

Hizb militant with Rs 2 lakh reward surrenders in J&K

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 27

IN a significant development, the Baramulla district commander of the Hizbul Mujahideen surrendered before the security forces while four persons were killed including a militant in Kashmir since yesterday, police said.

Jehangir Khan surrendered before the IG Border Security Force, Baramulla frontier range, and handed over arms and ammunition. Khan, a senior Hizbul cadre was wanted in several militancy-related incident. He carried Rs 2 lakh on his head.

Meanwhile, Zahoor Malik alias Muntazir of Kapran, Dooru was killed in an encounter with security forces today. In the exchange of fire, one house was damaged. militants kidnapped and later killed Noor Mohammad Shah of Latina of Budgam.

In the evening militants shot dead a surrendered militant Fayaz Ahmed, resident of Brein, Nishat in Srinagar.

'It is not ceasefire'

■ NEW DELHI: THE Government on Tuesday said it was not ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir but stoppage of combat operations in the state against terrorists, the Lok Sabha was informed today.

"Prime Minister has never said that it was ceasefire but the Government has only instructed the defence forces not to open fire but respond to militant attacks. Since this move came into effect, in the last three months 184 terrorists have been killed by security forces", Home Minister L K Advani said.

This morning militants shot dead two persons at Bagh-e-Nanadsingh of whom one has been identified as Muhammad Amin Sheikh, resident of Sutaharan, Beerwa in Budgam.

At least 13 pedestrians were injured when a grenade hurled by militants on a security force picket exploded on the road at Khudwanl, Kugam yesterday.

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 FEB 2001

Lone's party joins issue with Geelani

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 25. Differences within the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) have deepened further with the People's Conference led by Mr. Abdul Gani Lone publicly joining issue with the Jamat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Geelani. Kashmir - whether a religious or political issue - is the bone of contention.

The reaction to Mr. Geelani's speech at a Friday congregation that there was no room for secular politics in Kashmir came from the People's Conference (PC) spokesman on Saturday, who said that the Jamat leader was getting isolated. In a hard-hitting statement, he said Mr. Geelani had lost even the support of his own party and was hence exploiting the sentiments of the masses.

The People's Conference reiterated that Kashmir was a political issue. Mr. Geelani, a known hardliner in Kashmir politics, had asked the people to foil the designs of the "so called secular leaders", in an apparent reference to Mr. Lone.

Disputing Mr. Geelani's assertions, the PC spokesman said. "even the chief of the Jamat-e-Islami in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Mr. Abdur Rashid Turabi, and in Kashmir, Mr. G.M. Bhat, had termed the issue political."

The Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen Parvez Musharraf, also gave the same account of the nature of Kashmir problem. "It is only Mr. Geelani who attributes Kashmir as a religious one. He stands isolated and if does not get support from his own party why blame Lone." asked the spokesman adding that the poisonous propaganda launched by Mr. Geelani was regrettable.

He said the leader of the stature of Mr. Geelani should not raise controversial issues and level unfounded allegations in public meetings.

Referring to the sinking support to Mr. Geelani, the spokesman said if Mr. Geelani could not get re-elected to the prime post why blame Mr. Lone who had just one vote. The issue would be taken up in the Hurriyat executive when Mr. Lone, presently in Delhi, returned to Srinagar, he added.

Mr. Geelani had openly supported the Lashkar-e-Taiba and said "they are part and parcel of our movement and are helping us in fighting repression." The Jamat leader said that Parliament should accept Kashmir as a dispute and then only they (Hurriyat) would ask the militants to respond to the ceasefire. In what can be seen as a setback to the peace process, Mr. Geelani also questioned the Hurriyat's proposed visit to Pakistan saying there was no need for that. The Hurriyat has already constituted a team of five leaders to visit Pakistan in which Mr. Geelani is included.

Now when there are indications that the Vajpayee Government may clear the visit, Mr. Geelani has sent another signal categorically opposing the visit. Sources in the Hurriyat said the majority would certainly prevail in the executive. But Mr. Geelani's inclusion assumes importance for his acceptance among the militant groups.

The Hurriyat is already divided on the ceasefire issue with one group consisting of the chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, Mr. Yaseen Malik, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Mirwaiz Farooq and Mr. Lone supporting the initiative and Mr. Geelani and Mr Aziz opposing it.

The Al-Umar Mujahideen chief, Mushtaq Zargar, who was freed in exchange for the IA passengers in Kandahar in December 1999, has also threatened to take on the Hurriyat leaders supporting the ceasefire.

THE HINDU

26 FEB 2001

New ceasefire norms

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. In seeking to enforce the Kashmir ceasefire for the next three months, the Army has modified its plans to separate the pan-Islamic jihadis from the local militants and their supporters.

Highly placed sources in the Government here point out that a directive for adopting a sterner disposition towards the foreign militants while holding offensive operations against local militants has been issued. This move is meant to enable the security forces to launch selective operations against groups such as the Laskhar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad. Restraint will continue to be exercised vis-a-vis the local militants and their supporters in the valley. To facilitate this, the cooperation of the Hurriyat Conference leaders in restraining their supporters from carrying weapons may become necessary.

Sources pointed out that the continuation of high profile militancy by the jihadi groups has forced the Army to consider a more muscular response against them. Operations against foreign militants will be launched on the basis of "hard intelligence."

The recent outpouring of Kashmiris on the streets has prodded the security forces to reconsider its tactics towards the local militants and their supporters. The Army now wants to go the extra mile to mend civil-military relations.

New confidence-building measures

In order to improve ties with the locals, it proposes to adopt new confidence building measures. For instance, the security forces will now be required to adhere to a better standard of human rights practices. Preventing custodial death has especially become urgent and indispensable.

The Army, in order to enforce its plans, is looking for better coordination with the para-military forces

and the police. It is felt custodial deaths can be avoided only if the activities of all sections of the security forces, including the Jammu and Kashmir police, who detain militants are made transparent and monitored more strictly.

Greater emphasis on preventing deaths in captivity is being laid as the killing in custody of Mr. Jalil Ahmad triggered recent street demonstrations and subsequent firing in Kashmir. Mr. Ahmad was reportedly picked up by the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir police. The emotional response to the killing, according to one assessment, can be attributed to the fact that Mr. Ahmad was an activist of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF). Unlike the jihadi groups, the JKLF has considerable following in the valley. The firing on the large crowds further inflamed local Kashmiri passions. The Army, in its recent internal meetings has been one of the principle advocates of the ceasefire extension. For instance, it has pointed out that military posture along the Line of Control after the ceasefire is more relaxed. Firing on the volatile Siachen glacier after the ceasefire initiative is also on hold.

The breather on the border, in turn, has allowed the Army to regroup its forces and reassess its deployments.

MSEB pays Rs. 50 cr. to DPC

MUMBAI, FEB. 23. The Maharashtra State Electricity Board today made a part payment of Rs. 50 crores for its December bill to the Enron-promoted Dabhol Power Company. The MSEB gave a cheque for Rs. 50 crores, nearly one-third of the Rs. 152-crore December bill, DPC officials said. The total outstandings for December and January were Rs. 279 crores (including Rs. 127 cr. for Jan.), a spokesman said. — PTI

THE HINDU

24 FEB 2001

Cease Fire

There is a message from the Valley and it is time it was paid heed to: Kashmir is people. It is not a powerplay between India and Pakistan or between the Vajpayee government and the opposition or indeed among different factions of the BJP. It is not about isolating Pakistan in the international community or about disproving the so-called two-nation theory. Certainly strategy is important. But for strategy to make headway, we must first admit that we are dealing with flesh and blood people. And if — as field reports from our special correspondent suggest — it is true that there is a fresh sense of disquiet among the Kashmiris, we must ask ourselves why this has happened. Why have they taken to the streets, when the government is ostensibly doing all it can to further the peace process? The easiest thing to do would be to spot the hand of the extremists in the protests which are now rapidly spreading across the Valley. Without doubt, the terrorists have a huge stake in keeping Kashmir on the boil, which is why they'll go to any desperate length to ensure that the people remain alienated. A sensible government would see this trap for what it is and win the battle by not allowing the situation to proceed to a stage where it can be exploited. The militants succeed in their gameplan each time an innocent civilian falls to the bullets of the security forces.

Perhaps that is why a major aim of the ceasefire was to free the average Kashmiri citizen from the kind of everyday harassment that made him/her resent New Delhi. In the first month of the ceasefire, this, in fact, happened. All indications suggested that the mood in the Valley was slowly turning in India's favour. The change in atmosphere might have held out had the two recent cases of firing not blotted the record of the security forces. Javed Shah, who was killed in the Hiagam firing, was only 15 and, as our report points out, far too innocent to know anything about the protest march outside his house. This kind of killing is exactly what ignites public anger. And now thanks to the focus on the firings, a lot many things of consequence have gone unnoticed, including statistics that support the Indian government. During the ceasefire, fewer militants and securitymen were killed. As against this, civilian casualties rose, which is incontrovertible proof of the anti-people character of the ongoing militancy. Three days ago, militants blew up the towers that send out power supply to the Valley, which again hurts the ordinary people the most. Before this, innocent Sikhs and Bakarwals were killed in militant strikes. Each of these incidents is confirmation that for the terrorists the Kashmiri people are merely cannon fodder to be used at will. Fortunately, the Vajpayee government — as well as all the political parties — has had the sense to extend the ceasefire instead of buying the argument that cessation of combat operations had produced no tangible result. The Centre must follow this up with two things. Keep a strict watch on official human rights violations. Two, launch a massive information campaign about the nature of the peace process and the true character of militancy. As we said before, Kashmir is about people. But is anyone listening?

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 FEB 2001

Pak., PoK invitees put India in a fix

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

APD-13
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ISLAMABAD, FEB. 22. A number of prominent politicians and intellectuals from Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), who have been invited for a conference in Jammu to discuss the Kashmir issue in the third week of March, are prepared to attend it if the Government of India grants them visas.

The conference poses a dilemma to the Government of India that is already grappling with the question of issue of travel documents to an All-Party Hurriyat Conference delegation. Of course, in one case it is the issue of passports and in the other, visas.

The chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Mr. Amanullah Khan, who is among the invitees to the conference, has forwarded to the organisers a list of 88 members from Pakistan and PoK who are willing to travel to Jammu. The fact that his organisation is banned and an arrest warrant is pending against him in India has not deterred Mr. Khan from seeking to take part in the conference.

So far none of the invitees from either Pakistan or PoK has approached the Indian High Commission in Pakistan for the necessary visa documents. "We

would first like to know whether the Indian Government in principle would agree to allow us to travel to Jammu. I have written to the former Chief Minister, Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Shah, who is organising the conference, to ascertain the position from New Delhi. If we get a green signal from the Indian Government, we would go ahead seeking visas," Mr. Khan said.

Being organised by the former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and president of J&K Awami National Conference, Mr. G.M. Shah, the conference intends to bring together people from various walks of life from both sides of the border.

Mr. Shah has invited all the prominent politicians and intellectuals from the PoK, Gilgit-Baltistan (known as northern areas of Kashmir administered by Pakistan) and Pakistan.

Titled "in search of peace and solution", the conference intends to provide a platform to people from both sides of Kashmir subscribing to different ideologies.

Among those invited include Sardar Qayyum Khan, former President and Prime Minister of PoK, and Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhary, Prime Minister of PoK.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2001

CEASEFIRE TO CONTINUE FOR THREE MORE MONTHS

Don't mess with peace, PM warns jihadis

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. The Centre today formally announced its decision to extend the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by three more months. The current ceasefire, which was to have expired on February 26, now stands extended till the end of May, 2001.

As per the widely reported decision taken yesterday by the Cabinet Committee on Security, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, made a statement in the Lok Sabha, spelling out the Government's thinking behind the "peace initiative". Unfortunately, because of a procedural stalemate, no statement could be made in the Rajya Sabha; hence, the Government was deprived of its option of offering "clarifications" and elucidations of the statement made in the Lok Sabha.

In his statement, the Prime Minister recalled that the President's address to the joint sitting of both the Houses on the opening day of the budget session, contained "the Government's approach to the whole question of Jammu and Kashmir".

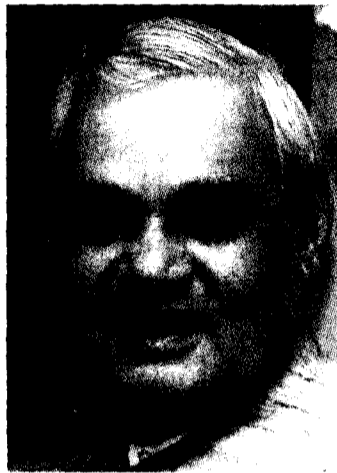
Confident tone

The overall tone of Mr. Vajpayee's statement was of a confident Government convinced of its game-plan. At least, three operative elements could be clearly discerned. First, Mr. Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha that "the Government has decided to pursue this path (of readiness to have talks with every group in the State that abjures violence) by initiating talks with various groups in Jammu and Kashmir". According to officials, this formulation could

only mean that sooner than later the Centre would be "formalising" some kind of format to "engage those groups and voices which are outside the mainstream".

A necessary corollary of this decision would be to allow the All-Party Hurriyat Conference delegation visit Pakistan. Though there was no discussion on this specific point in yesterday's CCS meeting, the presumption is that the APHC's much-hyped visit could come about in near future.

Second, the Prime Minister asserted that "we will not let this (peace) process be derailed, diluted or misused". Without mentioning by name jihadi outfits such as the Laskhar-e-Taiba or the Jaish-e-Mohammed, Mr. Vajpayee's statement contained a tough message: "If you inflict injury on any Indian citizen in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, or elsewhere, or commit any act of violence or terrorism then the security forces have clear instruc-



tions to act decisively and to defeat such intentions."

Message to militants

Apart from rectifying the apprehensions among the security forces that the ceasefire meant no level playing field, the Prime Minister's statement is a "message openly delivered" to the mili-

tants. This message, according to officials, is that there would be no let-up in operations against the jihadi militants while every effort would be made to spare the civilian population of any collateral hardship. In a way, the statement merely formalises the situation on the ground; and, as one official put it, to the extent that it "ends the duplicity", the statement betrays a self-assured approach.

Third, Mr. Vajpayee's statement reiterates the "bilateral" format of talks with Pakistan, thereby rejecting the APHC's penchant for a "tripartite" approach as well as rules out a mediatory role for any third party. However, this does mean a willingness for simultaneous dialogues — with Pakistan and with the APHC, though with separate agendas.

This point was further underlined by Mr. Brajesh Mishra, National Security Adviser and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. Speaking at a book-release function at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, Mr. Mishra noted that "though international opinion is shifting in favour of India, (even) in the best of circumstances a third party has its own agenda. The most benevolent mediator could have his own interests which may not be in line with our national interests."

However, the officials concede that apart from the unpredictability of Pakistan's response, there are many loose ends — political and operational — that need to be sorted out before the hope in the Prime Minister's statement could get materialised.

