulwama district of south Kashmir late last night.

The militants fired on Ratanpur's house but were forced to retreat after a one-hour shootout with police. Nobody was injured. Ratanpuri was in the house during the shootout.

In Pulwama district, two Hizbul Mujahideen militants and a BSF jawan were killed in an encounter late last night, a BSF spokesman said today. Three homes were gutted in the gun battle, which broke out when a BSF party was fired at by Hizbul Mujahideen militants during a raid on their hideout at village Dadoor near Wudwan in Pulwama.

The shooting killed a BSF jawan. The BSF troops retaliated and killed two militants, identified as Nazir Ahmad and Hilal Ahmad.

Clash averted in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad, March 26

POLICE BURST teargas shells to break up two clashing groups at Ashok Nagar in the city's labour-dominated Gomtipur area last night. Nobody was injured.

Trouble broke out after an argument between two friends from different communities on sitting at a particular place. The dispute snowballed into a clash with two groups throwing stones at each other. No arrests have been made so far, police said.

Meanwhile, in the city's Bapunagar locality, four persons were arrested for firing in the air while trying to extort money from a provision storeowner yesterday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 MAR 2001

J&K burns in Quran aftermath

Srinagar, March 24

VIOLENT PROTESTS against the alleged desecration of Quran rocked the Kashmir valley for the second day today, even as curfew remained in force in Baramulla and Poonch towns. A total bandh was observed today in Doda and Rajouri districts, official sources said.

Curfew was imposed in Baramulla town yesterday after violent protestors went berserk on the streets, clashed with police, set ablaze a place of worship and some vehicles, and ransacked the office of Youth National Conference.

One person was killed when security personnel opened fire on the protestors.

Curfew had been imposed in Poonch town too yesterday, following clashes between protestors and police in which 16 people, including four police personnel were injured.

Official sources said both the curfew-bound areas were incident-free today.

Meanwhile, police and paramilitary forces patrolled sensitive areas of Baramulla and Poonch town, where curfew still



AFP PHOTO

A paramilitary trooper stands guard in curfew-bound town of Baramulla.

continues without any relaxation after yesterday's violence. Officials sources said the situation was tense but under control.

The protests, however, spread to other areas today.

A massive demonstration was held in Kupwara district town where shops and business establishments were closed and traffic came to a standstill.

In Srinagar angry youths pelt-

ed stones in Qammerwari, Natipora, Soura, Batmaloo, Solina, Shaheedgunj, Saraibala, Naikadal, Jawahar Nagar, Noorbagh, Safakadal, Nowshera and the Jama Masjid area, forcing closure of educational institutions, shops and business establishments.

In Jammu, Muslim Federation activists took out a procession and later staged a dharna to protest the alleged burning of a copy of Quran in Amritsar.

People took to streets in Pattan and Sopore townships of Baramulla. They blocked traffic on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway. Police used batons to disperse the protestors, official sources said.

In Rajouri and Doda districts a total bandh was observed in Banihal, Baderwah, Doda, Rajouri, Thanamandi and Bhudal areas, where shops and business establishments remained shut and traffic remained off the roads.

No untoward incident was reported during the bandh in the two districts, official sources said.

PTI

Police shoots at protesting students in Baramulla, 1 killed

Protests in Valley over incidents of Quran burning

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Srinagar, March 23: A 17-year-old boy was killed and another wounded in Kashmir's north-western town of Baramulla on Friday when the police opened fire to quell a students' mob protesting against the latest incident of burning of Quran by activists of a hardline Hindu group in Amritsar this week.

The desecration of the holy book, the second such incident this month, sparked off protests across the Kashmir Valley on Friday. Particularly after the weekly mid-day prayers, Muslims held street demonstrations and at a number of places clashed with the riot police.

In Baramulla, 55 km from here, the angry students attacked passing vehicles with stones and other missiles to force a bandh. As the riot police came their way, the town's

streets witnessed brickbattling for during which the policemen made repeated attempts to chase the violent demonstrators away by firing tear gas canisters and using batons, reports received here said.

Soon a contingent of CRPF joined the local police to quell the surging mobs. Later on, a student Merajuddin Sheikh died when the policemen twice opened fire at protesters at Uri Bus Stand just outside the town.

Another protester injured in the firing has been identified as Altaf Hussain. The bloody incidents heightened tension in the border town and latest reports said that police and paramilitary reinforcements have been fanned out there to prevent further trouble.

Students also held protest demonstrations in neighbouring towns of Kupwara, Sopore and Bandipore to protest the desecration of the Quran. At each

these places, the police lobbed tear-smoke and used batons to break the demonstrations.

Indefinite curfew was clamped on border town of Poonch in the Jammu region following violent demonstrations by Muslims protesting the sacrilegious act in Amritsar.

An official spokesman said that the Section 144 of the RPC was being strictly enforced in the town areas as a precautionary measure. Other reports said that the situation was taking a communal turn in the already volatile town and the authorities decided to impose curfew before it was too late.

In Srinagar, the agitators clashed with the police at Lal Chowk, the city centre, outside the grand mosque and other places. Again, the police used force to quell the stone-throwing mobs. A spontaneous bandh was observed in many parts of the city and in some other Valley

towns including Pattan, Magam, Budgam and Tral. Various students' organisations had called for a one-day strike in all educational institutions to lodge their protest against the burning of the Quran in New Delhi on March 5 and in Amritsar earlier this week.

Imams and other religious leaders while giving Friday sermons at mosques and hospices warned the central and state governments against allowing Hindus activists to desecrate the holy book.

"Don't challenge the pride and courage of Muslims," said one of them. The cleric wondered if the Quran was being burnt to avenge the demolition of the Buddha statues in Afghanistan.

The Huriyat Conference, the JKLF Muslim Conference, the JKL and the Muslim League have issued statements condemning incidents in New Delhi and Amritsar.



ANGER: Protesters run with stones in their hands towards the police during a demonstration at Jamba Masjid in Srinagar on Friday. The police used tear gas to disperse hundreds of Muslims who were protesting against the burning of a copy of the holy Quran in Amritsar recently. (Reuters)

THE ASIAN AGE

28 MAR 2001

28 MAR 2001

Violent protests continue in J&K

SRINAGAR, MARCH 24. Violent protests against alleged desecration of the Quran rocked the valley for the second day today, while curfew remained in force in Baramulla and Poonch towns and a bandh was observed in Doda and Rajouri districts, official sources said.

Police and paramilitary forces patrolled sensitive areas of Baramulla and Poonch where curfew continued after Friday's violence as the situation remained tense but under control, the sources said.

People took to the streets in Pattan and Sopore townships and blocked traffic on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway.

A massive demonstration was held in Kupwara where shops and business establishments were closed.

In Srinagar, youths pelted stones forcing closure of educational institutions, shops and business establishments.

In Jammu, the Muslim Federation activists took out a procession and staged a dharna.

In Rajouri and Doda districts a bandh was observed in Banihal, Baderwah, Doda, Rajouri, Thanamandi and Bhudal areas where shops and business establishments remained shut and traffic remained off the road.

Militants kill two

Meanwhile, militants attacked a security picket, threw grenades at a police station and engaged security personnel at three places in the Kashmir valley, where two persons, including a militant, were killed since Friday night.

The ultras fired at the picket, set up for protecting minorities in Narsinghpora in Badgam



The leader of the Democratic Freedom Party, Mr. Shabir Ahmed Shah, protesting the desecration of the Quran at Amritsar, along with party workers in Srinagar on Saturday. — Nissar Ahmed

district on Friday night, an official spokesman said here today. The security personnel retaliated and in the exchange of fire one policeman was injured, he said.

Rebels fired three rifle grenades at the Magam Police Station in the same district this afternoon. Two of them exploded near the boundary wall without causing any damage.

Security personnel and ultras exchanged fire at Gadool village in Anantnag district and Satganga-Natnoosa and Shatipora- Handwara

in Kupwara district during the period. Unidentified militants shot dead a former Hizbul Mujahideen militant at Nowgam, while a youth, Kurshid Ahmad Misger, was killed in Khanyar here, the spokesman said.

Security personnel detected two hideouts while patrolling the Awoora forest and Dardpora in Kupwara district and seized two rocket projectile guns, nine grenades, an anti-tank mine and two Ak magazines with 88 rounds of ammunition. — PTI

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2011

Annan under attack from Pak media for statement on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD: UN secretary-general Kofi Annan came under attack from Pakistani media on Monday for his statement on Kashmir, saying, he "appears to have lost a historic opportunity to restore the vital UN role in resolving the dispute" and instead, "handed over all the cards to India".