Text of statement: Page 15
Pak. reaction: Page 13

Bhat escapes bid on life

By Our Special Correspondent

JAMMU, FEB. 22. The chairperson of All-Party Hurriyat Conference, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, escaped a bid on his life in the north Kashmir village of Tarzoo, near Sopore. Prof. Bhat was addressing a public meeting and was about to board his vehicle when people noticed a grenade fitted to his vehicle, and stopped Prof. Bhat from boarding. One of his bodyguards, Ashiq Hussain, immediately removed the grenade and handed it over to the police guard of the local bank. It was not known who was responsible.

When contacted, Prof. Bhat confirmed that there was an attempt on his life but maintained that his death would not kill the freedom movement. He refused to identify the group or agency responsible for the act. It is for the first time that a senior Hurriyat leader has been publicly targeted.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2001

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2001

PERSEVERING WITH PEACE ^{g 8, 5, 12}

IN PERSEVERING WITH the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, operative since the beginning of Ramzan (November 27, 2000), the Centre has displayed remarkable sagacity and the fact that such a course has had the approval of national parties across the political spectrum is highly significant. Particularly noteworthy is that the Government has by going in for a three-month-plus extension straightway — a break from the one-month-at-a-time mode — sought virtually to delink the sustainability of the unilateral peace initiative from the negative impact which every act of massacre or bomb attack perpetrated by the 'jehadi' groups tended to have on the security milieu. The earlier practice of review-after-a-month contributed in its own way to the vulnerability of the ceasefire to such pressures, resulting in the process itself being constantly dogged by uncertainty and the Government getting needlessly preoccupied with the question whether the cessation of anti-insurgency combat operations should be continued or not. Given this context, the latest extension, which in a sense places the ceasefire in a longer-term perspective, is clearly a welcome move.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has, in his statement in Parliament announcing the Government's decision, projected a sort of 'carrot and stick' line while delineating his administration's somewhat nuanced approach to ceasefire. The peace process, he stressed, is only for those who "wished to benefit from it" and the Government would not let it be "derailed, diluted or misused". On the other hand, those organisations that are out to disrupt it or commit acts of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir or elsewhere would be countered effectively by the security forces; he has chosen not to name the outfits, unlike the last occasion (in January) when he specifically mentioned the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed as the chief perpetrators of cross-border terrorism and wanted them to be "curbed and controlled" by Pakistan. If the message is that the security forces

would hereafter be selective in their adherence to ceasefire, being proactive in their operations against the likes of the Lashkar, it is going to be a difficult proposition from the operational standpoint. But the point is that most of the killings and other acts of violence the 'jehadi' groups had carried out over the past three months had to do not so much with the ceasefire being in operation as with the lowering of guard by the security personnel and the inefficiency and slackness of the intelligence network. Only over time and through attrition can the 'jehadi'-linked violence decline appreciably and there has to be the will to combat those elements and isolate them, even while enlarging the constituency for peace in the State.

For all its apparent persistence with the ceasefire line, the Vajpayee regime has given the unmistakable impression of looking at the move as no more than a strategy to 'expose' and pin down Pakistan on the cross-border terrorism front, with the piecemeal one-month extensions coming in a rather mechanical manner. If the objective is to find a political solution to the vexed Kashmir problem — as it ought to be and as is indeed claimed by the NDA Government — the ceasefire has necessarily to be part of a broader and well-crafted package of political and diplomatic initiatives. Regrettably, there have been no discernible signals, so far, of the Centre having formulated any such clear policy, one that seeks to coopt the various political and regional interests in its search for an enduring solution to the multi-dimensional long-festering problem of the State. The few signals as are available only point to a lack of direction; a notable example is the way the Government has handled the issue of the Hurriyat's offer to visit Pakistan in an effort to make the ceasefire a two-way street. Unless the Government comes up with a political initiative without any further loss of time, it will run the risk of losing the advantage of a national consensus of the kind in evidence on Wednesday.

23 FEB 2001

Ceasefire: civilians at the receiving end

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 22. Much against expectations, the non-initiation of combat operations (NICO), commonly referred to as ceasefire, hardly had any impact on the situation in the State, particularly the Kashmir Valley. Notwithstanding another extension, that too by three months, hopes of a political breakthrough which could lead to the return of peace and normality continues to be elusive.

Enthusiasm which had marked the first ceasefire announcement by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, in November last, is no longer to be found. In fact, violence, that too against civilians, both at the hands of militants and security forces, has increased, leading to further alienation of the masses.

When the Centre decided to suspend armed operations against the militants, people looked forward to a comprehensive political process involving players from all the groups. Peace was the top priority for Kashmiri commoner, but today people feel it is back to square one. "It is reminiscent of 1990 euphoria when people used to throng the streets demanding freedom," commented a university teacher.

The ceasefire was expected to silence the booming of guns from all sides. But early on, it was rejected outright by the militants groups, including the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (which was the first to make the ceasefire offer in July 2000), the Jaish-e-Mohammad, Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Al-Badr. Their activities continued unabated. Though the security forces implemented NICO during the month of Ramzan, the situation seemed to be slipping out of New Delhi's hands.

The truth statistics tell

The figures tell their own story about the violence against civilians — not at all the mo-

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tive of NICO. From 134 killings (between September and 19 November 27) it touched 201 (November 28 and February 5). However, the number of militants killed during the period came down drastically from 389 to 153. Against the 707 incidents of violence preceding the ceasefire, 746 were reported after that. The security forces found themselves at the receiving end, facing 95 deaths as against 54.

The initiation of the peace process clearly went in favour of the militants, who not only could hit their targets well but also had the time to reorganise and regroup, that too in Srinagar city and other major towns. However, the only dividend which the Government

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can claim is the situation on the borders. It has remained calm and has certainly given a respite to those living in these areas.

Haigam and Maisuma

However, what happened in Haigam and then in Maisuma opened a new chapter in the 12-year-old militancy. There was not only a drastic change in the public mood, but the incidents forced the authorities to impose curfew for the first time since 1993. With the Government claiming that local support to militancy was on the wane and that Kashmiris would no longer accept foreigners as their saviours, it was possible only in the ceasefire period for 6,000 people to take to the streets asking the police to hand over the bodies of six LeT militants, responsible for the attack on an airport, for an honourable burial.

Then came the moment when people refused to allow two Ministers of the Farooq Abdullah Government entry into Haigam and they were forced to take shelter in a nearby

building. People chanted slogans like '*Lashkar se rishta kiya la Illaha Illalah*' (Our relation with Lashkar is that of Allah). The separatists' allegation that people were being killed in custody, in total violation of the ceasefire, seems to have pushed the Valley back to the 1990 situation.

Political critics

Politically, the ceasefire had many critics in Kashmir. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, opposed the move saying the militants have not honoured it and the violence continues. Among mainstream politicians, the former Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed of the People's Democratic Party, and the lone CPI(M) MLA in the Assembly, Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami, wholeheartedly supported and welcomed it. Mr. Sayeed continues to seek a role for the Hurriyat, impressing upon the Government to talk with them.

Though the All-Party Hurriyat Conference welcomed the ceasefire, they are sceptical about the latest extension. For them the road seems closed since the Government has remained undecided about their visit to Pakistan. "Either the Hurriyat would have been exposed (if they failed in their mission), or by convincing the jihadis (in Pakistan) they would have contributed something to the process," said a political analyst.

Senior Hurriyat leader and JKLF president, Mr. Yaseen Malik, believes there is no ceasefire at the ground level. "The extension does not deserve any appreciation as the custodial killings, search operations and other killings go on," he told *The Hindu*. The Democratic Freedom Party chief, Mr. Shabir Shah, feels unless the initiative is accompanied by some practical measures it may not have the desired result. Mr. Tarigami has hailed it, but has urged Mr. Vajpayee to add political inputs.

THE HINDU

23 FEB 2001

Talks rider to all-party truce go-ahead

Call to rein in Sangh hawks

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Feb. 21: Parties cut across the political divide today to endorse the ceasefire extension in Jammu and Kashmir but asked the Centre to act tough with militants from across the border.

The all-party meeting also felt that extending the truce was not an end in itself but a means to a solution which could bring "everlasting peace" to the embattled state.

Many parties, including the CPM, the RJD and the National Conference, said the Centre should also use the opportunity to begin talks with the state's political establishment, especially the National Conference, which was the first to raise the autonomy demand.

"The ceasefire is a confidence-building measure and needs to be stabilised," National Conference MP Ghulam Ahmed Shah told reporters after the meeting. "But once that is done, the dialogue process has to start, because that is the only way out."

The Centre tried to whitewash the post-ceasefire violence by pointing out that the "positive" spin-offs of the step were not percolating down to the people and more "effective" measures had to

be taken to propagate them.

Opposition sources said the Intelligence Bureau's briefings, supported by facts and figures, made out a case for the extension by arguing that voices of dissent even among the militants were few and far between. Also, India's image before the world's diplomatic community was enhanced and closer home, there was "active" civilian support.

Vajpayee assured the meeting that the views of every leader would be taken into account before a decision was taken. Home minister L.K. Advani — who BJP sources had earlier said was in favour of ending the ceasefire — was conciliatory, going along with the general view that the step was a means to seeking permanent peace.

Observers believe that in getting the political spectrum on his side, despite the occasional discordant notes, Vajpayee has for the moment reined in the hawks within the Sangh parivar, including those in his own party.

In fact, Congress president Sonia Gandhi's remark — "They sought our endorsement and we gave it" — summed up the Centre's intent in convening the session.

RJD parliamentary party leader Raghuvansh Prasad Singh



Two shopkeepers sit outside their dry fruit store without customers and electricity in Kashmir. (AFP)

challenged the Prime Minister to "temper" the Sangh parivar hawks who, he said, were indulging in "dangerous talk".

"They keep talking of trifurcating Jammu and Kashmir on communal lines and this dangerous talk has confused the people. I told the Prime Minister to dispel the confusion that has arisen and, instead, use a strategy that will take the state government and the peace-loving people into confi-

dence," Raghuvansh said. He also alluded to the army's apology for killing civilians and described it as a "clear sign of things going wrong".

CPM veteran Somnath Chatterjee stressed that the question of granting more "permissible autonomy" to the state and Article 370 needed looking into.

The NDA allies, who had insisted on a meeting after the government's exposition on the ceasefire to the Congress over a week

Special force chief shifted

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, Feb. 21: The state government has shifted the deputy police superintendent heading the special operations group in Budgam, central Kashmir, following the recent public outcry against alleged custodial deaths in Jammu and Kashmir.

Informed sources said Davinder Singh was transferred back to his original rank and posted as inspector, state intelligence, on Monday.

Last week in Hygam, north Kashmir, six civilians died in the army firing on protesters agitating against the alleged custodial killing of a local pharmacist.

Sources said the government was also planning to shift some more officers from the SOG in the wake of large-scale demonstration across the Valley.

The move to shift Singh followed allegations of custodial killings against the SOG in Budgam during the unilateral ceasefire, which the Centre decided to extend today.

However, Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat scoffed at the truce extension, saying that "the killing of innocents in firing and custodial deaths are continuing".

A report from Khanetar in Poonch district said eight militants were killed in an encounter with security forces today.

Chance to build consensus on Kashmir

By K. K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. Belated, haltingly taken but welcome. The Government's action in calling an all-party meeting for consultations on the question of extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir did not come a day too soon. It was a significant step towards building a national consensus on Kashmir and could help take the issue out of party politics.

The involvement of non-government sections in talks on the sensitive issue was long overdue, and it was just as well that the future of the ceasefire provided the stimulus. The country could not afford any aspect of this problem — in particular, the question of peace in the State — becoming a pawn on the partisan chessboard. That much was realised by all but, unfortunately, it was not possible to live up to this noble thought because of the tendency to restrict the consultation process to the government set-up, apart from other factors.

The idea of the all-party meet may have been born out of tactical considerations but served a

wider purpose. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, in the last few days, became aware of a sharp sentiment against the ceasefire extension in the National Democratic Alliance, even within the BJP. In the first instance, he had planned to call the NDA constituents for discussions, but there was the risk of the critics attracting disproportionate limelight and, thus, affecting the credibility of the Government's decision.

The Congress and most other opposition parties, on the other hand, did not have a serious problem with the extension approach, though they found fault with other aspects of official policies and performance. By widening the scope of consultations, it was possible to ensure that critics in the ruling camp did not get undue importance. In the process, a unified face was projected.

Today's exercise was an extension of the talks between the Government and of the main opposition some ten days ago. That interaction proved useful — filling as it did some vital communication gaps. The Congress was

able to get a clearer idea of the ground situation, before and after the ceasefire, and of the rationale behind the unilateral ceasefire for the Ramzan month, and the subsequent extensions. Not that it was satisfied with the totality of the Government's policy, but its criticism was based on its evaluation of the problem based on information supplied to it. Its stand did not stem from ignorance about the Government's moves and its thinking.

The consultation with party leaders was useful on many counts. One, it helped the Government get inputs from a wider range of political opinion. Two, it could — hopefully — reduce the scope for thoughtless inter-party wrangles. True, some in the opposition were vociferous in expressing their misgivings and reservations and made forceful points against piecemeal approach and in support of a wider strategy but were supportive of the ceasefire extension. It helped demonstrate the all-party backing to the Government's stand.

Today's discussions were held under the pressures generated by

the current ceasefire deadline and, as such, had a narrow focus. In future, this process could well be widened to cover decisions on various — and crucial — aspects of the Kashmir problem — like the shape and timing of engagement with Pakistan, involvement of the Hurriyat and other groups in talks. The importance of this second problem was highlighted by the recent unfortunate developments in the State — the firing by security forces and the intense sharp protests at the popular level. That had led to the squandering of the gains accruing from the ceasefire.

Since the first announcement, New Delhi had been talking of the relief to the local people, of the respite from the security-driven day-to-day living. With protest demonstrations at various places, could the argument — "relief to the local population" — be sustained? Some in the Opposition have specific ideas on what needs to be done by way of follow-up of the ceasefire — which could be given serious attention in the interest of coherence of the Government's overall approach.

Oppn. holds fire, backs govt's peace moves in J&K

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The government has decided to extend the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir beyond February 26, official sources said. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday.

The ceasefire has been extended for a specific period which is not less than a month, the sources said, without giving further details. The PM will make a statement on the ceasefire extension in both Houses of parliament on Thursday after question hour, home minister L.K. Advani told mediapersons after the CCS meeting.

The decision came hours after Mr Vajpayee received the endorsement he had wanted for extending the unilateral J&K ceasefire at an all-party meeting which he convened.

The two-and-a-half-hour-long meeting, attended by 24 parties, paved the way for the Cabinet Committee on Security, which met in the evening, to extend the ceasefire. An announcement to this effect is likely to be made in parliament on Friday.

But for the government, it was

not a cakewalk. Some NDA partners and opposition parties alike rammed home a few truths. They emphasised that unless the ceasefire was accompanied by a reduction in violence—there has been an escalation in the number of civilian deaths in the last few months after the ceasefire—with a renewed crackdown on the militants, the beginning of a dialogue with Pakistan, and the search for a permanent solution, it would all be meaningless. Otherwise, as the Trinamul Congress' Sudip Bandopadhyay pointed out, it would be perceived as "a compromise with militancy".

Opposition sources said that although no party had opposed the ceasefire, the tone of the meeting was that the government would have to carry the responsibility for its own decisions as well as the fallout. The Shiv Sena's Anand Rao Adsul pointed out, "The government should not tolerate the killings." Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi, in a terse statement after the meeting, said, "We were briefed by the government on the impact of the ceasefire which, they say, has been positive. They asked for an endorsement and we gave it."

Where death still calls the shots

By Aunohita Mojumdar
The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: It's a day after the curfew has been lifted. The family of Javed Shah Nath sits in a darkened room, mourning. Their neighbours are here to console them. No one from the government—neither an official nor a politician—has visited them to express grief for the loss of life of an innocent 15-year-old.

In fact, the family's attempt to mourn the death was met with arrests and tear-gassing. Adding to their anger is the fact that those arrested had to pay Rs 300 as bribes to secure their release.

Rs 300 seems to be the going rate for the release of all those arrested in the spontaneous protests that erupted in the Valley over the killings of civilians at the hands of the security forces at Haigam on February 15 and in Maisuma on February 16.

Javed Shah was not even a protester. A 'simple' boy is how the family and the neighbours describe the teenager who dropped out of school early because of a brain injury due to a fall.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 FEB 2001

Decks cleared for J&K truce extension

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 21

DECKS WERE today cleared for extending the ceasefire in Kashmir beyond February 26 after the government won approval of its allies and the Opposition for its initiative. An all-party meeting chaired by the Prime Minister reached the consensus that "the ceasefire is not an end itself but means for finding a permanent solution for durable peace."

An announcement on extension of the ceasefire is to be made in Parliament tomorrow after the Cabinet Committee on Security takes a formal decision to this effect. Opposition leaders Sonia Gandhi, Somnath Chatterjee and Mulayam Singh Yadav said they favoured extension of the ceasefire even though they felt that the government needed to do more to bring a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem.

SOLDIER AMONG 9 KILLED

EIGHT SUSPECTED foreign mercenaries and an army jawan were killed and a junior commissioned officer injured in an encounter in Dhoom-Soom forests in Poonch district on Tuesday. Army launched a search operation after a patrol party sighted a group of eight ultras moving in the forests.

PTI, Jammu

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan said leaders of 25 parties agreed with the Government's assessment that the ceasefire should be seen as a beginning of the initiative and not an end in itself. The truce needed to be backed up by talks with the "people of Jammu and Kashmir" and measures to improve their economic welfare, Mahajan said. They asked the government to take firm steps

against foreign mercenaries to curb the killing of civilians, which increased during the last three months of the ceasefire.

Mahajan said the leaders did not discuss the question of permitting the Hurriyat leaders to travel to Pakistan. Home Minister L K Advani said: "the government's view that talks should be held with all concerned and not just one group." He listed the government's assessment of the situation after a 35-minute presentation by the Intelligence. "The people of the State are happy, India is enjoying good international opinion and Pakistan stands isolated. On the minus side, the violence in the State has increased. Terrorists have stepped up attacks and the number of civilian deaths has shot up. He sought to "correct" the impression that the action by the army against the militants had suffered on account of the truce.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 FEB 2001

NDA ALLIES TO BE TAKEN INTO CONFIDENCE

Ceasefire decision likely today

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has summoned the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to meet tomorrow to take a view on the next step in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Government has to take two decisions — whether or not to extend the ceasefire and whether to give travel documents to the Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan.

The CCS was scheduled to meet last Sunday but had to be deferred because the Prime Minister and other senior ministerial colleagues got delayed on account of

an all-party consultation on the Gujarat earthquake.

Advani sceptical

However, the postponement of the Sunday meeting led to considerable speculation on whether the Vajpayee Government was divided on the advisability of extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

Both the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, are reported to be less than enthusiastic about another extension, but it is learnt that both have been told that there could be a political cost if they chose to oppose the extension.

Nonetheless, the Prime Minister has taken the extra precaution of mobilising opinion behind his ceasefire strategy within the National Democratic Alliance. The NDA partners have been called to meet tomorrow around noon, ostensibly for a briefing on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir. The NDA partners would be given the same detailed briefing as was given to the principal Opposition party, Congress, about 10 days ago, including classified information on the situation "on the ground", the Government's thinking, the intelligence agencies' assessment and the militants' game-plan.

Though almost all the NDA al-

lies have been publicly supporting the Prime Minister's peace initiative, they have in private complained of being left in the dark about the Government's thinking. On the other hand, the BJP has been almost asking for termination of the unilateral ceasefire.

Indications are that the CCS could also take a decision on letting the Hurriyat delegation travel to Pakistan. Almost all the 'Kashmir hands' in the Government are agreed that it would be pointless to extend the ceasefire, and yet deny the Hurriyat delegation their desire to visit Pakistan. These 'experts' also believe it would be futile to try to determine the composition of the delegation by denying passport to this or that executive member.

Last week, the Hurriyat executive publicly declared that the purpose of a visit to Pakistan would be to try and make the unilateral ceasefire a bilateral one. After this declaration, it makes no difference whether Syed Ali Shah Geelani is allowed to go as part of the delegation.

In any case, the CCS should, the experts feel, speak with sufficient clarity so as to put an end to the gathering impression of vacillation and divisions with the Vajpayee Government on the strategy in Kashmir. This is hurting at the ground level.

Kashmir policy confusing: Sonia

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. There is a marked change in the Congress' stand on the Vajpayee Government's handling of the situation in Kashmir. For the first time since the ceasefire initiative, the Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, today criticised the Government on the issue. "Utter confusion prevails, and the Government is unclear about its own policy," she told a Congress Parliamentary Party (CPP) general body meeting here.

Ms. Gandhi's remarks come at a time when the Government is to take a decision on extension of the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir. Though the Congress supported the last two ceasefire extensions, it has of late been showing signs of restiveness. Ms.

Gandhi described the ceasefire as a "military tactic and not a political or diplomatic strategy".

She also criticised the functioning of Ministries which were more concerned with "finding fault with each other than combating cross-border terrorism". She pointedly referred to the killing of Sikhs in the Kashmir Valley, and the growing dissatisfaction in the State, and said "it is high time that J&K had a policy".

Ms. Gandhi refuted the charge that it was the Congress which had bound the country to the WTO agreement as a result of which it was now suffering. There were inbuilt safeguards in the agreement and the fault lay with the NDA Government for not taking advantage of it.

THE HINDU

21 FEB 2000

2 J&K cops killed in militant attack

NT Correspondent
Srinagar, February 19

MILITANTS TODAY targeted an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) camp at Bemina on the outskirts of Srinagar and a police party in Sopore, killing two policemen and injuring eight.

According to reports, half-a-dozen rifle grenades were fired on an ITBP formation in the Bemina quarter at 11.30 am. Police sources said that three of the grenades exploded inside the camp, killing one and injuring five. Condition of two of the injured personnel was stated to be critical.

Jaish-e-Mohammad claimed responsibility for the attack on the security formation.

Militants also ambushed a police party at Amargarh near

Sopore in north Kashmir and killed a head constable, besides injuring two policemen. The police party, accompanying two detainees, was on its way to Srinagar from Handwara.

One of the detainees was also hurt in the attack. The injured police personnel and the detainee have been admitted to hospitals in Srinagar and Sopore.

Meanwhile, the State Capital continued to be rocked under demonstration, stone pelting and brick-batting.

Undeclared curfew was imposed in some pockets under Shaheed Ganj and Batamaloo police stations, when protestors turned vio-

lent at Shaheed Ganj, Suthra Shahi and Batamaloo. Miasumma, the scene of Friday's shootout, in which one youth was killed, was still reeling under curfew for the fourth consecutive day on Monday.

Local residents attempted to defy the curfew and came out on the streets. However, police and paramilitary forces, deployed in the area, swiftly acted and fired tear smoke shells.

The police also arrested a group of 50-60 mourners at Residency Road, who, after offering 'fateh' at the grave of the youth killed in the Friday's shootout, were returning to the locality.

The mourners were lodged in Kothi Bagh police station and later released.

Stone throwing on the police and paramilitary forces was also reported from Koker Bazar, Lal Chowk, Court Road, Dal Gate, Nowpora, Sonwar, Khanyar, Nowshehra, Rajouri Kadal, Chatabal and several other localities of the old city.

The local authorities had to bring Court Road, Koker Bazar and Lal Chowk under curfew to keep the situation under control.

Agitated youths also pelted stones on plying vehicles in Barzullah, Rambagh and Hyderpora.

Reports from Haigam, the scene of Thursday's army shootout, which killed four persons, said it was limping back to normalcy.

Raid on ITBP Post

Army's shadow over J-K decision

■ Generals warn of rise in infiltration ■ Prez raps Pak for proxy war in House address

2 Pak planes cross LoC, hit by ground fire

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEB 19

THE Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is likely to meet on Wednesday to take a decision on the extension of ceasefire by another month despite reservations expressed by the Army and intelligence agencies.

"The CCS may extend the ceasefire by another month and also put some rider," a senior Cabinet Minister said. The 'rider' comes in the wake of intelligence agencies and the Army expressing reservations on certain issues pertaining to the extension.

The CCS was to take place on Sunday but because of extended discussions at the meeting of the National Committee on Disaster Management, headed by the Prime Minister, the meeting was cancelled late in the night.

Highly placed sources said the rider could be in the form of a pre-condition for having discussions with separatist groups or an appeal to step up the pace of the peace process.

The sources said the Army expressed reservations in view of the fact the number of foreign mercenaries in the Valley has increased sharply and they are moving about freely. Because of the continuing ceasefire, the Army was finding it



A policeman fires teargas at protesters in Srinagar defying the curfew to participate in the post-funeral ceremony of Javid Ahmad Nath who was killed during a demonstration on Friday — PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, FEB 19

TWO Pakistani military reconnaissance aircraft today crossed the Line of Control (LoC) in the Chhamb sector of Jammu and Kashmir and one of them was "hit" when Indian troops "engaged" them, Defence sources here said.

"Two small fixed wing Pakistani army reconnaissance aircraft violated Indian airspace in the Chhamb sector at 1415 hours and were engaged by our own ground troops and forced to return," the Army headquarters here said.

One of the two planes, said to be air observation piston-engined aircraft 'Mushaq', was "hit" and a search was launched to determine whether the aircraft had crashed within Indian territory, the sources said.

"A protest is being lodged with Pakistan for this airspace violation," the headquarters said.

This is the first known Indian airspace violation by a Pakistani military aircraft in over a year. Indian air force jets had shot down a Pakistani navy reconnaissance aircraft Atlanticque in the Kutch sector of Gujarat shortly after the 1999 Kargil conflict. The entire 16-member crew was killed.

"Mushaq is a twin-seater low-flying air observation plane also used by Pakistan to direct artillery fire.

SECURITY PERSONNEL KILLED IN SRIINAGAR

SRINAGAR: FOUR security personnel were killed and eight injured when militants attacked an Indo-Tibetan Border Police camp and ambushed a police vehicle in the Kashmir Valley today, an official spokesman here said. Militants ambushed a Kupwara-bound police gypsy carrying two detainees on police remand at Amargath in Sopore area of Baramulla, killing three cops and wounding two others including a detainee, Baramulla Superintendent of Police, Abdul Qayoom Manhas, told PTI. One ITBP constable Rafi Ram was killed and five others injured when militants fired four rifle grenades at their camp in Baramulla here, official sources said. Elsewhere in the Valley, militants shot dead a policeman attached to the CID in Pattan area of Baramulla and a surrendered militant working with the Forest Department in Kupwara district.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Fear and the democratic state

BHASKAR GHOSE

The attack on Subash Ghising and the shooting in Kashmir of civilians by security forces in Sopore and then in Srinagar are really two aspects of a basic element in our society — to which very few have admitted. This is the almost necessary use of fear as a part of the democratic process. We have elections to various bodies, we have a vigilant press — and now equally vigilant television news units, we have a sternly independent judiciary and a greater perception of the strength of public opinion among people in general. But, in real terms, these mean little.

Democracy and the functioning of society is what happens in the streets, in the *mohallas* and villages. That is where it is fear that governs all action, not participation in any democratic process. Political parties which loudly proclaim their dedication to democracy, the leaders of which bray at public meetings that they are servants of the people, translate at street level into mobs of thugs and ruffians who use murder, maiming and plain thrashing as a means of enforcing their commitment to democracy.

Trade unions are no different; any worker who argues with the leadership is either savagely beaten or, if he persists with his arguing, is killed. The Sixties and Seventies of the last century saw this form of democracy used against men who were working as managers or supervisors. The infamous Subodh Banerjee, who did more to subvert democracy than any other politician of his time, sanctified that instrument of torture called the *gherao* as a democratic means of expressing the people's will, and if anyone died as a result — as some did — then it was the just anger of the people against the corrupt lackeys of capitalism which had manifested itself.

Fear was the instrument used by the left to consolidate its hold on various groups of employees. To be sure, there were among them some fiercely dedicated and committed comrades, but these comrades never scrupled to use fear to further their objectives. When the United Front government came to power, they soon realized that fear was not their monopoly. The Congress mobilized its "youth" groups — gangs of toughs who used fear just as ruthlessly as the leftist gangs did. And then, of course, came the Naxalite movement, when fear became the sole instrument, when democracy and its institutions were contemptuously cast aside for the slogan that Mao Zedong had coined: "Power grows out of the barrel of a gun."

But fear is no one's monopoly; nor is

The author is former secretary, ministry of information and broadcasting

the violence used to instil it. The Naxalite movement was finally broken by that very means. Many tales and legends have emerged from it, when murder was transformed into love for the motherland, smoothly drawing a veil over the

On a slightly lower level, but one that is no less contemptible, is the use of fear by goons of the Shiv Sena and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh on Valentine's Day. The occasion was silly enough, but it drew more attention be-



‘ The attack on Ghising and the shooting in Kashmir of civilians by security forces are two aspects of a basic element in our society ’

cause of the efforts made by members of these groups to stop its observance. (In fact this whole business is fishy; Valentine's Day is so clearly a publicity gimmick brought by some private television channels that one wouldn't be at all surprised if the whole ridiculous business of attacking restaurants and tearing down banners had actually been stage-managed. A good PR company could have done it.)

"Hate is an automatic response to fear," Graham Greene wrote, "for fear humiliates." So we have found, to our

cost. Fear has led to hatred, hatred to more violence and destruction, to more slaughter. Midnapore in West Bengal and the accursed districts of Bihar are terrible examples of what fear can lead to. If a mature society is where there is no fear, and, by definition, no hatred, then we certainly have a long long way to go to achieve anything like that maturity.

One cannot help thinking of the United States presidential election; if what happened in Florida had happened here, there would have been bloody riots, hundreds dead, many more maimed or injured, shops looted and burnt, and general chaos would have engulfed the country. It may well be that American society has faults of another kind — insularity, prejudices, indifference to everything beyond their immediate world and much more. But underlying it all, there does seem to be a general acceptance that fear plays little part in determining what people in general want. Perhaps the PR people got in before the fearmongers did, who knows?