Kofi Annan

Mr Annan's visit has turned out to be nothing more than a mere public relations exercise, more to please the heavyweight members of the UN on issues of interest to them: Osama bin Laden, the statues of Buddha and CTBT, to mention a few, rather than any serious effort to get the newly nuclear India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, *The News* commented editorially.

Mr Annan, who made a strong endorsement of India's stand on Kashmir, had said the Lahore declaration and not the UN resolutions could pave the way for settling the dispute.

"There was no wisdom in his coming to south Asia after years and only repeating what the UN and the major western countries have been saying ad nauseum that India and Pakistan should resolve

their disputes bilaterally and there would be no outside mediation," the daily said.

Stating that Mr Annan made it abundantly clear that the UN stipulated no role for itself "till India cooperates", the paper said, "this primarily means he has abandoned his role as a world mediator and has handed over all the cards to India allowing New Delhi to keep the entire world hostage to a potential nuclear conflagration in the sub-continent."

The message for Pakistani leadership is clear.

"Pakistanis must now seriously sit down and ponder as to what options do they have and how they want to go about tackling the situation," it said.

In an equally critical editorial *Pakistan Observer* said Mr Annan's assertion that the resolution was not in the category of enforceable resolutions "exposes his deliberate inaction" to implement the 1948 resolution on Kashmir.

Even if one goes by Mr Annan's logic, it said the people of Kashmir are justified in demanding UN contribution towards seeking India's cooperation for the resolution of the issue.

Other newspapers gave prominent display to Mr Annan's visit but did not comment editorially. (PTI) /

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 MAR 2001

Kashmir Realities

Speaking in the Lok Sabha in support of the motion of thanks to the President, Prime Minister Vajpayee announced that talks with various parties and groups in Jammu & Kashmir as part of the peace process would start soon. He admitted to delays in initiating the talks, but pleaded that these were due to reasons beyond the government's control. Presumably he was referring to insufficient response to the peace process from other parties in Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan. The peace process envisaged that the government of India should keep the political initiative even as it took the major step of suspending cordon and search operations by the security forces. One hopes the government will now act vigorously and make up for lost time in pursuing the political process on the ground in Jammu & Kashmir. The prime minister also referred to the latest pronouncements of UN secretary-general Kofi Annan on the UN resolutions of 1948-49 on Jammu & Kashmir. Mr Annan's statement that the Lahore resolution — and not the UN resolution on holding a plebiscite — must be considered valid for Kashmir, has been received with great enthusiasm in our media. This just goes to show how poorly informed they are. The secretary-general has merely repeated what has been on the UN Security Council's records since 1957. On April 29, 1957, the UN representative for Jammu & Kashmir, Mr Gunnar Jarring, thus reported to the Security Council: "...I could not fail to take note of the concern expressed in connection with the changing political, economic and strategic factors surrounding the whole of the Kashmir question, together with the changing patterns of power relations in West and South Asia. The Council will furthermore be aware of the fact that implementation of international agreements of an ad hoc character, which has not been achieved fairly speedily, may become progressively more difficult because the situation with which they were to cope has tended to change".

Since then, except for one debate in 1964, the issue has never come up before the Security Council. Secretary-general Boutros Ghali even wanted to remove it from the Council's list of pending disputes since, as per the UN rules, issues not considered by the Security Council for the previous five years are not to continue on its agenda. With great difficulty Pakistan managed to retain it on the agenda subject to an annual review. The Pakistanis are unable to reconcile themselves to the fact that western support to them on Kashmir was actually contingent on their need for Pakistan during the Cold War. Should Pakistan only care to place the UN secretary-general's current declaration in the post-Cold War context, it will see the changed equation for what it is. It is to be hoped indeed that Mr Annan's statement would instil a greater sense of realism in Pakistan and the secessionist parties in Jammu & Kashmir and persuade them to adopt a more positive attitude in their negotiations with the government of India. The tourist season is fast approaching and a positive move towards negotiations and a reduction in violence in Kashmir valley will go a long way in restoring normalcy to the Valley and creating a conducive atmosphere for fruitful negotiations between New Delhi, Srinagar and various dissident and secessionist parties.

EC once again decides not to hold byelections in J&K

By Sant Kumar Sharma
The Times of India News Service

JAMMU: While the Election Commission (EC) has announced the dates for holding byelections to two UP assembly constituencies of Haidergarh and Sadadad, it appears to have once again decided not to hold byelections to the four assembly seats lying vacant in J&K in this round.

Incidentally, the six-year term of the J&K assembly will expire only in October 2002 and that of the UP assembly would be over much earlier.

At present, four assembly constituencies of Wachi, Tral, Doru and Habbakadal are vacant in the J&K legislature. The Habbakadal assembly constituency in Srinagar had fallen vacant some days ago when state law minister Pyare Lal Handoo died. The Doru constituency has been lying vacant since May last year when the sitting legislator and then power minister Ghulam Hassan died in a last triggered by militants. The assembly consti-

ties of Wachi and Tral, on the other hand, have been lying vacant for over 18 months.

Political leaders, cutting across party lines, have taken strong exception to these areas going unrepresented. Most of the political parties here insist that the EC should hold elections within six months of a seat falling vacant, the thumb rule the EC follows in most other states.

Besides, they point out, that panchayat elections are being held in the state at present and have remained largely peaceful barring two or three cases of violence.

When contacted, Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) leader Mehbooba Mufti said: "The state government doesn't want these elections to be held as it is shaky and is likely to lose in all the constituencies. Else, why shouldn't it tell the EC to do the needful? In fact, almost all other parties had opposed the panchayat elections without first fulfilling certain conditions. However, the ruling party chose to ignore our voices."

Ruling National Conference (NC) provincial secretary Sheikh Bashir Ahmed, on the other hand, said the NC had no reason to shy away from the electoral process. "All the four constituencies were represented by our party and we had won in 1996 with handsome margins. We will win even now if the elections are held," he asserted.

Going a step further, he said the state government wanted the EC to hold these elections at the earliest. "In a democratic set-up, it is a serious fallacy to have so many constituencies unrepresented in the assembly," the NC leader added.

State Congress leader Gulchain Singh Charak said there was no reason why the people of these four constituencies should not get their elected representatives. He alleged that the ruling NC did not want to hold these elections as it had lost considerable ground due to its misgovernance. "If elections can be held for the panchayats, why not for four assembly constituencies too?" he asked.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 MAR 2001

Let the Hurriyat team visit Pakistan

It's no capitulation

92-6
1873

HOME Minister L.K. Advani has the reputation of not changing his decision. It has merit in the sense that there is finality about what he says. But who is to blame if and when his inputs for reaching a decision are not correct? Not allowing the Hurriyat leaders to go to Pakistan is one such case.

The home minister's plea — he has repeated it in the Rajya Sabha — that the Hurriyat wants to act as a mediator between India and Pakistan and that his government would not allow it to play that role. If this is the Hurriyat's stand, few would disagree with Advani.

The Hurriyat leaders, after a joint meeting in Srinagar a few days ago, said that they wanted to go to Pakistan to bring about 'a multi-ceasefire.' They explained that after the unilateral ceasefire by India, their task in Pakistan would be to meet the various groups of militants and persuade them to stop violence and militancy to create an atmosphere for talks. They specifically mentioned that their role was not that of a go-between.

Advani can argue that he has no faith in them. He can also say that the information he possesses indicates that the Hurriyat leaders would try to be mediators. But he has not taken that stand. All that he has said is that when New Delhi decides to hold talks with Islamabad, it would do so on its own.

There can be no exception to this approach because it is the government, which has to decide when and where to sit with Pakistan across the table. Again, it is the government, which has the authority to decide how far it wants to go in the matter relating to Kashmir. This problem is too serious to be left to the mediators. The government has always rejected the idea of a third party. How can it now accept the Hurriyat to act that way when even the offer by a country like the USA has been rejected outrightly?

In the face of a categorical statement by the Hurriyat executive, it is clear that it wanted to talk to the militants in Pakistan to persuade them to reciprocate Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's unilateral ceasefire. Advani's refusal to allow them to visit Pakistan shows an attitude that is not based on facts. He looks like going against the general opinion in the country, which favours the Hurriyat's trip to Pakistan.

This does not, however, mean the nation supports the Hurriyat stand on Kashmir. Nor does it in anyway reflect the government's weakness. All this means is that New Delhi wants to explore every possible avenue to ensure peace.



KULDIP NAYAR

Pakistan will also see chinks within the Hurriyat. They are under one umbrella, no doubt, but they differ on the concept of tomorrow's Kashmir

Vajpayee's expectation is that the ceasefire will eventually act as pressure on Pakistan to respond positively.