There are other societies where fear has been replaced by active commitment and participation. Japan, most European countries, and even tiny Mauritius. Elsewhere fear rules; openly, as in Africa, or in other less evident but no less dangerous ways in countries like India, China, and in most of Latin America. Control through fear has always been a temptation to politicians, as in this country; but that fear casts a dark shadow which follows the politician around. Hence the security cordons, the pilot and escort cars and screaming sirens and commandos. They are, hopefully, beginning to realize that to control through fear inevitably means to live in fear of its corollary, hatred, spilling over into murderous forms.

The choice before one is, nevertheless, not easy assuming, of course, that there is a choice. But if one could choose what would it be? A society free from fear, and consequently of hatred in its endemic form, which would lead almost inevitably to complacency, to an absence of questioning, to a gradual soporific state where all that would matter would be buying goodies in the malls around one and watching TV? Or a society steeped in fear, and consequent hatred, but a consequence of which is heightened perception, an awareness of different aspects of society manifesting itself in a live, dynamic press, of anxious grassroots inquiry into the basics which build society?

The poet Rabindranath Tagore spoke of a state where the mind would be without fear, and that seems to be an ideal that is worth striving for. But would that ideal state, could that ideal state, have a Rabindranath Tagore?

Looking beyond the ceasefire

By Muchkund Dubey

HD-12
20/2

THE UNILATERAL ceasefire declared by the Prime Minister last December is the most significant initiative taken since 1996 for restoring peace in Jammu and Kashmir. It constitutes a long-delayed response to the Kashmiri people's longing for freedom from violence and a step towards preventing their further alienation and paving the way for a dialogue with them. The initiative has been widely appreciated internationally and has evoked positive response from Pakistan. The cessation of shelling on the border has no doubt given a fillip to the peace process, apart from reducing loss of life and property. Pakistan has seen in the initiative an opportunity to engage India in a dialogue which could enhance the credibility of the military Government, and, more importantly, push India towards discussing Kashmir which in its perception is the core issue between the countries. The Pakistani move may also be regarded as a response to pressure from its creditors to take steps on the ground to facilitate the resumption of dialogue with India.

The initiative has been well synchronised with a parallel move behind the scenes, to hold talks with Hurriyat leaders and assign them a special role in the peace process. The announcement of the ceasefire was followed by a decision to let a group of Hurriyat leaders visit Pakistan as a part of the process. The ceasefire initiative has, no doubt, certain broader objectives behind it, like bringing peace and winning over the Kashmiris. But there seems to be no gameplan to pursue these objectives to the logical end. The initiative appears to be essentially a tactical move to gain diplomatic advantage and to bring on Pakistan further pressure to clamp down on the terrorists operating from its soil. So long as the acquisition of Kashmir remains the objective of Pakistan, it cannot be expected to give up striking where India is most vulnerable. Even if General Pervez Musharraf has the will and the capacity to dismantle the terrorist

The climate created by the ceasefire must be used to start a broad-based dialogue with the Kashmiri people. The only way for the dialogue to succeed is grant of maximum autonomy to J&K.

camp, it will be politically impossible for him to do so. Foreign Governments of course can mount additional pressure, but they cannot be expected to force Pakistan to act as they have other interests in that country.

If the idea behind sending the Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan is predicated on the belief that they would be able to persuade the extremists outfits there to join the ceasefire, then it is a grave miscalculation. For, the Hurriyat is basically a pro-Pakistan outfit, supported by and working in close liaison with Pakistan. Even though some of the individual leaders may entertain different views, the Hurriyat as a group should be expected to play the Pakistani game. That is why Pakistan regards the Hurriyat's role as crucial to advancing its interest through this exercise. Pakistan takes the Hurriyat's parallel talks with it and India as a means of imparting it a tripartite character. Besides, Pakistan would like to use the Hurriyat leaders' visit, which would be a major media event, to project its own line on Kashmir — i.e. depicting it as a struggle for self-determination and highlighting violation of human rights by Indian security forces. The visiting Hurriyat leaders can be expected to indulge in this well-rehearsed litany without effort or provocation. That is why Pakistan regards the visit as the next indispensable step towards commencing a dialogue with India. Is the delay in issuing passports to some of the Hurriyat leaders because of the subsequent realisation that the visit would be used for the above purposes. If that is indeed so, then it has come somewhat too late, as it has damaged our image abroad.

If the objective behind the ceasefire is only tactical, then the entire process would soon come to a dead-end, leaving

a trail of frustration all around and with the ominous prospect of intensified violence and terror. This must be avoided by imparting a long term perspective to the initiative. This can be done by commencing a dialogue with Pakistan and a separate one with the people of Jammu and Kashmir. What should be the gameplans for these dialogues?

With Pakistan, we should try to resume the composite dialogue envisaged in the Lahore process with the objective of normalising bilateral relations, including the resolution of the Kashmir issue. If Pakistan insists on a dialogue confined to Kashmir, then India will be fully justified in its insistence on Pakistan taking effective measures for controlling cross-border terrorism as a condition for the dialogue. In the present circumstances, a solution to the Kashmir issue acceptable to both the countries appears highly unlikely; just as no Government of India can concede Kashmir to Pakistan, no Pakistan Government can accept a solution based on converting the Line of Control into an international boundary. The *status quo* is the maximum that the Government of India can concede. On the other hand, the entire effort of Pakistan over the past few decades has been precisely to change the *status quo*.

Some people in India believe that Pakistan will now accept the *status quo* because its economy is on the verge of bankruptcy and its social fabric under the threat of being torn asunder by religious fundamentalist forces. However, the vast majority of the people of Pakistan, even while being aware of the problems besetting their country, do not see the situation in this light. They do not see a link between their grave economic and social situation and the pursuit of

Pakistan's objective in Kashmir. There are, of course, long term costs of continued hostility against India. But these costs do not weigh significantly in people's calculations. A military regime preoccupied with the problem of its survival can be even less expected to be able to calculate such costs. Besides, one should not underestimate the capacity of a richly endowed — both in human and natural resources terms — middle-size country such as Pakistan to survive on the margin for a long time and even resume growth and prosperity. The Pakistani state is in deep crisis but the Pakistanis do not see its imminent collapse. Given the country's crucial geo-strategic position, major powers will do their best to ensure that it does not go under. And even if Pakistan collapses, it need not sacrifice its organising principle. And making Kashmir a part of it is intimately linked to the organising principle of the Pakistani state.

The only way to make Pakistan stop cross-border terrorism and accept what India regards as a realistic solution to the Kashmir problem is to bring about a change in its perception that India is losing fast in Kashmir and that Pakistan can carry on its proxy war without impunity. This change can be brought about only by winning over the Kashmiri people to India's side. The climate created by the ceasefire, therefore, must be used to start a broad-based dialogue with the Kashmiri people. The only for the dialogue is grant of maximum autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir.

Even a settlement based on the Line of Control would leave intact the demand of the Kashmiri people for autonomy. It will be difficult to persuade even the most well-meaning Hurriyat leaders to join the political process and participate in elections until they are in a position to deliver a substantial measure of autonomy to the people. It is unrealistic to imagine that the Kashmiri people will allow the immense sacrifices they have made during the last ten years to go in vain.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2007

'PAK. FAILED TO RECIPROCATE OUR SINCERITY' ✓

Govt. ready for talks with any group in J&K: President

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 19. The President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, today reaffirmed the Vajpayee Government's commitment to start a dialogue with various dissatisfied groups in Jammu and Kashmir. "I reiterate the Government's readiness to have talks with every group in the State that abjures violence," he said in his customary address to the joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament, commencing the Budget session.

Spelling out the Government's thinking behind the "bold initiative" in declaring "a unilateral non-initiation of combat operations", the President said the step was "warmly welcomed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who are longing for an end to militancy and violence in their beautiful State."

Repeating the Government's known formulations, the President told the parliamentarians that Pakistan had failed to reciprocate "India's sincerity" and that Islamabad seemed to have done nothing to put an end to "cross-border terrorism and vicious anti-India propaganda, originating from Pakistani soil".

Apart from these expressions of reasonable policy coherence, the presidential address was a remarkable exercise in rhetoric. Written in classic committee prose, it merely catalogued "achievements" of the 200 or so departments of the Government of India. It was neither inspired nor inspiring; instead, it reflected the blandness that has come to characterise the coalition Government.

More than what the President was made to say by the Vajpayee government, what was curious was what Mr. Narayanan was asked not to say. Compared to his address on February 23, 2000, this time the President was not made to mount a defence or justification of the "constitution review" panel. There was not even a mention of the constitution review exercise; and this probably reflected the Vajpayee establishment's respect for the President's sensibilities in this matter, which he had voiced so eloquently in his Republic Day message this year.

Nor did the address contain any laudatory reference to the relief efforts mounted by the RSS/VHP combine in Gujarat following the earthquake. There were earlier hints that the Government wanted to use the occasion to pat these saffron organisations on the back. It was suggested that it was the opposition from Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Trinamool Congress leader and Railway Minister, that had put paid to such ideas. Interestingly enough, the President said, "the Government is uncompromis-



The President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, proceeding towards the Central Hall of Parliament, on the first day of the Budget session, in New Delhi on Monday.

— Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

ing in its commitment to secularism." What was more, without naming either the Bajrang Dal or the VHP, he held out a clear warning to "communal and extremist organisations". Mr. Narayanan warned that "the law will take its course unsparingly and impartially against those who seek to create trouble". This, it was suggested, was directed at the Shiv Sena (which wreaked violence on St. Valentine's Day) as well as against those saffron hotheads wanting to rake up the Ram temple issue.

Predictably, the speech began with the devastation caused by the January 26 earthquake, and extended the nation's sympathy and support to the State in the hour of tragedy. Mr. Narayanan indicated the Centre's desire to set up "a permanent National Disaster Management Authority, with suitable statutory authorities in States."

Women's bill

The President also sought to impress upon the political parties "to arrive at a consensus and pass" the women's reservation bill. For the first time, he indicated the Government's thinking on the politically sensitive matter of family planning. "It is necessary to evolve, in concert with the States, a set of incentives and disincentives. This should be enforced in a

non-coercive manner with the cooperation of social, cultural, and religious institutions."

With the Finance Minister due to unveil his Budget by the month-end, the President was understandably short on specifics about the economic policy and long on platitudes. Predictably, he noted that there was a "growing national consensus" on the agenda of reforms but added that this needed "to be broadened and strengthened, guided always by the criteria of whether or not specific policy changes promote the interests of the country and the common man."

Mr. Narayanan offered the feeblest of defences of the Government's policy disinvestment in the public sector, commended the new telecom policy, talked of the need to "protect our farmers against unfair global competition" and called for support to the power sector reforms which could entail a difficult transition "but will ultimately be rewarding for all".

On foreign policy, he spoke of "our time tested friendship with Russia" and approvingly mentioned that "we continue to engage with the administration of the U.S. President, Mr. George W. Bush, to foster a stronger and mutually beneficial bilateral relationship."

Speech highlights: Page :

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2001

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2001

LOSS OF POLITICAL MOMENTUM ^{HD-12}

THE INSENSITIVITY SHOWN by the security forces in handling the protest demonstrations in the wake of a suspected 'custodial death' in Haigam — palpable in the way the army men opened fire killing in all seven civilians in Haigam and Maisuma — has seriously vitiated the atmosphere in Jammu and Kashmir in the context of the 'peace initiative', from the Government of India's standpoint. This and the widespread public unrest the incidents have understandably provoked, warranting imposition of curfew, have apparently prompted the Centre to put off by a few days its decision on the continuation (or termination) of the twice-extended ceasefire, due to end on February 26. That the military establishment, known for its penchant to stoutly deny any suggestion of 'excesses', should have admitted that fire, in both cases, was indeed opened by its men, as distinguished from the police personnel, however represents a positive attitudinal change vis-a-vis enforcement agencies' accountability. Yet it is apparent that the groundswell of public protest was what forced the Dr. Farooq Abdullah regime to institute a judicial probe by a sitting High Court judge into the Haigam episode; the proposed enquiry should cover not just the 'firing' part but the incident that triggered the protest demonstrations and also establish whether the victim-shopowner was indeed a militant and whether he was killed while in custody or in an 'operation', as claimed by the Army.

If the rationale of the ceasefire is rooted in suing for peace in the traumatised State, it only stands to reason that the security forces should display restraint, discipline and transparency of a much higher order than in normal situations. Surely, the Haigam and Maisuma episodes, which arguably involve gross violation of human rights, do little credit to them in this regard. Though not exactly comparable, these have a qualitative commonality with the post-Chattisinghpora massacre (by 'jehadi' militant groups) response of the security forces, characterised as it was by a brazen defiance of the rule of law; some

innocent civilians were branded 'terrorists', held responsible for the killings, gunned down in an 'encounter' and buried in a hurry. It is common knowledge that the repression unleashed by the security personnel in the name of counter-insurgency operations was an important cause for the perceived alienation of the people from the administration. It follows therefore that the security forces as also the police, especially its special operations wing, should mend their ways and adhere strictly to the rule of law, if the people's sense of alienation is to be reversed. This is particularly imperative at the present juncture, when the stated aim of the Government of India is to enlarge the constituency for peace in the Valley and to expose the foreign-backed pan-Islamic 'jehadi' groups as inveterate saboteurs with no stakes in peace and, above all, to isolate them from the local people.

The corrective lies, evidently, in the realm of sensitising the security and police personnel to the basic human rights and the requirements of rule of law. At another level, there is an unassailable case for the creation of a credible, independent monitoring agency at least for the duration of the ceasefire, to begin with, and it should not be difficult to identify and secure the services of persons of high integrity and eminence for such a mission. The benefits flowing from such an arrangement are manifold. First, the very existence of the watchdog mechanism will make for greater restraint and discipline in the functioning of the security forces. Second, and no less important, is that the diabolical acts perpetrated by the terrorist elements, especially massacres of innocent people, would, in stark contrast, stand condemned for their outrageous assault on human rights. While the task of restoring peace is by itself challenging, there has been no movement at all in the search for a political settlement. The Centre will have to move purposefully on the political front, engaging all groups including the Hurriyat.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2001

Army admits firing in somersault

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, Feb. 18: The army today admitted that an officer had ordered "controlled firing in air" at Hygam on Thursday, ending days of finger-pointing between the police and the military.

Both the Jammu and Kashmir police and the army had accused each other of opening fire on the villagers, protesting against the alleged custodial killing of a local pharmacist. Five civilians, including two women, had died and 18 others injured in the incident.

"The convoy commander exercised his right to protect a military operational convoy, and in exercising his right to self defence, he ordered five of his men to open controlled fire in the air and move on quickly to the destination," army commander Lt Gen. J.R. Mukherjee told reporters in the fortified corps headquarters at Badami Bagh.

"Immediately on reaching his destination, the convoy commander reported the entire incident to his superiors," he added.