All the Indian groups, which have gone to the other side in the last few weeks, have demanded in their statements that restrictions on the Hurriyat visit should be lifted. There was a delegation of former Indian diplomats, some of whom are hand in glove with the BJP, who proposed the same thing on their return. Even some senior retired officers from the army and the navy came back with a similar feeling that the efforts towards conciliation would be strengthened if the Hurriyat leaders were to visit Pakistan. In fact, General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's chief executive, complained to some members of the delegation that the Indian government had unnecessarily stalled the

visit of the Hurriyat leaders. "We were prepared to talk to them and so were some militant groups," Musharraf has reportedly told the delegates. Why Advani is adamant is not understandable. It shows he and Vajpayee have distanced themselves on matters relating to Kashmir. But where Advani has gone wrong is that the talks for peace do not in anyway impinge on our stand. It also does not mean that any understanding beyond cessation of violence, which the Hurriyat may bring about, will be binding on us. The visit is only to silence guns from the other side. The Hurriyat is conscious of its limited role and it has not made any statement to the contrary.

Advani is quite right when he says that there are several points of view within the Hurriyat. Indeed, it is a divided house. One or two members are openly pro-Pakistan in their stance while some are pro-independent. A couple of them have India as their center of attention. But their views or leanings are not the point at issue. Their visit has a limited purpose. If New Delhi were to allow them to go to the other side, it would help the country know how far the Hurriyat could influence the militants in Pakistan to respond to the ceasefire. This will come in handy in the days to come when the real negotiations would begin.

There is a possibility that some Hurriyat leaders may say something in Pakistan that may not be to our liking. So what? They have said so many things, on so many occasions, which are not

palatable to the country. The press has printed them all. They may have been criticised for upholding certain views but none could punish them because the Constitution provides freedom of expression to all its nationals. What new would they say in Pakistan now? We have heard them all before. Their views are their own and are at variance with the country's stand. People and the government there already know from the press and TV networks their oft-repeated thinking. One more round will not weaken New Delhi's policy.

Maybe, Pakistan will also see chinks within the Hurriyat. They are under one umbrella, no doubt, but they differ on the concept of tomorrow's Kashmir — most of them believing in a secular state and a few supporting the Islamic order. It is possible that after their visit to Pakistan, some of them would return disillusioned. Even the hardcore among them might begin to realise that the Pakistan society was not fanatic enough to their liking.

By blocking the visit of the Hurriyat, New Delhi may also be hurting international opinion that supports our cause. Islamabad stands isolated because of the impression that it is training, arming and sending militants to Kashmir. Still the world wants hostilities to end. New Delhi's refusal may create the impression that India is not willing to compromise on even an innocuous step like the Hurriyat's visit to Pakistan.

Advani has done well to give an assurance in Parliament that the government will soon be talking to various groups in Kashmir. It shows that the ceasefire is not an end in itself but an opportunity to sort out things in the state. It also shows that for the first time all political elements will be invited for talks. Strange, Advani should mention the Hurriyat among the groups on the government list for talks but refuse permission to its leaders to go across the border.

INDIAN EXPRESS

13 MAR 2001

Only Lahore pact can help resolve J&K issue: Annan

ISLAMABAD: In a firm endorsement of India's stand on the Kashmir issue, UN secretary-general Kofi Annan said on Saturday that only the Lahore declaration, and not UN resolutions, could pave the way for a solution.

"I call upon both India and Pakistan to retain the spirit of the Lahore declaration. This will require restraint, wisdom and constructive steps from both sides," he told newsmen at the Chaklala air base on his arrival here on the first leg of his four-nation visit to South Asia.

Asked why the UN resolution on Kashmir could not be implemented on the lines of that on East Timor, he explained that there were two types of UN resolutions. "The resolutions that come under chapter seven of the charter are self-enforcing — like those related to East

Timor and Iraq. The second type of resolutions, which do not fall under the purview of chapter seven, need the cooperation of the parties concerned for their imple-

mentation. The resolutions on Kashmir do not fall under the category of chapter seven and, hence, require the cooperation of the parties concerned for their implementation," he said.

Ruling out a separate UN Human Rights Commission on Kashmir, Mr Annan said the world

body had an active human rights body based in Geneva and it regularly monitored human rights situation the world over.

The UN secretary-general began talks with Pakistani leaders on Sunday on a number of issues, including Kashmir, nuclear proliferation in South Asia and the situation in Afghanistan.

According to officials, during his talks with President Mohammad Rafiq Tarar, Mr Annan stressed the need to settle the Kashmir dispute to ensure durable peace in the region.

He also held discussions with foreign minister Abdul Sattar, who urged the UN to play an effective role in implementing resolutions for a referendum in Kashmir. (Agencies)

Annan is being biased: Hurriyat

NEW DELHI: The Hurriyat Conference, reacting angrily to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan's remarks that only the Lahore declaration could solve the Kashmir issue, accused the world body of being biased against and shirking its commitments to Kashmiris.

While Hurriyat chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat refused to comment on Mr Annan's remarks, two senior leaders of the separatist conglomerate said the UN could not escape its responsibility in resolving the issue.

Former Hurriyat chairman Syed Ahmed Shah Geelani said, "If Mr Annan has said that, it is not appreciable, and it will not be wrong to say that the UN is inactive and biased. It is the moral obligation of the UN to resolve the longstanding problem and use its influence to force a solution." (PTI)



Kofi Annan

Geelani under house arrest

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, March 11

POLICE IN Srinagar put former Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Geelani under house arrest today, to prevent him from holding a rally at Nowhatta.

There was an explosion on Tuesday at Nowhatta, near a BSF formation.

More than a dozen houses were gutted in the explosion at Nowhatta, where the Jamaat-e-Islami leader had planned to hold a public meeting.

Policemen swooped down on Geelani's Hyderpora house on Airport Road at 11.30 am and plugged all doorways leading to the main road.

Geelani, though a member of Hurriyat Conference's executive council, has been operating independently since he fell out with his colleagues over the ceasefire declared by the Government in November.

Hurriyat chairman Professor Abdul Gani Butti and other members such as Abdul Gani Lone, Mirwaiz Ommar Farooq, Molvi Abbas Ansari and Mohammad Yasin Malik (all members of executive council) welcomed the ceasefire.

Geelani saw the ceasefire as a "ploy to mislead the international community".

Differences between Geelani and other Hurriyat leaders deepened further on the Hurriyat delegation's agenda on the proposed Pakistan trip.

Hurriyat Conference leaders wanted to persuade militants to respond positively to the ceasefire. Geelani publicly objected to this agenda, and sought instead to project the Kashmir issue as an Islamic one to garner support from Muslims all over the world.

Geelani's views don't seem to find support in his own Jamaat-e-Islami.

A Jamaat spokesman said yesterday that the nature of the Kashmir issue was more political and human rather than religious and military adds PTI.

"The nature of the Kashmir issue is human and political - it is a human issue as both the majority and minority communities are directly or indirectly getting affected by its continued non-resolution and both the communities are suffering economically also," the spokesman said after the day-long meeting of its executive advisory council Majlis-e-Shoura. Geelani's stance proved to be a stumbling block for the planned visit.

The Union Government has reportedly asked the Hurriyat to drop Geelani from the delegation.



Former Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Geelani addressing pressmen.



A snub to Geelani

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 11. Officials here have noted with satisfaction the Jamaat-e-Islami's latest formulation that "Kashmir" is a political problem rather than a religious issue. The formulation, made yesterday by the organisation's deliberative forum, Majlis-e-Shoura, is seen here as a gentle snub to the Jamaat's seniormost leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who has for some time now taken to arguing that "Kashmir" is a religious issue.

According to a Jamaat spokesman in Srinagar, "the nature of the Kashmir issue is human and political. It is a human issue as both the majority and minority communities are directly or indirectly getting affected by its continued non-resolution and both the communities are suffering economically also."

The spokesman, further added, that the issue was political because "it is only through peaceful means like the exercise of the promised right of self-determination or, in the alternative, tripartite talks, that a lasting solution to the issue can be possible."

The Jamaat formulation becomes relevant as the APHC executive meets again tomorrow in Srinagar to see whether a way can be found to meet the Centre's objections to the proposed Hurriyat visit to Pakistan. The Centre has been most reluctant to issue a

passport to Mr. Geelani, primarily because of his staunch pro-Pakistan views, which of late have acquired a religious connotation.

Therefore, it remains to be seen whether the APHC executive can redefine the objectives of its Pakistan mission in a manner that would soften the Union Home Ministry's objections. As of now, Mr. Advani's views remain unchanged that Mr. Geelani's inclu-

sion in the proposed delegation has rendered the visit totally unattractive from India's point of view.

It is here that the Jamaat's formulation can come in handy in isolating Mr. Geelani. Earlier, the Jamaat had refused to accede to the APHC chairman, Professor Abdul Gani Bhat's suggestion that Mr. Geelani could make way for some other nominee of the Jamaat-e-Islami.