Giving details of Thursday's incident, Mukherjee said an army and another security force convoy were held up when a crowd blocked the Srinagar-Baramulla highway, demanding the body of Jaleel Ahmad Shah. "Shah was a militant of the Harkatul Jehad Is-lami, who died in a security force operation on Thursday morning."

The convoy commander, Mukherjee said, immediately

asked for help to clear the highway. Police and additional troops arrived and tried to pacify the crowd. Initially, they were successful as the protesters moved off the road and the convoy was asked to proceed.

"As the convoy started moving, the crowd turned violent and started pelting stones and kangris (fire pots) at the convoy. There are reports of some elements firing at the convoy," the army commander said.

The army has ordered "a detailed inquiry into this unfortunate incident", Mukherjee added. The death of a 14-year-old boy in firing by troops at Maisuma is also under investigation, he said.

But the sparks generated by the incident refused to die down. Nearly 25,000 people — one of the biggest gatherings in the state in recent years — joined Shah's Fateha (prayers after death) ceremony at Hygam today.

Anticipating trouble, the government had put the senior All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders under house arrest. But Shia leader and Hurriyat executive member Moulvi Abbas Ansari managed to reach Hygam and led the prayers.

Addressing the mammoth gathering, the Moulvi said that "innocent civilians have been targeted" during the ceasefire. "Your only fault was that you were asking them to hand over the body of Jaleel Ahmad Shah, killed by them in custody. Instead of handing over the body, they showered



A jawan takes rest while his colleague guards a deserted street in Srinagar. (AFP)

ister and works minister were heckled by the angry crowd. They were booed and greeted with shouts of "Killers go back". Police officials had to escort the ministers out of the village.

Crippling curfew

A strike and curfew crippled normal life for the third day in Srinagar, which remained tense with protesters clashing with the po-

lice throughout the day in various parts of the city. Two persons were injured when police opened fire to disperse demonstrators at Bagiyas.

Police sources said trouble started when a mob, raising anti-India slogans, hurled stones at the police at Bagiyas this afternoon.

A baton charge failed to disperse the protesters, who began to pelt stones. The police then

opened fire, seriously injuring two youths, identified as Bilal Ahmed and Riyaz Ahmad. Reinforcements were rushed in as women began pouring out on the streets.

Despite patrolling by paramilitary and police personnel, protesters threw stones at the security men, forcing the police to fire tear gas shells and resort to baton charge in several areas.

CCS meeting to extend ceasefire called off

Self-defence behind Army shooting

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 18 FEBRUARY

A CRUCIAL meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which was to decide upon extension of the three-month-old ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, was called off on Sunday evening at the eleventh hour.

An official spokesman said the meeting had to be cancelled due to "extended deliberations" in the maiden meeting of the all-party National Disaster Management Committee chaired by Prime Minister A B Vajpayee on Sunday afternoon. No fresh date has been announced as yet.

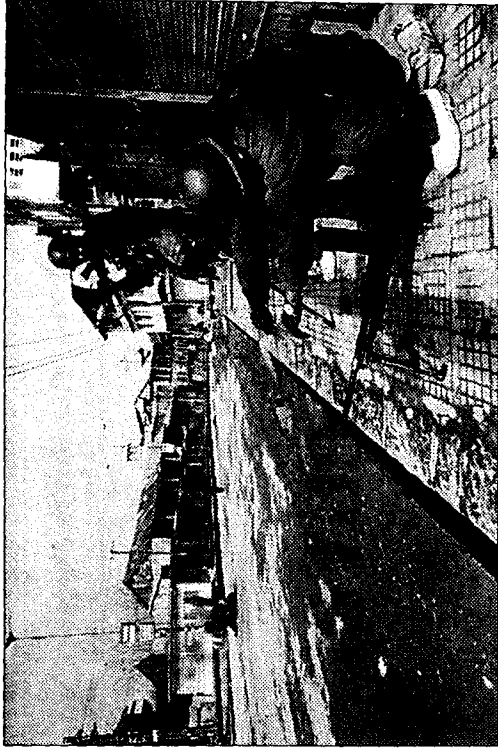
The CCS meeting was originally slated for 4.30 pm but was postponed to 8.30 pm before finally being cancelled.

Since the meeting will be held after the opening of the Budget session, the issue of ceasefire and its extension is likely to be brought up by the Opposition parties in Parliament.

With militant attacks and civilian killings in the Valley on the rise after the ceasefire, the latest being the massacre of six Sikhs in Srinagar, political parties have been describing the ceasefire as counter-productive.

The ceasefire was last extended on January 24 despite major reservations from a section in the government.

The section, on the basis of inputs that the militant groups were regrouping themselves and replenishing their ammunition, had warned the Centre against continuing the cessation of operations by the security forces. The CCS, chaired by Vajpayee and comprising home minister L.K. Advani, defence minister George Fernandes, external affairs minister Jaswant extended the ceasefire till February 26.



UNEASY CALM: Para-military forces rest in a deserted street in Srinagar on Sunday. — AFP

Hygam, Maisuma bring Valley to a standstill

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 18 FEBRUARY

FOR THE fourth consecutive day Kashmir remained paralysed — partly under curfew, mostly on protest strike — over the Hygam and Maisuma killings.

As the curfew-defying mobs remained busy in pitched battles with the police, over 30,000 people thronged the Hygam village, 37 km north of Srinagar, where four civilians were killed by the army on Thursday.

Authorities have kept All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders — Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Prof Abdul Gani Bhat — under house arrest preventing their participation in the Hygam congregation.

Mohammed Yasin Malik, who had arrived from Delhi, was arrested at the airport. However, police failed to stop senior Hurriyat leader Maulvi Abbas Hussain Ansari and separatist activist Naeem Ahmad Khan from making it to the village. Shabir Ahmad Shah has been in police lock-up since Saturday when he was arrested while leading a demonstration defying curfew restrictions.

Reports reaching from Baramulla said people in hundreds of buses reached the Hygam village from Sopore, Baramulla, Pattan and scores of hamlets in between.

Amid fierce sloganeering, they refused to return when troops from 22-Rashtriya Rifles at Ambarpora and Sangrama used mild lathi-charge to disperse them.

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 18 FEBRUARY

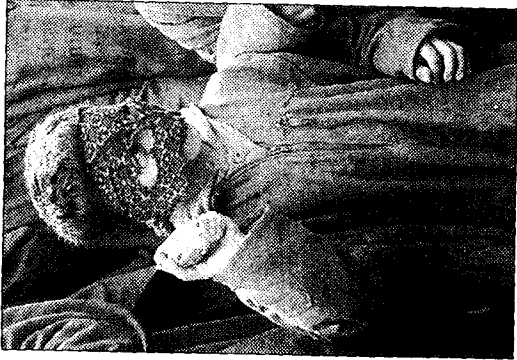
ADMITTING THAT the army had opened fire at Hygam and Maisuma, Commander of Srinagar-based 15-Corps, Lt Gen J.R. Mukherjee on Sunday said: "The action was in self defence." Six civilians, all protesters, were killed in the twin incidents and 20 injured.

In the Hygam case, the station house officer of Sopore police station has personally lodged an FIR against 29-Rashtriya Rifles. And in the Maisuma killing, the police arrested a military intelligence (MI) officer along with two others after they fired on the mob and killed a boy.

Addressing a hurriedly arranged news conference at the Corps headquarters, Lt Gen Mukherjee said a military intelligence official fired with a pistol at Maisuma while an Army officer had asked his five men to open con-trolled fire in the air at Hygam to clear the road blocked by the villagers.

Gen Mukherjee admitted that the twin incidents resulted in widespread violence and agitation in Kashmir.

Though chief minister Farooq Abdullah has announced a judicial probe, the Army, he said, has also ordered a detailed inquiry into the incidents. Gen Mukherjee, it may be recalled here, is ex-officio adviser (security) to the chief minister, who heads the Unified Headquarters.



BLIND TO THE TRUTH: A masked Muslim boy holds a stone during a demonstration in Srinagar on Sunday. — AP

"I must express my sincere condolences and regrets over these deaths to the bereaved families and to the people of Kashmir," Lt Gen Mukherjee said.

"On our part, I give you my solemn word that those of my men who are blameworthy will be brought to books and be dealt with according to law," he said adding the investigations will be impartial and completed at the earliest.

Accepting that the killings gave some set back to the ongoing peace process initiated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, he said strict instructions were given to army that such incidents should not occur again.

Protests engulf Valley

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 17. Massive demonstrations against the killing of six civilians at Haigam and one in Maisuma have engulfed the entire Kashmir Valley with people taking to the streets. This, and the Hurriyat Conference-sponsored general strike, threw normal life out of gear for the second straight day.

Over 40 people, mostly policemen, were injured in pitched battles in different parts of Kashmir. Around 40,000 people converged at Haigam and demanded severe punishment to the culprits. Even as curfew continued in Maisuma, Kothibagh and Rambagh areas for the second day, people thronged the streets raising slogans against the security forces.

Srinagar was under a haze with police personnel bursting hundreds of teargas shells in every area and protesters setting tyres ablaze. Though police resorted to firing in the air at several places,

the situation is stated to be out of control. Most towns observed a spontaneous strike and processions were reported even from small villages.

Reports from Baramulla said, despite restrictions, over 40,000 people gathered in Haigam to share the grief of the families

Cabinet to decide on ceasefire extension: Page 8

whose members were allegedly gunned down by Rashtriya Rifles personnel.

The former APHC chairperson and Jamat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who returned to Srinagar from Delhi, also visited the village and spoke against the Government, the ceasefire and the security forces. Mr. Geelani managed to give the slip to police even as orders for his arrest had been issued by the IGP, Kashmir, Dr. Ashok Bhan.

Another group of people protested against the Government in Pathanpora near Pattan, where Prince Khan, brother of a senior separatist leader, Mr. Nayeem Khan, was gunned down by unknown assailants on Friday.

In Kaka Sarai, downtown Srinagar, some unknown assailants fired at two civilians, critically injuring them. (PTI identified the youths as Farooq Ahmad Gujari and Riyaz Ahmad.) While police maintained that the identity of the assailants was yet to be ascertained, locals said that Abdur Rashid Parray, a selection grade constable working with the SOG, Badgam, opened fire.

Shabir Shah arrested

Senior separatist leader and the chief of Democratic Freedom Party, Mr. Shabir Shah, was arrested along with six supporters when he tried to take out a procession in the curfew-bound Badshah Chowk area.

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2001

Ceasefire in J&K hasn't held, laments Vajpayee

■ Cabinet panel to discuss pros and cons in Delhi today

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
MUMBAI, FEB 17

STUNNED by the stepped up violence in the Kashmir valley, the Cabinet Committee on Security will meet tomorrow in New Delhi to take a collective decision on whether or not to extend the ceasefire.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, here to attend the naval fleet review, told media-persons "since the deadline expires on February 26, a special meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security has been convened in New Delhi tomorrow. A collective decision will be taken taking into consideration the law and order situation in the valley, the prime minister said.

Refuting reports appearing in a section of the media that he was in favour of further extending the ceasefire, Vajpayee asserted that militancy and ceasefire cannot go hand in hand in



A pat for DF Govt

Mumbai: PRIME Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today showered praise on the Congress-led Democratic Front government for its 'outstanding contribution' to relief and rehabilitation work in Gujarat after the quake devastation. "The people and the government of Maharashtra were among the first to respond. All sections of the cosmopolitan city participated spontaneously to mobilise relief," Vajpayee said.

DETAILS ON PAGE 2

the valley. "We declared ceasefire on the eve of the Ramzan festival with a view to provide much needed respite to the people of the valley, but there has been no response from the militants to our appeal as violence has only gone up. The result of the ceasefire has not been as expected," Vajpayee remarked.

Vajpayee said with the declaration of ceasefire, Pakistan should have built up pressure on militant organisations so that they refrained from killing innocent persons. Unfortunately this did not happen. "Prima facie, we feel that Pakistan has failed in its task to contain the militants. We still feel that Pakistan can take a lead in that direction and create an atmosphere that is conducive for talks for restoring peace," he said.

Vajpayee reminded that he himself had taken the initiative by undertaking the historic Lahore bus visit.

On the killing of innocent
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ceasefire in J&K hasn't held

Sikhs, Vajpayee said, since a judicial probe has been ordered into the incident, his government hoped that they don't migrate to other states. "These were unfortunate incidents. We hope they don't act in haste," he remarked.

On the contentious Enron project, Vajpayee said since his government had received a communication from the Maharashtra Chief Minister, his government was examining it. "We will take a decision soon," he added.

INDIAN EXPRESS

18 FEB 2002

India must not endorse any proposal to sort out the Kashmir issue that may lead to another Partition

Territorial tussles

BY ANAND K. SAHAY

HERE IS a developing unease in political circles that the Government may be bucking a course of action in respect of Jammu and Kashmir that may seriously prejudice impact on its defence autonomy.

For close to a year, official moves have tended to place a premium on interfacing with organisations and individuals on both sides of the divide in Kashmir — *jehadis* mostly — whose stated aim is to effect a second Partition of the subcontinent, this time in Jammu and Kashmir. Traditional entities participating in the country's established political processes in Kashmir have naturally felt left out as a consequence. Since Pakistan's past — and the past of its relations with India — have a close bearing on the context in Kashmir, the current effusion in diplomatic as well as back-channel traffic in respect of India and Pakistan needs to be weighed in the light of experience.

Despairing of a 'solution' emerging from the battlefield, in recent years Pakistan has embarked on 'a war of a thousand cuts' — to use the expressive formulation coined by Islamabad's military establishment and its cohorts — in order to bleed this country into surrendering Kashmir through sustained low-intensity conflict. The Indian response has been one of 'a thousand dressings', as a senior official once privately put it.

However bumbling this may have appeared to be, it was adequate enough in its own humble way. It obliged all the macho men at the helm in Pakistan, General Zia-ul-Haq downward, to seek dialogue and face-saving accommodation with this country even as they abetted terrorist *jihad* against it.

In the main, this was because the Pakistani State had itself begun to suffer grievously from 'aggression fatigue'. Thus, instead of making India pay an unacceptably high price for retaining Kashmir (which came about through a happy configuration of history, cultural linkages and the attempt to weave the political thread of democracy), in course of time Islamabad itself came to feel the heat of trying to keep New Delhi on the run.

Pakistan's dilemma was, indeed, acute. On the

one hand, a State founded on a purely communal basis found it impossible not to push for Muslim Kashmir's integration with itself. This meant disregarding the historical terms of Partition, namely, that only territories of British India, and not of the Princely States such as Jammu and Kashmir, were to be divided on the sectarian religious principle. But, equally, it was impossible for this urge to reach fruition, given Pakistan's long-term economic, social and political crises which even today threaten to unravel its fundamental organising principles. General Pervez Musharraf inherits Pakistan's frightening dilemmas in as great a measure as any of his recent predecessors did.

Indeed, he may be worse off than them in some respects; although, to be fair, this situation is not all of his own making. By now Pakistan's political institutions look comatose. Its economy literally breathes from day to day, and gasps for foreign aid.