Under the circumstances, the APHC finds it difficult to keep up its claim of being the sole voice of the "resistance". It is the Hurriyat's hope that if it can undertake a trip to Pakistan, it would help it consolidate its "sole representative" claim. As it is, the former Chief Minister, Mr. G. M. Shah, is trying to steal the limelight by trying to bring together on one platform all the "pro-Pakistan, pro-India and pro-independence" voices.

The APHC would also have to re-devised its strategy in the light of the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan's assertion that the old U.N. resolutions were no longer workable, and that only the Lahore Declaration provided a practical format. PTI reports:

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman and senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Yaseen Malik, suffering from a heart ailment, left for the United States late last night for a medical check-up.

Geelani placed under house arrest

SRINAGAR, MARCH 11. The former Hurriyat conference chairman and Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was today placed under house arrest to foil his plan to visit the Nowhatta locality of Srinagar, official sources said.

A joint party of the police and the CRPF cordoned off Mr. Geelani's Hyderpora residence early today and asked him to remain indoors, the sources said.

Mr. Geelani, who was to visit Nowhatta to express sympathy with those whose houses and shops were damaged in a fire on Tuesday, was placed under arrest in view of the reports that he was planning to organise a demonstration there, they said. — PTI



The President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, being received by the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Anerood Jugnauth, at Port Louis airport, in Mauritius, on Friday. — PTI (Report on Page 13)

PoK leaders may not get visa

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9. The Centre is unlikely to give visa to the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)-based leader, Mr. Amanullah Khan, and others to visit India to attend Mr. G.M. Shah's conference in Jammu on "In search of peace and solution". Mr. Khan and 25 other "leaders" from the PoK and the Northern Areas have applied for visa from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

Officials, however, were quick to point out that the applications would be processed as per India's existing visa regime, and no special dispensation could be made in case of those who purported to attend a politically-significant conference. At the same time, the officials are not all that certain that these "leaders" would be permitted by Pakistani authorities to visit India.

It is pointed out that a few months ago Pakistan denied permission to a prominent PoK-based leader to attend the "Bristol Hotel" dialogue, even though the Indian Government had granted the visa. The processing of the applications of Mr. Amanullah Khan and others appears to have become one more occasion for one-upmanship between two Foreign Offices.

Mr. G.M. Shah, who is president of the Jammu and Kashmir Awami National Conference and who has the reputation of being the "estranged" brother-in-law of the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, is trying to organise a gathering of all Jammu and Kashmir leaders. The stated objective is: (1) to "enable the power of dialogue to reassert itself in Jammu and Kashmir"; (2) to enable "the polit-

ical leaders, protagonists of the armed struggle, social activists, intellectuals, technocrats and eminent citizens from both sides of the Line of Control" to come together and talk things out; and, (3) to make "practically workable and politically feasible recommendations for an amicable resolution" of the Kashmir problem.

The Centre's reluctance to grant visa to "leaders" such as Mr. Amanullah Khan (who is also facing a number of criminal charges), however, according to officials, should not be construed as disapproval of Mr. Shah's venture. It is asserted that as an Indian citizen, Mr. Shah is free to organise any kind of political activity he and his party want. But at the same time, the Government reserves the right to deny entry to anyone who does not meet the criteria of the current visa regime, officials add.

Also, it remains to be seen whether Mr. Shah would go ahead with the conference. Earlier, it was scheduled to take place on February 10-11; it is now slated for March 17-18, next week.

Mr. Shah, who had displaced Dr. Farooq Abdullah as Chief Minister in 1984, is widely regarded as hostile to the Chief Minister, but keen observers believe that of late there is a kind of rapprochement between the two families. In fact, Mr. Shah's conference is being seen by some as having the blessings of the Chief Minister, and the purpose of the exercise appears to be to recover some of the separatist space from the Hurriyat.

THE HINDU
wishes its readers
A HAPPY HOLI

THE HINDU

10 MAR 2001

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2001

H.D. 12 ✓

A SHORTSIGHTED APPROACH

9/3

THE GOVERNMENT OF India's summary rejection of the idea of a Hurriyat delegation visiting Pakistan as a followup of the 'ceasefire' initiative, an issue that has been hanging fire for quite a few months now, is a reflection as much of a flawed perception of the role the umbrella separatist outfit is seeking for itself as of the lack of a coherent policy framework on Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, in his responses to queries in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, has sought to rationalise the Government's decision by placing the All Party Hurriyat Conference's proposal in the context of India's basic 'no-third-party-intervention' stance and suggesting that the Hurriyat was indeed trying to assume the role of a 'mediator'. But the point is that, from the beginning, the Hurriyat has been consistently maintaining that it does not visualise any 'mediatory' role for itself for the reason that it is very much a 'party' to the dispute. In fact, leaders of the Hurriyat have even been hinting that they would persuade the jihadi militant groups as also the military regime in Pakistan to allow space for the Indian Government's peace initiative.

Although initially the Centre did appear to go along with the proposition, it seemed to have second thoughts after the Hurriyat began to identify the members of its team to visit Pakistan — the squad included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a pro-Pakistan hardliner — and Delhi became extremely wary when Pakistan extended an "invitation" to the APHC executive for "consultation to prepare the ground for a tripartite process of negotiations". But the fact remains that there have been perceptible changes in the power equations within the Hurriyat, with the moderate, pro-independence elements emerging stronger vis-a-vis the hawks, and significantly appearing less hardline in their outlook and attitude to the core issues of the Kashmir problem. In fact, one could discern a

nuanced shift in its approach, witness the APHC executive's description of 'Kashmir' as a "political" (as distinguished from "religious") problem. And that the body could deplore the likes of Mr. Geelani and even demand from the Jamaat-e-Islami that he be replaced as their representative in the Hurriyat, conveys its own message about the dominant mood in the conglomerate. Notably, its February 12 resolution, while stating that helping the creation of a "peaceful atmosphere" was the idea behind its proposal to send a team to Pakistan, had no disparaging references to India; nor was there any mention of a tripartite negotiation process. What is more, it spoke of "some people" in Pakistan (besides India) trying to "interfere and influence" the decision of the Hurriyat and went on to assert that the APHC leadership would not submit to such pulls or pressures.

Given these positive signals on the Hurriyat front, a go-ahead from the Centre to the much-delayed Pakistan visit by its team should have gone some way in strengthening the pro-peace forces. In fact, after the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's decision to go for a three-month extension of the 'ceasefire', the Centre was widely expected to give its nod; that however was not to be. It is nobody's case that the Hurriyat team would have achieved anything spectacular and, for that matter, it may well have failed to carry conviction with the jihadi outfits. But the visit, apart from being an imaginative gesture, would have helped to clarify 'who stands where' among the different players involved in the Jammu and Kashmir problem. By saying 'no' to the Hurriyat visit, the Government has certainly sent a wrong signal to those who were expecting it to come up with a package of intelligently crafted policy initiatives, both on the domestic and diplomatic fronts, for a solution to the Kashmir problem, considering especially that it has given itself three months for the next review of the ceasefire.

THE HINDU

- 9 MAR 2001

Eight militants among 18 killed in Kashmir violence

HT Correspondent/PTI
Srinagar, March 8

FOUR SOLDIERS and five Lashkar-e-Tayyeba militants were killed in a gunbattle in the Rajouri-Poonch sector on Thursday. Elsewhere in the State, nine others - including three militants, two policemen and a Congress activist - died and seven security personnel were wounded in a grenade attack.

The five Lashkar militants killed by the troops are suspected to be involved in last week's massacre of 15 policemen and two medical employees in Rajouri district. An official spokesman said a large quantity of arms and ammunition, including seven grenades and four AK-series rifles, were recovered from the spot.

Two police constables were killed by militants at Dalgate and Maisuma in Srinagar.

Militants barged into a home at Dharmkoot village near Bani-

hal early this morning and shot dead the occupants, Teja Ram, his wife and son. A hunt has been launched for the killers.

Militants also struck at Maitra village, 20 km from Dharmkoot, and killed newly-elected village head Ghulam Rasool Gujjar.

Two militants were killed when they made an abortive bid to attack an Army post at Jarna Wali Gali in Surankote.

Congress worker Mohammad Ishaq Mir was shot dead by terrorists at Magam village in Badgam district, the spokesman said. Militants fired at Ishaq, nephew of senior Congress leader and former MP Mir Magami, killing him on the spot.

Six security personnel were injured in a powerful grenade blast which occurred when senior officers were inspecting the damage caused by a blast in Srinagar last evening, official sources said.

Militants lobbed a grenade at security forces at Nowhatta Main

Chowk around 1.45 p.m., injuring six personnel - three from the Border Security Force and the rest from the Central Reserve Police Force. The condition of two of the injured was stated to be serious.

Amanullah move: The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman, Amanullah Khan, has with 25 others applied for visa to India to participate in a two-day seminar.

"Khan is among the first 20 people who have applied for visa to participate in the two-day conference beginning on March 17," senior ANC leader and co-ordinator of the conference, Muzaffar Shah said. He said all these leaders had applied at the Indian High Commission in Islamabad yesterday. Khan is a proclaimed offender and is unlikely to be granted visa. The two-day seminar, "In search of peace and solution", will be organised by the Awami National Conference at Jammu.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 9 MAR 2001

FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 2001

A SHORTSIGHTED APPROACH

THE GOVERNMENT OF India's summary rejection of the idea of a Hurriyat delegation visiting Pakistan as a followup of the 'ceasefire' initiative, an issue that has been hanging fire for quite a few months now, is a reflection as much of a flawed perception of the role the umbrella separatist outfit is seeking for itself as of the lack of a coherent policy framework on Jammu and Kashmir. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, in his responses to queries in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday, has sought to rationalise the Government's decision by placing the All Party Hurriyat Conference's proposal in the context of India's basic 'no-third-party-intervention' stance and suggesting that the Hurriyat was indeed trying to assume the role of a 'mediator'. But the point is that, from the beginning, the Hurriyat has been consistently maintaining that it does not visualise any 'mediatory' role for itself for the reason that it is very much a 'party' to the dispute. In fact, leaders of the Hurriyat have even been hinting that they would persuade the jihadi militant groups as also the military regime in Pakistan to allow space for the Indian Government's peace initiative.

Although initially the Centre did appear to go along with the proposition, it seemed to have second thoughts after the Hurriyat began to identify the members of its team to visit Pakistan — the squad included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a pro-Pakistan hardliner — and Delhi became extremely wary when Pakistan extended an "invitation" to the APHC executive for "consultation to prepare the ground for a tripartite process of negotiations". But the fact remains that there have been perceptible changes in the power equations within the Hurriyat, with the moderate, pro-independence elements emerging stronger vis-a-vis the hawks, and significantly appearing less hardline in their outlook and attitude to the core issues of the Kashmir problem. In fact, one could discern a

nuanced shift in its approach, witness the APHC executive's description of 'Kashmir' as a "political" (as distinguished from "religious") problem. And that the body could deplore the likes of Mr. Geelani and even demand from the Jamaat-e-Islami that he be replaced as their representative in the Hurriyat, conveys its own message about the dominant mood in the conglomerate. Notably, its February 12 resolution, while stating that helping the creation of a "peaceful atmosphere" was the idea behind its proposal to send a team to Pakistan, had no disparaging references to India; nor was there any mention of a tripartite negotiation process. What is more, it spoke of "some people" in Pakistan (besides India) trying to "interfere and influence" the decision of the Hurriyat and went on to assert that the APHC leadership would not submit to such pulls or pressures.

Given these positive signals on the Hurriyat front, a go-ahead from the Centre to the much-delayed Pakistan visit by its team should have gone some way in strengthening the pro-peace forces. In fact, after the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's decision to go for a three-month extension of the 'ceasefire', the Centre was widely expected to give its nod; that however was not to be. It is nobody's case that the Hurriyat team would have achieved anything spectacular and, for that matter, it may well have failed to carry conviction with the jihadi outfits. But the visit, apart from being an imaginative gesture, would have helped to clarify 'who stands where' among the different players involved in the Jammu and Kashmir problem. By saying 'no' to the Hurriyat visit, the Government has certainly sent a wrong signal to those who were expecting it to come up with a package of intelligently crafted policy initiatives, both on the domestic and diplomatic fronts, for a solution to the Kashmir problem, considering especially that it has given itself three months for the next review of the ceasefire.

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2001

Hurriyat mediation in J&K talks ruled out

Indrani Bagchi
NEW DELHI 7 MARCH

THE GOVERNMENT formally put the stamp of irrelevance on the Hurriyat Conference on Wednesday, ruling out any mediatory role for the separatist outfit in the Kashmir peace process.

Answering questions in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday morning, the Union home minister, Mr L.K. Advani, stated that any dialogue between India and Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir will be held directly between the two governments and held no place for a third party.

Not only does this dismiss Hurriyat's only agenda, but also robs any future travel to Pakistan

of any legitimacy. Mr Advani added that the leaders were not speaking in one voice and some Hurriyat leaders had already been given passports with which they could travel out of the country.

Unfortunately, the issue of the Hurriyat's travel plans to Pakistan have overtaken the entire peace initiative in Jammu and Kashmir. Presently there is the issue of the headline Jamaat leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who openly advocates the accession of Kashmir to Pakistan and even supports the jihadi groups wreaking havoc in the Valley. It is on his travel arrangements that the government has dug in its heels.

The arguments made supporting their travel is that it will

expose the group's own lack of credibility since it is highly unlikely that they will get any response to their professed intentions of persuading the militant groups to turn the Indian unilateral ceasefire into a multilateral one. Basically, that India had little to lose and everything to gain from giving out passports.

Pakistan is perfectly clear about why it wants the Hurriyat leaders there — legitimising their presence as the "sole" representatives of the Kashmiris and paving the way for a tripartite dialogue. India is determined that neither should happen, emphasising that they had no role to play in the negotiations between the two governments. According to the gov-

ernment, Pakistan's role at present should be to 'exert pressure on militant groups to stop cross-border terrorism in Kashmir,' Mr Advani said.

As a matter of fact, a significant event, which almost went unnoticed was a meeting between Farooq Abdullah and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on Wednesday. Meeting in his capacity as the leader of a Haj goodwill delegation, the discussions were also expected to cover the Kashmir issue, on which Saudi Arabia has traditionally supported Pakistan. India has been attempting to get the Saudi leadership to clarify their position, which is crucial since the latter exerts a huge influence on Pakistan.

First, the government has clearly stated that the Hurriyat is only one among a number of groups in Kashmir, all of whom will be engaged in dialogue with the Centre. This includes the Hizb, the current state government, the Shias of Ladakh and the Pandits.

The second argument for their travel is that the Hurriyat leaders need a face-saver from the Indian government before they can legitimately open talks with India.

There are any number of analysts who believe that the Hurriyat cannot talk to the Indian government because they have been constrained by their masters in Pakistan.

'PAK. MUST STOP CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM'

We don't need APMC as mediator: Advani

By Our Special Correspondent J.D. 1

NEW DELHI, MARCH 7. The Centre today refused to accord the All-Party Hurriyat Conference the status of mediator between New Delhi and Islamabad, while stating that the Hurriyat leaders with passports were free to travel to Pakistan.

Replying to supplementaries in the Rajya Sabha, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, emphasised that as far as talks with Pakistan were concerned, if the Government wished to talk, it would do so directly.

The Government viewed the Hurriyat as part of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and if discussions in respect of the State were to be held, talks would be held with the Hurriyat too.

Mr. Advani said the Centre proposed to hold talks with various groups in the State and wanted Pakistan to exert pressure on militant groups to stop cross-border terrorism.

The response of the people of the State to the Ramzan peace initiative was good as was that of international community. However, the response of various militant groups, which operated at the ini-

tiative of Pakistan and indulged in cross-border terrorism, was not satisfactory.

While welcoming the stoppage of shelling on the border by Pakistan, he said it was hoped the climate created in the State through the response of the people and the world would pressure Pakistan.

Mr. Advani said the Government had not urged the security forces to abandon the fight against militancy, and that during the three-and-a-half month period since Ramzan, 227 militants had been killed by security forces.

Referring to the suicide attacks by militants, the Minister said that while these incidents had created the impression that the battle against militancy had been somewhat abandoned, the fact was that security forces had been asked not to wait until attacked.

Defending the extension of the ceasefire till the end of May, Mr. Advani said all aspects of the situation had been reviewed and Army commanders' views considered. Responding to members' concern over reports of reservation, he said the Centre would take cognisance of it.

THE HINDU

8 MAR 2001

Army repels Lashkar attack, two ultras killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

JAMMU, March 6. - The Army today repulsed an attack on its camp by a suicide squad, killing two Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants at Surankote in Poonch district.

In a separate incident, militants fired rockets at an administrative base at Reasi in Udhampur which exploded near an Army area, defence sources said.

A group of Lashkar militants attacked the Army camp at Jaran Wali Gali around 1.30 a.m. One of them rushed towards the camp while firing on the troops who retaliated and killed the *fidayeen* militant. Another militant who tried to gatecrash by firing indiscriminately was also gunned down.