Much of its civil society has plunged into medieval chaos, thanks to the pervasive *jehadi* stranglehold on the system. Modernising influences have long had their day, and the impetus of democracy has all but run aground. Even the Pakistan army, that pride of institutions, has had its vitals eaten into by an over-exposure to politics, and through the sustained diet of the 'holy warrior' ideology.

Not to put too fine a point on it, Pakistan is sitting on a tinder-box. At the best of times, it has found itself unable or unwilling to honour Kashmir or border (ceasefire line/LoC)-related agreements made with India. The record speaks for itself. Just look at the events leading up to the 1965 fighting, the Simla Pact, the Lahore Agreement, and the Kargil intrusion — not to mention the breaching in 1947 of the Standstill Agreement made with Maharaja Hari Singh.

In the circumstances, how realistic is it to expect that today's Pakistan is any better placed to observe agreements that may be made following the dialogue that it so loudly seeks?

Pakistan's reason for not adhering to commitments is quite simply this — it would not countenance anything less than the detaching of Kashmir from India, whatever may be the Valley's subsequent fate. Given this background, there can be little assurance that General Musharraf, presiding over an especially messy situation, can make a steady interlocutor, even if his intentions are deemed to be peaceable.

In the circumstances, it is nothing if not extraordinary that the Indian Government should have invested so much in the relationship with Pakistan — via direct or indirect talks with the multifarious *mujahideen* groups and through the agency of US-based personalities of Pakistan or Kashmir origin. It is also noteworthy that the contacts were established when the members of Kargil had barely died down, and were kept up even as the Government officially declared right through this period that dialogue with Pakistan cannot commence unless cross-border terrorism was ended.

What is more, whenever the unofficial interaction — which cannot occur without official sanction — seemed to be at risk of floundering on account of stepped-up terrorist violence and killings, it was sought to be boosted by appropriate pronouncements from the top. This turned out to be the case with Prime Minister Vajpayee's *Musings*, wherein he promised to meet the Pakistani dictator anywhere, any time, if *jehadi* terror ceased.

This once again revived hopes of official dialogue being opened, possibly in the not too distant future. The pattern so far is clearly indicative of an inex-

pliable anxiety on India's part that the momentum of back-channel contacts not be lost. The recent massacre of the Sikhs in the Valley appears to have done little to stem this sentiment. When transparency is a casualty, it is difficult to fathom the Government's objectives.

But whatever its aims in dealing with terrorist groups and their political representatives — or indeed Pakistan officially — it needs to be clearly understood that the fulcrum of these exchanges is the Pakistani belief that if there is any giving to be done, it must be done by India (though this is not openly asserted). The exchanges would automatically collapse if India were to make it internationally clear that it does not plan to part with any more territory than it already has in 1947-48, signified by the establishing of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The alternative of accepting the LoC as the international boundary was adumbrated at Simla, though neither side is as yet in a position to openly canvass the idea. But Kargil has decisively shown that this is not a solution palatable to Pakistan. Ordinarily, for India, then, this should have been a moment to mark time or to be developing practicable negotiating positions without fanfare, rather than engage in advertising dialogue-oriented gestures.

Internally, within Jammu and Kashmir, India can easily hold its own as the incredible support for the panchayat elections recently showed. But despite this hugely favourable factor working in its favour, the political class is deeply worried that the Government has given in to entertaining some astounding ideas on the back-channel networks.

These are said to include variants of the so-called 'Chenab solution'. One of these visualises the combining of all Muslim-majority areas of Jammu and Kashmir on the Indian side, including the Shia-dominated Kargil district, with Pakistan's northern areas (the old Gilgit Agency), and setting up this entity as an independent state with soft borders with both India and Pakistan. Whatever the direction of the back-channelwork, the Government owes it to the country to disclaim endorsement of any proposals to sort out the Kashmir issue that may involve another Partition.



Two killed in Srinagar firing, curfew clamped

The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: The bloodletting in Kashmir continued on Friday with two persons being killed in reported police firing on a group of people demonstrating against Thursday's alleged army firing at Haigam, in which six persons were killed and 24 others injured.

The Haigam issue found its echo in the state assembly as well, with the chief minister being forced to order an inquiry by a high court judge into the incident. Earlier, on Thursday night, the government had ordered a probe by the district and sessions judge of Baramulla. There were conflicting reports on who was responsible for Friday's firing. Inspector-general of police A.K. Bhan said the unruly mob pelted stones in a number of localities in the city, defying a curfew that was in force. In the melee, two persons were killed, one of them on the spot, and three others were seriously injured when unidentified gunmen opened fire at Budshah Chowk. The killings were being investigated, he said.

Sources, however, said that hawaldar Harmindar Singh of the army's 15 Corps and two others were reportedly responsible for the firing. The police have arrested them and registered a case at the Matsuma police station. The All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) had called for a general strike on Friday against the army firing at Haigam. Earlier in the day, the administration clamped a curfew in Srinagar and restricted the movement of people in most of the major towns of the Valley to avert any untoward incidents. Despite these restrictions, people came out on the streets of Srinagar to protest against the Haigam killings.

Reports from Baramulla and Sopore said people tried to take to the streets there as well on hearing about the news of the Srinagar firing, but the police told them to stay indoors on loudspeakers.

Meanwhile, there was a ruckus in the assembly over the killings, forcing chief minister Farooq Abdullah to declare a judicial probe by a sitting high court judge.



A FAMILIAR RE-RUN

Protesters run for cover after burning tyres in Srinagar as clashes between the police and demonstrator continued on Friday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 FEB 2001

Protests against Haigam killings

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 16. Tension mounted across Kashmir and people took to the streets in a number of areas today protesting the killing of five civilians including three women in Haigam near Sopore on Thursday. One person was killed and many were injured when police opened fire in Maisuma area in Srinagar to disperse demonstrators this morning. Curfew was clamped in many parts of Srinagar after the situation went out of control.

From early morning slogan-shouting demonstrators started marching towards Lal Chowk. They pelted stones when the police resorted to a lathicharge and lobbed teargas shells. Pitched battles continued between police and the protesters throughout the day.

The situation took an ugly turn when an Army officer riding a civilian vehicle fired at the procession, in which one person was killed and several others were injured. The authorities clamped curfew in areas under the Kothibagh and Maisuma police stations which was extended to other areas later.

But the curfew was defied in Maisuma where another procession was taken out for burying the body of a youth in Dalgate area. In the Jamia Masjid area people took out a procession after prayers and engaged police and para-military forces in pitched battles.

Police said they were yet to ascertain who opened fire on the procession at Maisuma. A senior



A burning tyre thrown atop a police platform in the Lal Chowk area in Srinagar on Friday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

officer said the situation was tense but under control. The Director-General of Police, Mr. A.K. Suri, has rushed to Srinagar. It is learnt police has taken four army officials into custody.

Reports from Baramulla and Pattan said thousands of people came out on the streets to protest Thursday's killings.

As another injured person suc-

cumbed to his injuries taking the toll to six in yesterday's firing tension again erupted at Haigam and adjoining areas. In Baramulla over 5,000 people took out a procession led by the members of the Bar Association. Its leader, Sheikh Mohammad Ashraf, accused the Government of adopting double standards in handling the incidents in Kashmir.

THE HINDU

17 FEB 2001

The Hindustan Times

Failure in Kashmir

THERE ARE two purposes behind the unilateral ceasefire which is being observed by the security forces in Kashmir. One is to expose with greater clarity the real perpetrators of violence in the Valley. The other is to provide a feeling of reassurance to the local inhabitants by doing away with intimidatory tactics even though they are sometimes necessary in a situation as volatile as in the state. Any restraint which the security forces may observe during this period (and even afterwards) should relate not only to the suspension of cordon-and-search operations, which can be deemed provocative by the locals, but also to any interaction with crowds, even aggressive ones.

The latest incident near Sopore where four people were killed in firing, however, shows that the kind of restrained attitude which should be displayed by the security forces at a time like this when the Government is engaged in a delicate exercise is still a rarity rather than the norm. For a start, it isn't even clear exactly what happened on the fateful day. While the police have registered an FIR against the Rashtriya Rifles, an Inspector-General of Police has held the army responsible for the firing. The army, on its part, has denied its involvement and has blamed the police. It is futile to say that a judicial probe, which has been instituted, will reveal the truth. What is more relevant is to point out that such investigations in the past have done little to introduce an element of moderation into the conduct of the uniformed personnel.

It is a failure which has been noticed not only in Kashmir but virtually all over the country. Whenever those entrusted with the task of maintaining law and order face a crowd, their first instinct is seemingly to fire, which should be the very last resort. But crowd control without firing does not appear to be something which is taught in the training schools for the police and the security forces. Yet, where the situation is as tense as in Kashmir, it is imperative that a greater emphasis is placed on this aspect if only because the unnecessary loss of lives in such incidents can jeopardise the peace process, apart from giving a bad name to the country. It cannot be gainsaid that the need to deal with civilians with tact and circumspection is all the greater when they are mourning a death, as in Haigam village.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 FEB 2001

'Farooq derailing peace process'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. A senior Hurriyat leader and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman, Mr. Yaseen Malik, has accused the State Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, of derailing the ceasefire.

"Dr. Abdullah is not interested in peaceful resolution of Kashmir problem. He appears hell bent upon derailing the peace process," Mr. Malik said.

The firing by security forces in Haigam-Sopore in Baramulla district yesterday in which four persons were killed, showed clearly that the ceasefire was not being implemented on the ground in letter and spirit. "The behaviour of security forces indicates that Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, has no control over them," he said, alleging that senior colleagues of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, were not interested in continuation of the ceasefire.

The Hurriyat Conference was interested in creating a peaceful atmosphere. "That is why, we want to visit Pakistan. We want to make the unilateral ceasefire a truly multilateral one in which all sides participate. Hurriyat has disclosed its agenda, it is for the Indian Government now to take a

decision," he told reporters here today.

Taking note of the Prime Minister's statement that he would go off the beaten track to solve the Kashmir problem, Mr. Malik alleged that the security forces, on the other hand, were indulging in excesses upon civilians and peaceful protestors. "Why is this happening? Was unilateral ceasefire a posture before the world community? I appeal to the people to raise their voice in support of Kashmiris who are suffering in silence," he said.

Asked if he would describe the ceasefire as a "failure", Mr. Malik said it had held good during Ram-zaan but over the past 25 days it

had only "on paper." On whether he would support another extension of the ceasefire, he said if Mr. Vajpayee sincerely believed in it then the forces on the ground should be told to maintain its sanctity and not indulge in "wanton killings."

Mr. Malik alleged that the number of custodial killings had gone up to 23 during December-mid-February. Jalil Ahmad Shah, killed in custody in Haigam, Sopore, was secretary of the Baramulla district unit of JKLF.

"Barely two weeks ago, he had donated blood for the earthquake victims of Gujarat. But it was ironical that he had to go in this way," he said.

3,000 more SPOs for J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 16. The Union Home Ministry has decided to enhance the number of Special Police Officers (SPOs) in Jammu and Kashmir by 3,000. The number of SPOs in the State would go up to 21,000 for whom the State Government would be entitled to reimbursement under the Security Related Expenditure (SRE).

The additional SPOs would work with the security forces and with the volunteers of the Village Defence Committees (VDCs) in tackling militancy and providing protection to minority pockets as well as to the national highway.

The Centre reimburses Rs. 20,000 a VDC annually to the State Government under the SRE. The amount covers monthly honorarium, training, and arms and ammunition.

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Quake distracts US team from Valley

Peace offensive turns into mercy mission

FROM K.P. NAYAR

Washington, Feb. 15: An early attempt by the new Washington establishment to meddle in Kashmir has now been transformed into a mercy mission for Gujarat which has brought in unprecedented relief from the US.

A four-member delegation of US Congressmen which left for Mumbai today at the instance of House of Representatives Speaker Dennis Hastert was to have originally looked at attempts to make peace between India and Pakistan and resolve the Kashmir issue.

The Congressional delegation (CODEL) will still spend 10 days in India and Pakistan — including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) — but the focus of the Indian leg of its tour has undergone a complete change following the Gujarat earthquake.

Until the time of its departure for India, New Delhi had not cleared the delegation's visit to Jammu and Kashmir although the Pakistanis are welcoming the team to PoK with open arms.

Jim McDermott, Democratic Congressman from Washington state and the new co-chairman of the Congressional Caucus on India, told reporters on the eve of the team's departure: "Certainly at the core of my interest in going on this trip is somehow to get this Kashmir problem resolved."

He added: "I think like in the Middle East, it drains people's efforts, it drains money, it drains a lot of national effort in something that I hope will someday soon be resolved." McDermott acknowledged that "we know we are not going there with an answer. We are not sure we even know what the answer is. But we wanted to at least see how we could in some way be helpful, because I think it is in both India and Pakistan's interest to settle the Kashmir issue."

But under the itinerary for the team prompted by the earth-

quake, it is now heading for Mumbai and thereafter to Ahmedabad and Bhubaneswar instead of going straight to New Delhi or Srinagar for high-profile meetings with the players on Kashmir.

Ed Royce, the Republican co-chairman of the Indian Caucus, told reporters that "in India, our focus will be on the earthquake".

All the four Congressmen acknowledged that America's help so far has been meagre and wanted more assistance to be provided during the reconstruction phase of the affected areas.

Royce will not go with the delegation to Pakistan and PoK, but he denied that he was succumbing to pressure from Indian Americans in his home state of California, who had donated big sums for his election fund.

Royce said he had prior engagements in California, for which he had to return, but the ethnic media here is replete with stories that Royce is boycotting the Pakistan leg of the tour.

Notwithstanding the CODEL's preoccupation with Gujarat, officials and ministers will walk the tightrope when it arrives in New Delhi next Tuesday.

This is because one of the team's members, David Bonior, chief whip for the Democrats in the House of Representatives, is an ardent supporter of Pakistan.

Bonior, who acknowledged his links with Pakistani Americans at yesterday's press conference, said he was going with an open mind and wanted to see the Indian side of the Kashmir dispute.

Bonior has been instrumental in arranging the team's planned meeting with General Pervez Musharraf and its visit to PoK. The fourth member of the delegation is Joe Pitts, a Republican from Pennsylvania.

None of the CODEL members believes that their attempt to become involved in the Kashmir dispute will offend Indian sensibilities.



A police officer grapples with a protester as the officer on the right orders his arrest in Srinagar. (AFP)

Four die in protest-meet firing

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, Feb. 15: Escorts of an army convoy fired upon civilians demonstrating against an alleged custody killing at Hygam village, 40 km from here, killing four civilians, including two women, and wounding 18 others.

Residents of Hygam and adjoining Bulgam, Tarzoo and Panipora villages blocked the main Srinagar-Baramulla highway to protest against the killing of a local pharmacist, Jaleel Ahmed Shah, arrested a day before by special operations group (SOG) personnel of the local police.

Shah's family members and other protesters took out a procession with his bullet-riddled body as soon as it was handed

over to them this morning, demanding action against the SOG and raising slogans against the ceasefire.

They blocked the road and did not allow an army convoy to pass through, sources said.

Deputy inspector-general of police (north Kashmir), Dilbagh Singh, said some of the protesters started pelting stones at the police. The troops then opened fire, killing two civilians on the spot. "Two women succumbed to their injuries on the way to a hospital," Singh said.