One jawan received minor splinter injuries in the attack, the fifth since the third extension of the ceasefire in J&K. The third militant escaped, the sources said.

Sikh body set up: To infuse a sense of security among Sikhs in the state, the community today announced formation of J&K Sikh United Forum, an amalgam of various Sikh organisations in the state.

The new body was set up in Jammu at a meeting of Akali Dal groups, Sikh Sangat, Sikh Students Federation and other Sikh organisations in the state, a forum spokesman said in Srinagar.

THE STATESMAN

7 MAR 201

Kashmir stalemate persists

By Harish Khare

HD-1
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NEW DELHI, MARCH 6. When the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, announced on February 22 the decision to extend the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by three months, it was expected that the Government had a definite plan in mind on how to consolidate its strategy of a peace offensive. But two weeks later, the Government still appears confused, if not paralysed. This confusion is beginning to generate a sense of exasperation among those who have the hands-on jobs to perform in the State.

Two specific decisions were expected. First, it was to be decided whether or not an All-Party Hurriyat Conference delegation was to be allowed to go to Pakistan. The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, has remained consistent in his obduracy in not allowing Syed Ali Shah Geelani to visit Pakistan. On its part, the Vajpayee establishment has not found a way to overcome this obduracy. By default, the Centre has been made to be seen as less than sincere in its stated desire for peace.

Second, the February 22 statement carried a promise of a formal dialogue with the Hurriyat, besides others. No tangible initiative appears to have been taken on this front either. The status of informal contacts between the Centre's emissaries and

sections of the APHC, remains unchanged. Because of the Centre's paralysis on the first count, the "dialogue" aspect has become problematic.

For now the Centre is content to watch developments within the Hurriyat camp. A note has been taken of the demonstrations outside Mr. Geelani's house, just as it has been noted, with disappointment, that the Jamat-e-Islami has refused to replace Mr. Geelani on the Hurriyat executive. The APHC is truly a divided house, but no one in New Delhi seems to be confident as to how this division is helpful in promoting the strategy of peace offensive.

Meanwhile, Mr. Majid Dar, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen chief, has taken the Hurriyat leaders to task for airing their differences publicly. Mr. Dar is enigmatically silent on the emerging divide within the APHC, whether the "struggle" in Kashmir was a religious one (as contended by Mr. Geelani) or a political one (as argued by Mr. Abdul Gani Lone).

The seeming paralysis on the next move on the ceasefire front has created a seriously debilitating confusion among Army commanders in Kashmir.

The least confused force appears to be the State police, which takes its cue from the Chief Minister, who makes no bones about the built-in uselessness of any political or diplomatic engagement with the separatist groups.

THE HINDU

- 7 MAR 2001

Dialogue of the Deaf

A Dead End Ahead in Kashmir

By MANOJ JOSHI

11-10 573
BEGINNING February 26, the government had 90 days in which to reveal the first stage of its Kashmir policy. With the ceasefire in place, each day that passes without any follow-up is a precious day wasted because if the Vajpayee gamble fails, as seems increasingly likely, it could be another two or three years before any government will risk offering another ceasefire. What we have learnt till now is that not doing something, such as cessation of active combat operations, is far easier than doing, such as permitting the Hurriyat to go to Pakistan, finding out ways to get Pakistan onboard the peace initiative or containing the jihadis.

India or its government do not control all the factors affecting the situation. Under the Constitution, Farooq Abdullah's is the legally constituted government of the state. Despite everything, it remains rooted in the Kashmiri countryside despite the fact that its supporters are the principal target of jihadi violence. For two years after the Army and the paramilitary contained the militancy, the state security apparatus quite effectively kept it in check, especially in the urban and semi-urban areas.

The principal challenge now comes from the Hizbul Mujahideen aided by the Pakistani jihadi groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed. Its core comprises members of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Kashmir, but over the years, the best and brightest have died or disappeared and the prolonged stay of many of its leaders in Pakistan has made them less amenable to the local Jamaat control. Having faced the brunt of the Indian counter-attack, the Kashmir Jamaat has distanced itself from the 'armed struggle' leaving all the fire-eating to its erstwhile Amir, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and the commander-in-exile Syed Salahuddin. One measure of the price that the Hizb and the Kashmiri Jamaat have paid for their armed rebellion is the fact that it was the Hizb which first called for a unilateral ceasefire last July.

The Pakistan government is a catalyst in the situation. Though it was instrumental in getting the Hizb to resile from its offer last year, it has taken a more positive attitude towards the Indian ceasefire. The Pakistani commitment to observe restraint along the Line of Control has been the only silver lining in the otherwise dismal scenario confronting

the Vajpayee government on Kashmir. While infiltration across the LoC has not been stopped, the great advantage incoming militants got from the covering fire of Pakistani artillery and machine guns has been negated. No doubt it has brought down Pakistani army casualties, but it also benefited India.

Of all the variables in the Kashmir equation, the most predictable attitude is that of the jihadis, primarily the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami. In their scheme of things, the battle in Kashmir is but a preliminary move in their struggle to Islamicise India. In their totalitarian worldview, negotiation and compromise have little meaning, as indeed do dialogue and discussion.

As of today, each of the players in the Kashmir Great Game are working towards an aim. India and the National Conference would like to see an end to insurgency in the Valley, even while maintaining the territorial status quo. The aim of the Kashmiri Jamaat is somewhat difficult to determine. In the late 1990s,

IN BRIEF

- Pakistani jihadi groups hope to Islamicise India
- Negotiations with insurgents have not worked well in the past
- Hopes of a breakthrough are fast fading in Kashmir

the organisation went on record decrying violence, but its representative in the Hurriyat, Geelani has now begun speaking of the need for a jihad to achieve a merger of the state with Pakistan. The Hizb's ascendancy came in the mid-1990s with strong logistical support from Pakistan and at the cost of the JKLF. With the Kashmiri Jamaat sidelined, the Hizb is now apparently controlled by Qazi Hussain Ahmed, the chief of the Pakistani Jamaat, an outfit that has been associated with the military autocracy of Pakistan since the time of Zia-ul-Haq.

There was a time when Pakistan claimed Kashmir. But now the Pakistani position has changed. Its aims in the Valley complement those of the Hizb and the jihadis. Whatever be their differences, both seek the expulsion of India from the state after which they believe it would take

just a couple of hours for Pakistan to annex the Kashmir Valley. So the current Pakistani position is to support 'politically' the militancy and demand self-determination for the people of Kashmir.

Recounting these positions, which are public knowledge, is important since placed together they bring out the structural impediments in the way of any negotiated settlement to the Kashmir issue. The most obvious roadblock is the attitude of parties like the Pakistani Jamaat and the Lashkar which are fundamentally opposed to not just India, but civilisation as we know it.

It is this which brings into question the basic Indian strategy of undertaking negotiations with all the parties involved. In the past, India has negotiated with insurgents and even enabled their installation as heads of state governments, but only once has it been successful and that was in the case of Laldenga in Mizoram.

The Indian strategy appears to be aimed at initiating negotiations with the Hurriyat and then expanding the process to include others. That's easy enough, even if Geelani remains a member of the grouping. What then? The individual members of the Hurriyat, barring Geelani, are men of straw. Winning them over, too, would not be all that difficult. But what of their *mehmaan*, the 'mujahideen' of the Lashkar and Jaish? Only Pakistan can help there, but there are no obvious compulsions for it to do so. Even if it does, it will want a price that India will not be prepared to pay.

All indications are that the government of India is on a treacherous slope, with neither a plan nor equipment to traverse it. The Kargil situation seems to have unhinged the government to the point where it is ready to throw away the achievements of the Indian security forces between 1990-1996 in rooting out militancy from large parts of the state. The elections of 1996 may not have been fully representative, but they were far more liberal than those in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the ideal of the jihadis. Today, the jihadis are calling the shots in Kashmir. They have shown no inclination to negotiate or participate in any kind of a dialogue. All hopes for a breakthrough ended with the failure of the Hizb ceasefire last year. To pursue the same path at this juncture is to chase a mirage.

TARGETING CONVOYS

Little other movement in J & K 5-8

THAT the militants in Kashmir are determined to keep the flames of conflict burning in their bid to counter the impact of the ceasefire is evident from their new tactic of targeting army convoys which are relatively soft targets. The army has to supply its men deployed all across the Valley, it would be a massive exercise to arrange escort parties strong enough to ensure foolproof protection. Such attacks would also tend to provoke the troops into retaliatory action. Should arms and ammunition be part of the cargo, the escorts would have to do their utmost to prevent them falling into wrong hands. Both recent incidents have occurred when the convoy was passing through built-up areas where there was every probability of civilian bystanders being hit when the escorts reacted. And civilian casualties spark trouble of another kind. But convoys have to keep rolling. What must cause concern is that the ceasefire, or non-initiation of combat operations as the army calls it, has not progressed beyond "combat" dimension. The focus remains fixed on what the militants do, and what the forces avoid doing in return. Just about every opinion is based on gory statistics of violent incidents. This is dangerous, the troops on the ground would find it increasingly frustrating to follow orders to play it cool in an otherwise unchanged situation. The danger is that should the ceasefire eventually be called off the troops would go on a high offensive. They are, after all, only human.