Shah, villagers said, was the sole breadwinner of a family of seven. However, a police spokesman said Shah was a militant and was killed in a gun battle with the SOG in a nearby jungle.

Tension gripped towns and villages in north Kashmir, where, reports said, hundreds of people took to the streets as news of the firing spread.

District officers who rushed to the spot had a difficult time as angry mobs shouted slogans against the SOG and chief minister Farooq Abdullah. "Is this the ceasefire? You are killing everyone arrested by the security agencies in custody," shouted a youth at the deputy commissioner and the Baramulla district police chief.

The district administration this evening decided to register a case against the Kashmiriya Rifle which was involved in the incident. The SOG has directed for arresting suspects

ians and allegedly killing them in the valley during the ceasefire. The district administration said that yesterday there was another case of a young man in Baramulla who was killed in a custodial killing against the alleged ceasefire. The district administration said that the SOG suspected a young man for having links with guerrillas.

The spate of alleged custodial killings follows the announcement by chief minister Farooq Abdullah asking the police "not to take any prisoner as the jails across the Himalayan state are already full".

Local people view the ceasefire with misgivings as it is widely believed here that the security forces have been conducting operations against under ground guerrillas despite the official cessation of hostilities.

4 killed, 26 hurt in Kashmir firing

Convoy stoning may have upset jawans

The Times of India News Service
SRINAGAR: Four persons were killed and 24 injured when security personnel allegedly opened fire on a mob at Haigam, 60 km from here, in Baramulla district, on Thursday.

However, giving details of the incident, deputy-inspector general of police, Baramullah, Dilbagh Singh, told *The Times of India* that the trouble began when residents of Haigam, who were staging a demonstration on the Sopore-Kupwara road demanding the body of Jalil Ahmad Shah—who was allegedly killed in police custody—threw stones on the army convoy proceeding to Kupwara.

He said the army jawans tried in vain to control the mob. But militants, who had

sought refuge among the 500-odd demonstrators fired at the jawans. The latter retaliated resulting in the death of four demonstrators, including a woman and her daughter, the DIG added.

However, a resident of Haigam, Gulam Hassan Wagay, alleged that the soldiers "over-reacted" when some of the demonstrators stoned their convoy.

Asked about the alleged custodial killing of Jalil Ahmad Shah, a senior police officer said he was a

"district commander" of the Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami militant outfit in the Sopore belt and was killed in a retaliatory action when he fired on a patrol party of the J&K police's special operation group (SOG) and the BSF in the Juhama jungle of Baramulla district late on Wednesday evening.

Meanwhile, militants fired on a patrol party of the police and the CRPF at Hyderpora on the New

Airport road here late on Wednesday evening. While chasing the militants, the police found a bag and a wireless set left behind by them, the police added.

This is the second such incident in Baramulla in the last two days. On Wednesday, a demonstration was held and a bandh observed in the old Baramulla town

to protest against alleged custodial killing of a militant Khursheed Ahmad Dar. While security personnel claimed that Dar died in a cross-fire, the locals alleged that he was killed during interrogation.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir government on Thursday ordered a judicial probe into the firing. The district and sessions judge, Baramulla, Mir Mohammad Yaqoob, will probe the incident, an official announcement said in Jammu.



THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 FEB 2001

Along with holding talks with Pakistan, India must engage with political formations in Kashmir

Enter the tunnel

BY KARAN SINGH

THE RECENT condemnable and barbaric massacre of Sikhs in the Valley and of Bakarwals in Jammu is yet another grim reminder, if one were needed, of the terrible and tragic situation that has prevailed in Jammu and Kashmir since militancy began almost 12 years ago. While the horrendous Gujarat earthquake has shocked the entire nation and galvanised it into action, Jammu and Kashmir has been going through a political earthquake for over a decade which has left tens of thousands dead, lakhs uprooted from their homes, property worth hundreds of crores destroyed and the entire social fabric disrupted.

In the broader national interest, therefore, we must begin a serious reappraisal of our policy vis-à-vis that state. Uncoordinated gestures without adequate preparation or follow up are not enough.

We have reached a critical juncture in dealing with this entire question of Jammu and Kashmir. Either the peace process begins fairly soon, or we lapse once again into a confrontational situation which may well end up in armed hostilities and the ultimate nightmare of a nuclear exchange.

India's bold and dramatic gesture of announcing a unilateral ceasefire during the month of Ramzan and extending it twice has received widespread acclaim around the world. But while firing on the Line of Control has died down, the activities of militant groups within Jammu and Kashmir have sharply increased and their number also seems to have swelled. Unless there is some substantial breakthrough within the next fortnight or so, it is more than likely that the ceasefire will not be extended further, bringing the whole situation back to square minus one.

We must understand that the basic problem lies with and in Pakistan. It is Pakistan that right from 1947 — even before my father, Hari Singh, signed the Instrument of Accession — was responsible for a series of efforts to wrest control of Jammu and Kashmir: from the first tribal invasion in 1947 down to the current militancy which began in November 1989 immediately after the minority Janata Dal Government assumed office.

In between, there were the Tashkent Agreement, the Simla Agreement, and the Prime Minister's historic bus trip to Lahore during which the Lahore Declaration was signed between India and Pakistan mooting a composite dialogue. But this was followed swiftly by the massive incursion in Kargil which was gallantly countered by our defence forces.

Thus for over half a century, Pakistan has made

one attempt after the other to substantially change the post-1949 status quo, each one of which has resulted in a disastrous conflict culminating in some form of agreement and withdrawal to previous positions. And in each case it is the people of Jammu and Kashmir — a majority of whom belong to the region which Pakistan claims to represent — who have been the worst sufferers.

The question now is whether this process will continue indefinitely into the future even after both India and Pakistan have become nuclear weapon States, or whether there will finally be some movement towards a peaceful and fair settlement. The formal positions of the two countries are, of course, totally incompatible. Our position is that the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, created by my ancestors and ruled by my father, became part of India when he signed the Instrument of Accession in 1947, and that the only remaining matter is to get Pakistan to vacate territories it occupied thereafter.

Pakistan holds that the entire state is disputed territory, and that the only solution is a plebiscite under UN supervision. However, these positions fail to take into account many significant factors including the ground realities, the divergent aspirations of the people living in the five regions of the state, the ominous upgrading of weapons technology on both sides, the terrible toll in a human devastation and suffering that continues on a daily basis, and the fact that India and Pakistan both rank among the poorest countries in the world while their mutual hostility forces them to divert vast resources towards defence requirements.

Meanwhile, the five regions of the original state of Jammu and Kashmir are all under tremendous pressure and turmoil. From the few reports that trickle in, it is clear that the people in the northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan are chafing under direct rule from Islamabad, while in the Mirpur-Muzaffarabad belt — which is the main source of training, equipping and motivating the militants — the situation is also extremely grim, and several

leaders there have publicly expressed their dissatisfaction with the present dispensation.

We seem to have written off the millions who live in those two regions. But in any 'final settlement' as envisaged in the Simla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, their factor also has to be taken into consideration. It would be interesting if some leaders from those two regions were to visit India.

As far as the three regions which have been with India since 1947 are concerned, the situation is uniformly disastrous. The Valley has been in constant turmoil over the last decade. Tens of thousands of people have been killed including a large number of security forces; the entire Kashmiri Pandit community has been forced to migrate and is living in miserable conditions in Jammu and elsewhere in India; and now the tiny Sikh minority is also being targeted.

In the Jammu region, apart from the continuing pressure of a whole series of refugee camps from 1947 onwards, there has been considerable attrition by the militants. Life on the international border has been disrupted as a result of constant shelling. This has resulted in widespread political resentment, particularly among the youth who are facing massive unemployment and a bleak future.

Although the people there have shown remarkable patience and maturity despite tremendous provocations over the last decade, frustration in the Jammu region is rapidly growing. In Ladakh, the Kargil area was badly pummeled during the war, while in Leh the demand of a separate dispensation has gained strong roots.

In his recent musings the Prime Minister, *inter alia*, said: "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. In this search, the sole light that will guide us is our commitment to peace, justice and

the vital interests of the nation."

Surely, now is the time when bold and innovative approaches are needed to break the present log-jam. General Musharraf has been sending out mixed signals, but his reported statement recently that he was prepared to meet the Prime Minister "halfway" should not be lightly brushed aside.

There is a feeling in some quarters that any talks with Pakistan would be an exercise in futility, because that nation is based on an enduring hatred of 'Hindu' India which will always persist. Howsoever that may be, it remains my view that despite all that has happened over the last half century, given courage and compassion on both sides, there is still the possibility that a reasonably satisfactory solution can be found. Peace must be given every chance, because the alternative is so horrific.

Whether we like it or not, our destinies are intertwined to a considerable extent. It would be in Pakistan's own interest if it were to give up its posture of permanent confrontation with India over Jammu and Kashmir, and move instead towards a co-operative and mutually supportive relationship. We, on our part, should welcome any movement in this direction.

In addition to talks with Pakistan, what is needed is a parallel process of widespread consultation with political parties and formations in the Valley, Jammu and Ladakh to see whether a consensus can be achieved. This whole exercise must begin soon if it is to have any chance of succeeding.

We often talk of light at the end of a tunnel, but we must remember that the light is not visible from outside. It is only when one has entered the tunnel and traversed some distance that one begins to see a faint light at the other end. Unless we enter the tunnel of the peace process — howsoever dim and uncertain it may appear — we will never see the light nor reach the end of this long and tortuous tunnel. In fact, there is every possibility of it turning into a black hole that could suck in and destroy the aspirations of one fifth of the human race residing in India and Pakistan.

Let me end with a verse by the Urdu poet Shakeel Badayuni:

"Har cheez nahin hai markaz par
Ek zarra idher ek zarra udhar
Nafrai se na dekho dushman ko
Shayyad woh mohabbat kar baithe."

(Things are not always in equilibrium
A slight tilt this way a slight tilt that,
Look not with hatred upon the enemy,
He may even end up loving you.)



Four killed in firing on J&K protestors

HT Correspondents
Srinagar/Jammu, February 15

FOUR PERSONS were killed and at least 28 injured when Rashtriya Rifles men allegedly opened fire on a crowd of protestors at Haigam near Sopore in north Kashmir on Thursday.

The state government has ordered a judicial probe. It has appointed District and Sessions Judge Baramullah Mir Mohammad Yaqoob as the head of the inquiry commission.

The police have also registered an FIR against the Rashtriya Rifles.

Inspector general of police (Kashmir range) Dr A K Bhan held the Army squarely responsible for the firing.

"The armymen were provoked by the protestors, who had not allowed their convoy to pass through," the IG said, adding that his statement could be verified from the villagers.

Police sources and eyewitnesses said that villagers, angered by the death of a local youth, allegedly, in the custody of security forces, had gathered on the Srinagar-Baramullah highway. They had also blocked traffic.

The villagers stopped an Army convoy and heckled

the armymen, accusing them of being involved in killing of the youth.

The armymen, sources said, tried to force their way through. When they were resisted, they opened fire on the agitators, killing of two persons and injury to 28 others. Two of the injured died later, taking the toll to four. The condition of four more persons was stated to be critical.

Defence spokesman Col. S S Hayer of Army's 15-Corps, however, denied Army's involvement in the incident. He said that the Army had killed a top militant, Jalil Ahmad Shah, a district commander of Harkat-e-Jihad-Islami (HUJI), during an encounter and handed over his body to the police.

When policemen went to the village to hand over the body, they were attacked. Col. Hayer said that the Army arrived on the scene much after the incident.

The All-Party Hurriyat Conference has called for a two-day general strike against the incident.

A spokesman for the outfit said that Jalil Ahmad Shah was a Hurriyat activist affiliated with the JKLF. He had a medical shop in the village. The Hurriyat spokesman claimed Jalil was arrested by security forces on Tuesday night and was killed in custody.

Farooq on Art. 370

CRITICS of autonomy were taken by surprise when Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah announced in the Assembly that if India manages to get back Pakistan-controlled parts of Kashmir, he would demand the "abrogation of Article 370" that grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir. "I will abrogate Article 370 if India is able to get back Azad Kashmir (PoK) and the northern territories," he said while replying to the debate on the motion of thanks.

HTC, Jammu

Lashkar fishes for funds on the Net

19/2
STANLEY THEODORE SF
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, Feb. 13. - The Lashkar-e-Taiyaba has launched a fund raising drive on the Internet. The outfit has posted on the web the name of the bank, telephone and account numbers in which money can be deposited.

It wants the money to be sent to Markaz-ad-Dawa Wal Irshad, 5 Chamberlane Road, Lahore. A/c No 2011816001 is maintained by Faisal Bank Ltd at the Mall in Lahore. The phone No. is (92-42) 723-1106.

The webpage says: "The Mujahideen-e-Lashkar-e-Taiyaba is engaged in jihad against the oppressive Hindu Army in the snow covered valleys, mountains and jungles of Kashmir."

It's because of the Mujahideen's sacrifices, the Lashkar says, that the Indian Army faces revolt in the "occupied" J&K and Hindu soldiers prefer to flee from there.

The appeal for funds is published at <http://194.66.45.228/charity.htm> and <http://www.markazdawa.org/English/organization/contribution.htm>. Two other sites give Lashkar's view on Kashmir: <http://members.tripod.com/Suhayb/Mujahideen-e-Lashkar-e-Taiba.htm> and <http://members.nbci.com/XMCM/markazdawa/lashkar.htm>.

The Los Angeles Times has said Lashkar's fund-raising drive has been so successful that it plans to open a bank.

Lashkar protest: Lashkar has called "un-Islamic" Pakistan's decision to ban public collection of funds by "jihadi groups", reports UNI.

THE STATESMAN

13 FEB 2001

Shabir Shah opposes division of Kashmir

Srinagar

13 FEBRUARY



Shabir Shah

SEPA-
RATIST
LEADER
Shabir Shah,
on Tuesday,
opposed any
division of
Jammu &
Kashmir,
saying:
"Kashmiris
will not
accept free-

dom if it comes as a result of a partition of the state."

"We do not need such a freedom," he told news reporters here, recalling that the state had been divided into two parts in 1947 when Pakistan-backed tribals attacked it and occupied part of it.

The Jammu & Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party president welcomed the Centre's unilateral ceasefire but maintained that it was not being implemented in letter and spirit.

"If you want to make it (the ceasefire) a serious effort, it should be implemented in letter and spirit," he said.

Ground should be prepared for the initiation of a dialogue with representatives of the people of Jammu & Kashmir and the Pakistani government," Shah said. Alleging that 18 custodial killings had taken place over the past two months, he said: "But we are not depressed as we want the ceasefire to be strengthened so that a solution can be found to the Kashmir issue."

Shah said he was not against track-two diplomacy.

— PTI

The Economic Times

15 FEB 2001

Lashkar to step up violence

Udayan Namboodiri
New Delhi, February 13

THE LASHKAR-E-TAYYIBA is out to step up its activities in Jammu and Kashmir. From the public pronouncements of its chief Hafeez Muhammed Saeed as well as through intelligence inputs, it is clear that the Lashkar's strikes against civilians and police and military installations will increase in the days to come.