What is tragic is that little or no political and administrative action has been taken in the last three months to try and make some capital of the gains. Life has become a little easier for the common folk in the Valley since security measures have been relaxed. The ceasefire was intended to drive a wedge between the people and militants, but nobody has really tried hard to exploit the opening. This would be the first tourist season in a decade in which peace was being given a chance. The militants are aware of that, hence their enhanced determination to scuttle the process. Choking tourist traffic is akin to a garrotte around the neck of the local economy. Which re-emphasises the urgency of positively filling the vacuum created by troops pulling their punches.

THE STATESMAN

5 APR 2007

4 soldiers die in attack on army camp by militants

SRINAGAR: Pakistan-based Lashker-e-Toiba militants on Sunday attacked an army camp at Baramulla killing four soldiers, including two JCOs, and wounding four while losing two of their men. This has been the third major strike by militants in Jammu and Kashmir after the extension of ceasefire in the state.

The suicidal attack on the battalion headquarters of Eighth Jack Rifles, some 55 km from here, took place at around 3.45 a.m, official sources said.

Heavily-armed LeT militants fired rockets and lobbed grenades at the army installation before two of them sneaked into the camp by cutting the fence, they said.

The two militants fired indiscriminately at the troops killing four soldiers, including two junior commissioned officers, and wounding an equal number.

The troop retaliated and in the resultant gunbattle lasting more than an hour both the militants were killed, the sources said.

The killed soldiers were Subedar Ram, Tara Chand, havaldar Ghandi Ram and Surinder Singh, the sources said.

LeT claimed responsibility for the attack and identified its killed activists as Abu Hamaza and Abu Ammar.

Two AK-56 rifles with ten magazines, a rocket launcher and two grenades were recovered from the slain militants.

This was the third major strike by militants in Jammu and Kashmir after the extension of truce in the state till May-end.

On February 23, a day after the extension of truce was announced, militants killed six police personnel, including an officer, in an ambush at Kokernag-Dooru in Anantnag.

Militants ambushed an army convoy at Janglat Mandi in Anantnag on March 1, killing Colonel J.P. Janu and another soldier.

Meanwhile, a self-styled district commander of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit was killed in an encounter, while security forces recovered some arms and explosives in North Kashmir since Saturday night, a police spokesman said.

The top JeM commander, identified as Imran Zaki alias Saifullah of Bahawalpur (Pakistan) was killed when security forces fired back after being attacked by militants in Kalaross Forest in Kupwara district, the spokesman said. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

5 MAR 2001

Peace under fire

119-15

IT WAS an entirely different Sopore this time. All the excitement evident when the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, first announced the unilateral ceasefire in December last has vanished. Nearby Haigam is haunted by the killing of six civilians on February 15. Shattered families equate the tragedy with what happened in Chattisinghpora in March 2000.

Alive to the political situation, ordinary villagers mob an outsider, curious to know the latest. "The Chattisinghpora massacre was carried out to draw Mr. Bill Clinton's attention to the situation and the firing (in Haigam) on peaceful demonstrators was to derail the peace process," was the verdict of an elderly villager, Mr. Mohammad Shaban. He claims to have been witness to ups and downs of Kashmir's history. Something always happens to put the clock back, he says citing the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri in Tashkent when he had a meeting with President Ayub Khan of Pakistan on Kashmir; and, earlier, the death of Jawaharlal Nehru when Sheikh Abdullah was in Pakistan almost finalising a solution.

Residents are unable to understand why even during the ceasefire the security forces cannot stay out of their lives. "If this is what a ceasefire means, don't bother extending it," is a common refrain. Take the case of Jalil Ahmed Shah who died in police custody. His father was gunned down by militants for being an activist of ruling National Conference (NC) in 1999. No doubt he was affiliated to the JKLF, but it is a political organisation. He was stated to be close to the Speaker of the State Assembly, Mr. Abdul Ahmad Vakil. Hardly the profile of a militant.

The trauma did not end there. Six more people were killed in firing by the Army, whose convoy was stopped by thousands of Jalil's mourners. Admitting that fire was opened in Haigam and then in Maisuma as well, where a protest was being held and another youth, Javed Ahmed Nath, was shot, the Army is investigating the matter.

The killings in Haigam, Maisuma and Mahjoor Nagar, where six Sikhs were killed by unknown assailants, have had a terrible impact on the public mood. Take Sopore, whose residents had said goodbye to militancy and engrossed themselves in the apple trade. "What ceasefire? Does it mean the wanton killing of civilians,"



Kashmiri youth protest the Halgam killings... a people alienated.

asks an enraged Mr. Mohammed Iqbal, a shopkeeper. "The Vajpayee initiative had lit hopes for an early solution which would ultimately take us to peace but it has not moved an inch forward," sums up a teacher.

People are not against peace, but they want a comprehensive exercise which will ensure the silence of the guns. "Dialogue is possible only when guns stop booming," said a businessman whose livelihood has been hit by the return of curfew.

The scene is no different in Anantnag. A group of men turn angry on being introduced to a journalist. "The media needs news and is not bothered about what the people are facing," was the response from a youth, Mr. Muzaffar. "You are talking about ceasefire. Has it worked? It will not even if extended for another year," he says. "What has followed the ceasefire? No initiative. Only the killings."

The sincerity of Mr. Vajpayee's gesture is still not being questioned, but with no headway being made confusion reigns. The people believe an

attempt to win over the militants should have followed. "Peace with honour" is what they want.

The people's concern for age-old traditions is still intact, despite the bloodbath which has claimed thousands of lives and seen the minority community migrating elsewhere. Lawyers in Anantnag were upset that they could not see Law Minister P. L. Handoo's body being taken through the streets of his hometown. "It is a tragedy that there are no mourners at Handoo's house at Anantnag."

**"If this is what a ceasefire means, don't bother extending it."
This, says SHUJAAT BUKHARI, is the refrain among the Kashmiris, angry at the security forces' actions.**

4/3

said a member of the Bar. This does not reflect *Kashmiriat*, rich with communal harmony, he says.

Back in Srinagar, the alienation has only increased. The situation is reminiscent of 1990, with the city under curfew and people taking to the streets demanding *azadi*. The claims of the authorities that foreigners are not acceptable to the people are also disputed, with thousands of demonstrators chanting "*Lashkar Se Kiya Rishta Lal Ilahailalah*" (Our relation with Lashkar is that of Allah). Note also the procession by thousands demanding the bodies of six Lashkar militants, killed when they attacked the Srinagar airport, for "honourable burial".

The State Government finds itself facing a hostile population with allegations of custodial killings on the increase. With the current extension of ceasefire ending on May 31, the scope for a change in the mood lies in an initiative from the parties to the Kashmir issue which will lead to an end to the violence. The summer will prove decisive in defining the road Kashmir takes.

Police blood soaks Kashmir truce

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, March 2: At least 17 policemen were killed when their vehicle was blown up by rockets fired by militants in Rajouri district of Jammu this evening in the biggest strike since the three-month extension of the ceasefire.

Police said militants perched on mountain tops fired several rockets and opened fire indiscriminately on the vehicle at Manjakote village on the Rajouri-Poonch highway around 5 pm. Nine policemen were wounded and have been taken to Rajouri hospital.

The police team was returning from Gandhar Mouglan village where two people were gunned down by militants last night.

"One rocket hit the vehicle and killed on the spot 17 policemen. It is a huge setback," an officer said.

Reinforcements have been rushed to the area. Inspector-general of police (Jammu range) R.V. Raju will leave for Manjakote village, around 32 km from Rajouri, tomorrow morning. The bodies will be taken to Rajouri later tonight, police sources said.

No outfit has claimed responsibility for the attack which comes a day after a colonel was killed in an ambush in Anantnag district.

Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah condemned the massacre of the policemen, saying it was yet another blatant attempt to sabotage the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

"Had Pakistan shown some sincerity to our peace proposals, these incidents could have been prevented," Abdullah told PTI over phone from Jeddah where he is leading a Haj goodwill mission.

Abdullah warned that militant



Two masked militants at a BSF garrison in Srinagar. (AFP)

groups should not consider the suspension of combat operations against them as "our weakness".

"These militants claim to be warriors of Islam. But they do not even know that such killings are condemned by all religions," he said. "I will pray to almighty in this holy city that better sense prevails upon Pakistani rulers and militants who are leading the state to destruction."

As news of the killings spread,

the deputy inspector-general of police rushed to Manjakote with army columns to track down the militants.

Friday's attack was the second on policemen since the ceasefire was extended for three months on February 21. Militants gunned down a station house officer and five security guards in Kokernag last week.

State home minister Ali Mohammad Sagar today said that a

Pakistani national was involved in yesterday's ambush at Janglat Mandi in which the colonel and four people were killed. Brigadier Bikram Singh, who heads a Rashtriya Rifles unit, was among the wounded.

Sagar said in the Assembly that one Mohi-ud-din, a Pakistani national in the guise of a beggar, opened fire on the army officers.

Brig. Singh, who was army spokesman during the Kargil war,

was airlifted to Delhi last evening for specialised treatment.

Pak on budget

Pakistan said it is taking "appropriate steps" to counter India's increased defence allocations. "Appropriate steps are in the offing to counter the threats posed by the increase in India's defence budget," director-general of Pakistan's Inter-services Public Relations Rashid Qureshi said in Rawalpindi.

Involve the Islamists

A Way Out of the Kashmir Impasse

By MANSOOR IJAZ

WHEN we launched our effort 18 months ago to construct a framework for peace negotiations that would finally and fairly settle the Kashmir issue, the Vajpayee government's resolve and sincerity were without doubt in my mind. Achieving certain milestones, like the militant ceasefire in July 2000 and then the Ramadan ceasefire last November, were at the time laudable goals in and of themselves because they were designed to stop the bloodshed.

But Mr Vajpayee's latest ceasefire extension leaves me with deep concerns about whether an overarching strategy is still in play, or whether we are at the point of reducing the peace initiative to a mere propaganda ploy. The 90-day extension can only have meaning if it is followed with a rapid series of concrete steps to widen the net of participants on both sides of the LoC.

This means bringing the likes of Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan's largest and most vocally critical fundamentalist group — and perhaps its most powerful political voice — into the peace equation. And I mean the boys in Lahore, not the puppets in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. It also means ensuring whatever political unity exists in the Valley now is not destroyed by hardliners in New Delhi who may be queuing up in the "I told you it couldn't work" crowd if the APHC or other political groups blow up in the coming weeks.

Formulas for moving forward have been constructed and, largely, agreed upon. But dangerous signs have appeared in the latest extension move which could reduce a well-intentioned peace effort to rubble because of unnecessary obfuscation in New Delhi.

During my January visit to Islamabad, I concentrated my efforts on finding an acceptable transition for Jamaat-e-Islami from a harsh opponent of the reconciliation process to a "trust-but-verify" partner for peace. The rationale was obvious. Jamaat controlled Kashmiri militant leader Syed Salahuddin, could rouse Gen Pervez Musharraf with street rallies at any moment, was least controllable by the ISI and had a man in Srinagar eschewing the virtues of anti-secularism at every opportunity.

Unlocking Jamaat's door and getting its hardliners to the peace table was better than getting Mr Vajpayee and Gen Musharraf in the same room together. So I went into the

offices of the very men whose virile Islamist colleagues wanted me dead for my role in the peace effort and met with the key Jamaat leader responsible for Kashmir policy for over two hours.

After explaining the extent of goodwill Mr Vajpayee's doves were prepared to show and gaining an appreciation of his political and religious sensitivities, I spoke with a senior Indian government official over my speaker-capable cell phone in the Jamaat leader's presence to work out an acceptable formula for incorporating the concerns of Pakistan's religious groups in the peace equation. While the details of that formula are not appropriate for disclosure here, a formula was on the way to being worked out.

It would address the issue of how to characterise the "dispute" in Kashmir. It would address the triangulation problem. And it would require as a down payment only that

IN BRIEF

- The ceasefire extension must be followed by steps to include more participants on both sides of LoC
- Hurriyat leaders should have been allowed to go to Pakistan as a gesture to the Jamaat
- A reconciliation must incorporate the positions of all parties to the conflict
- Without engaging the Islamists, there can be no peace in Kashmir

Mr Vajpayee give all five Hurriyat leaders their passports for what would essentially be a marketing trip to Pakistan. Perhaps every detail wasn't in place, but we made a good start. New Delhi failed to respond to the crack in the door Jamaat opened that day.

If Mr Vajpayee was willing to take his own opposition into confidence recently prior to extending a ceasefire during which the "kill rate" in the Valley had not appreciably changed, why could he not allow Jamaat the needed face-saving mechanism a visit by Kashmiri leaders, including Jamaat proponent Mr Syed Ali Shah Jeelani, would have afforded them? What could Mr Jeelani say on Pakistani soil against the Centre that he had not already said? Jamaat needed to create a proper consensus within its

own constituency. After all, even Islamic fundamentalists need political rationales to make peace with their enemies.

It may not be too late to implement the formula now. It could prevent important structural failures from developing. There are strong indications that Jamaat could use the ceasefire's various complications to simply strengthen its grip on power in the Valley and set up the conditions for much more entrenched resistance this summer. If the APHC splits, as seems increasingly likely, the divestiture of power could allow Mr Jeelani to be installed as the leader of Hizbul Mujahideen's Valley operations, supplanting the more malleable Majid Dar. Syed Salahuddin would not lose much sleep over the change.

Militant operations next summer would now have a unified political and military commander under the remote-controlled guidance of Qazi Hussein Ahmed. Mr Jeelani's aging moral rectitude would enable the militancy to regroup itself indigenously in the very homes of those sympathetic to his crusade, but militancy orders would come from Lahore, Islamabad and who knows where else.

And all this because the Centre could not muster the foresight to let an aging but respected Islamist have a passport to go visit his brothers-in-kind. Essentially, the Kashmir conflict would be reduced to Jamaat vs the Centre. In that equation, the Centre loses not only the peace initiative but Mr Vajpayee forces Gen Musharraf to adopt publicly a harder line inside Pakistan to stave off an Islamist challenge at home just at the time his budgets are coming up for review and the Supreme Court is breathing down his neck for an election timetable. Can war be far behind?

Mr Vajpayee has 90 days to find a way to engage Pakistan's Islamist movements for a lasting peace. A just reconciliation is one which identifies, incorporates and then iterates the political, military and in this case — emotional positions of all parties to the conflict. It is clear that the governments of India and Pakistan, and the Kashmiri people have vested self-interests in Kashmir. It should now be clear that Islamists do as well. Without giving them a seat at the table, there simply cannot be peace.

(The author is a member of the US Council on Foreign Relations and chairman of Crescent Investment Management in New York)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 MAR 2001

Geelani criticises APHC for talking to Centre while ignoring Pakistan

By M. Saleem Pandit
The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: Senior Jamait-e-Islami leader and former chairman of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Syed Ali Shah Geelani has blamed members of the APHC for initiating a dialogue with the Centre ignoring Pakistan, which, according to him, was required under the APHC constitution.

Talking to this newspaper, Geelani criticised Abdul Ghani Lone and others for sharing a "socialist view" and said that secularism had been a failure in India. Reiterating his belief in Islamic politics, Geelani said that Islam was a complete code of life and "secular politics" had no room in Jammu and Kashmir.

Asked about the inclusion of non-Muslims as members in the APHC, he said Islam had allotted a special position to non-Muslims too. Responding to reports which said Jamait members too wanted to distance him from the Hurriyat for his views on the resolution of the Kashmir issue, the former chairman said it was not important whether he remained in the Hurriyat or not, but he would not change his stand and surrender to the viewpoint of some of the "secular politicians". The Hurriyat was not his identity, he said, adding that he had

been jailed in 1962 and had gained recognition over a period of time by serving the cause of the people.

Jamait chief Ghulam Mohammad Bhat is reported to have expressed his reservations about giving a religious touch to the "Kashmir struggle" at a crucial closed-door meeting of the Jamiat members here on Monday. One of the members even joined the signature campaign within the Hurriyat justifying the secular character of the APHC. Reacting to Bhat's aversion to his views on Islamic politics, Geelani said he would not change his views to please anybody else. He said some young leaders in the Hurriyat had accused him of having an identity crisis which seemed ridiculous given his long political career.

Lashing out at Lone, Geelani said that he had been a "skeleton of contradiction and confusion throughout his political career".

Geelani recalled that when the Centre offered to hold talks with the Hurriyat through Wajahat Habibullah and later through R.K. Mishra, he as chairman of the APHC had declined to talk within the framework of the constitution. But without pointing at anybody, Geelani said some of the members were now hell bent on talking to the Centre without adhering to the basic principles of the APHC manifesto.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

28 MAR 2001

29 MAR 2001