For New Delhi, now 12 days away from the date of reckoning when a decision on the extension of the unilateral ceasefire (a fourth time) will have to be made, this is a weighty consideration.

Despite the reorganisation of the Army in J&K and the minimalisation of cross-border shelling, the resolve of this hard-core group to carry on with its *jihad* has a dis-

turbing effect.

This has also belied General Pervez Musharraf's feel-good claim that the situation on the ground was improving.

Friday's attack on the police headquarters was followed up the same night with a massacre in Rajouri district, which left 11 dead. The group's hand is also suspected in the massacre of six Sikhs in Srinagar.

An intercept from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir picked up yesterday had Lashkar's "supreme commander" Maulana Zaki-ul Rahaman (Shahbaji) instructing his cadre to keep up "relentless pressure" despite the unilateral ceasefire, which is in its third month now. Shahbaji was also heard congratulating his boys on the Srinagar Police control room attack on last Friday in which two

14/2
cops were killed and six were injured. The Lashkar spokesman had in fact called up newspaper offices in Srinagar on the day of the attack and revealed the names of the four militants involved.

Sources believe that Lashkar was also responsible for Saturday's attack on the houses of three members of the local Village Defence Committee in Rajouri district. Though it has not taken responsibility for the attack, sources said the operation had the group's signature.

Saeed, in a signed article carried on the website, said, Lashkar was not interested in "patching up" with India. He, however, said he would be willing to talk to Hurriyat leaders about "freedom". "The *jihad* in Kashmir will be won just like we won it in Afghanistan," he declared.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

14 FEB 2001

Centre happy about Hurriyat talks

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 12. The Centre has noted with satisfaction the thrust of the deliberations at the executive of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference this afternoon in Srinagar. In particular, officials here have noted that the executive seems to have rejected Syed Ali Shah Geelani's formulation that the Kashmir issue is a religious conflict and that the APHC has, instead, termed it a "political problem".

Also, special note is taken of the executive spelling out the objective of its proposed visit to Pakistan, and, in this context, the

Hurriyat is seen as coming down on the side of the "peace process". The Hurriyat leadership has, for example, suggested that its visit could create "a conducive atmosphere" which would have "helped in making the unilateral ceasefire a bilateral ceasefire aimed at achieving positive result".

The officials have discerned a rebuff for Syed Geelani and his arguments in the Hurriyat formulation that "some people in India and Pakistan were intentionally or unintentionally trying to interfere and influence the decision of the Hurriyat Conference. The APHC would like to make it clear

that it would not accept anyone's interference or dictates while taking decisions.

The APHC felt that these hurdles, whether intentional or unintentional, to resolving the issue were the outcome of negative thinking and did not reflect the view of the common man.

In fact, the proponents of the "peace process" within the Vajpayee Government have been invoking the sense of relief felt by the "common man" in the Kashmir Valley following the ceasefire by the security forces. And, now the Hurriyat executive has invoked the "common man".

The officials have also noted

the huge turnout at a rally at Hajan in Baramulla district last Saturday. The rally, one of the biggest political gatherings in recent years, was addressed by the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and Mr. Kukka Parray, of the Awami League.

According to one estimate, as many as 30,000 people attended the meeting where anti-Pakistan slogans were raised.

Despite the fact that the State Government machinery appears to have been used to bring people to the rally, the officials believe that the meeting was reflective of the changed mood in the Valley.

THE HINDU

13 FEB 2001

THE Centre's decision to extend the ongoing ceasefire in Kashmir is welcome and Pakistan's response is appreciated. Using this as a fulcrum, it would be incumbent for both India and Pakistan to come to terms with certain realities in Kashmir and proactively find a final solution to this 53-year-old crisis plaguing the subcontinent. Several factors need to be re-assessed in this context.

First, there is no way that India can hope to solve the problem without involving Pakistan's attendance in the process. New Delhi was singularly partisan when it abjured talking to Islamabad at the time of the Hizb-ul Mujahideen's unilateral ceasefire in 2000 and consequently, the opportunity came to nought. Our attitude of not having to do any parleying with a military regime is hollow: witness our attempts to bolster relations with Myanmar. The less said about India's ersatz stance on terrorism the better — it quietly released five convicted gunrunners in the Purulia arms drop case and presumably the sixth culprit, Peter Bleach, will go free, too. Veerappan's unrestricted marauding is another sample. India has not bothered to formulate a comprehensive methodology to combat terrorism in Kashmir. Hence, its predicting cessation of sponsored terrorism as a precondition for talks with Pakistan does not cut much ice.

Second, India has steadfastly crowed that we do not want third-party mediation on Kashmir. In any governance system, whenever a dispute between two parties cannot be mutually resolved, a third party usually in the shape of a court invariably is called in to adjudicate.

Following nuclearisation, the subcontinent's status as an international nuclear flashpoint has got acutely enhanced and who knows whether a second Kargil might end up with the employment of weapons of mass destruction by both adversaries. Ergo, it would be prudent for India and Pakistan to invite a group of nations comprising say, China, Russia, the European Union, the USA and the Organisation of Islamic Conference to set up a roundtable along with the two host countries for deliberations on Kashmir. The adage, "Two heads are better than one," is apt in this context.

Third — and very importantly — what is the significance of the Line of Control? Ever since the first Jammu and Kashmir operations, the LoC has been treated as a *de facto* international border by India and Pakistan. The Shimla Agreement of 1972 indirectly conveys this fact and both Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto agreed in principle to convert the LoC into a formal border as soon as Bhutto gave the green signal. Regrettably, this signal never

materialised. Even during the height of the Kargil war, the LoC assumed the same *locus standi* as an international border, with leading nations of the world urging India and Pakistan to honour it thus. India's not crossing the LoC carried an explicit message that doing so would tantamount to transgressing diplomatic caveats and would lead to exacerbating the conflict, in all probability resulting in a major war. Hence in a manner of speaking, the solution to the Kashmir problem already exists, namely, "converting the LoC into a border".

This is what Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah has been iterating time and again. What is on demand is the implementation of this fiat and to this end, a multinational roundtable would be ideal to ensure its incorporation. Perhaps, New Delhi and Islamabad are chary of going it on their own to press this home because of assumed hostile reactions from either side of the LoC. Surely both countries realise that there can be no other pragmatic way out of the impasse.

Fourth, Article 370 seems to have done more harm than good. This so-called "special restriction" has created a psychological obstacle between Kashmir and the



Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah with militant-turned politician Kukka Parry praying for peace at a rally in Hajin on Saturday. — AP/PTI

rest of the country. Visitors from the mainland are even today looked at suspiciously by the residents of Kashmir. The feeling, "We are Kashmiris, you are Indians", persists to a fault which in turn has encouraged separatism. This unhealthy psychological divide needs to be eradicated and the only sure way of doing so would be to rescind this Article. Such an act by India will greatly help in integrating the Kashmir with the rest of their countrymen. Article 370 has inflicted the same damage on India's psyche as the Inner Line Permit has done in the North-east.

Going by our convoluted definition of the term, does it not imply that the other states in India lack secularism? If Abdul

For want of fly swatters

There thrives an unholy truism courtesy Niccolo Machiavelli that a politician would much rather keep a problem alive than solve it because a burning issue is more profitable for him. And Kashmir is rife with slush funds from the arms and drugs business. Politicians of all hues from India and Pakistan are making hay surreptitiously, writes JK DUTT

ulterior motives. It did nothing of the sort in the case of Hyderabad or Junagadh. Hyderabad has an analogy with Kashmir, the difference being in the former matter the Indian Army took the logical conclusion whereas in the latter India called a wholly unwarranted stop to the war just when its forces had managed to regain the initiative from Pakistan.

This displayed crass political chicanery for which Jawaharlal Nehru is culpable.

The long-term consequences of this deliberate ill-gotten gains curtailed by peace being induced into Kashmir; likewise for drug barons.

India and Pakistan have to forcefully put an end to this "death trade" if peace is to be meaningful.

India must activate the impetus for approaching the Kashmir problem. Tokens like autonomy mean nothing. Pakistan's reaction to the Gejjarat earthquake disaster has been praiseworthy. On India's part, it has to shed its inhibitions and open talks with Pakistan over Kashmir with a positive mind.

Rehman Antulay could be the c. minister of Maharashtra, appointing non-Muslim to be likewise in Kashmir will strengthen the concept of secularism. Obviously, vested interests have twisted secularism to suit their own purpose, a purpose which got terribly compounded by the Babari Masjid outrage.

Finally, notwithstanding the conversion of the LoC into a border, India needs to substantiate this border on similar lines as the erstwhile Berlin Wall.

India has to institute a "no man's land" over a depth of three to four kilometres on the Indian side of the border and relocate the affected villages elsewhere.

This stretch should be developed into an effective movement barrier by employing mines, booby traps, barbed wire concertina, improvised explosive devices, pre-registered artillery and mortar targets, machine gun sweeps and the like.

No unauthorised person should be able to freely negotiate the area as has been happening for over the past 50 years. India must also install modern surveillance systems all along the stretch to include physical, electronic and terrestrial modes keeping in mind the erstwhile Warsaw Pact maxim, "Not a fly should get through unchallenged!"

There thrives an unholy truism courtesy Niccolo Machiavelli that a politician would solve it because a burning issue is more profitable for him. Applying this to Kashmir, one fact of life is apparent — this area is rife with slush funds emanating from the arms and drugs business and politicians of all hues from both countries have been making hay surreptitiously.

The Kalashnikov small arms company of Russia considers Kashmir one of its largest markets because both insurgents and the security forces use its renowned range of weapons. Arms merchants make colossal gains — duly shared by many, of course — and there is no gainsaying that they would be most unhappy to see their ill-gotten gains curtailed by peace being induced into Kashmir; likewise for drug barons.

India and Pakistan have to forcefully put an end to this "death trade" if peace is to be meaningful.

India must activate the impetus for approaching the Kashmir problem. Tokens like autonomy mean nothing. Pakistan's reaction to the Gejjarat earthquake disaster has been praiseworthy. On India's part, it has to shed its inhibitions and open talks with Pakistan over Kashmir with a positive mind.

(The author is Lieutenant-Colonel, retired, Indian Army.)

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2001

15/2 THE IMPERATIVES IN KASHMIR

THE KILLING OF 15 innocent persons, including seven children, in Rajouri district on February 9/10 night is perhaps the most heinous of the attacks mounted by the jihadi militant groups in the Jammu region over the past two months and more since the Government of India's unilateral ceasefire came into operation. Earlier in the day and elsewhere in Srinagar, a four-member squad had stormed the control room of the police headquarters and the encounter left nine police officials and two armed assailants dead. To say that the Rajouri carnage and the Srinagar incident were a part of the pro-Pakistani pan-Islamic outfits' grand design to sabotage the peace initiative is to stress the obvious. The targets they pick — security personnel, members of the special police force involved in anti-insurgency operations and village defence committee members or their families (as in Rajouri), besides the symbols of Governmental authority — are intended to underline that they are the ones who call the shots and therefore can strike at will. Second, that they are determined to frustrate the ongoing, as yet incipient — and vague — peace process and, in pursuance of that objective, will continue to provoke the Government into calling off the ceasefire. The February 3 episode in Srinagar, which accounted for the death of six persons belonging to the Sikh community, was predictably seen as reinforcing, post the Chattisinghpura massacre (March 2000), a sinister aspect of the 'jihadi' elements' gameplan — to 'cleanse' the Valley of minority religious groups by generating panic among them through periodic killings. It was just as well that the Centre, even if it be under pressure from the Akali Dal — a partner in the ruling NDA — got a plan of action worked out in consultation with the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, for beefing up the Sikhs-specific security arrangement; its adequacy and effectiveness on the ground, of

course, remain to be tested. HD-12

The spate of killings by the foreign-based militant outfits, quite a few of which have right from the beginning made their intention clear, has undoubtedly brought the ceasefire under tremendous pressure and the chances of this easing are obviously not particularly bright. Needless to say that it is imperative for the administration and the security agencies to identify the weak spots in the security framework and remove them forthwith. At the same time, it needs to be remembered that ceasefire — an undoubtedly laudable initiative by India — is not an end in itself but only a step in the search for a political solution and must be backed by appropriate follow-up moves, both political and strategic. This is precisely where the NDA regime seems to be floundering. Take for instance the question of a Hurriyat delegation's visit to Pakistan. Having gone along with, if not actively promoted, the unexceptionable idea of letting a Hurriyat team interact with the leaders of the various 'jihadi' outfits as also the Pakistan Government, it makes little political or diplomatic sense to stall the initiative by not clearing the travel documents for the reason that the proposed five-member squad included Syed Ali Shah Geelani, a diehard exponent of merger with Pakistan. And this, despite the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's declaration in his Kerala musings that the Government "shall not traverse solely on the beaten track of the past". Given that the stated mission of the Hurriyat is to explore ways of strengthening the peace process, it is only fair that the team should be given the chance to undertake the trip. Noteworthy in the context of the Hurriyat's consensually positive approach is the JKLF chairman, Mr. Yaseen Malik's passionate plea against 'Sikh migration' out of the State in the wake of perceived insecurity.

THE HINDU

13 FEB 2001

~~Farooq: I was never against ceasefire~~

Hajin (Kashmir), February 11

JAMMU AND Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah says he was never against the unilateral ceasefire and will carry forward the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Kashmir. "My party is committed to peace in Kashmir and will support every effort in this direction," Abdullah told a rally here yesterday. Describing as misleading reports that he was opposed to the truce, he said, "I am was never against the unilateral ceasefire as is being made out in a section of the media." While security forces had stopped their operations against militants, ultras sponsored by a "neighbouring" country were on a killing spree, he told the rally.

Abdullah said he was consistent in his views that silence on the borders was meaningless, when guns were booming in the hinterland and innocents were being killed. (PTI)

Hurriyat leaders share dais with Fernandes

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, February 11

LAST WEEK'S massacre of Sikhs in Srinagar brought together separatists leaders of Kashmir and Defence Minister George Fernandes.

They, along with a group of Sikh leaders from Punjab, shared the platform at Mahjoor Nagar, on the 10th day of mourning of the slain Sikhs, on Sunday.

Shabir Ahmad Shah, the chief of the Democratic Freedom Party, and senior Hurriyat Conference leaders, Yasin Malik and Abdul Gani Lone, too were present.

A section of enraged Sikhs objected to the presence of the separatist leaders and raised slogans against them. However, Shabir Ahmad Shah got up and made a speech to assuage the feelings of the agitating Sikhs. Shah condemned the massacre in bitter words and told them that the act was against the Islamic teachings. He urged the Sikhs not to migrate as it would affect the Valley's social

fabric. Lone and Malik also assured the Sikhs that the majority community had all love and sympathy for them.

The Defence Minister and the Sikh leaders also addressed the gathering. The Hurriyat leaders were present there all through the proceedings.

The Sikh leaders and Kashmir's separatists leaders are holding another meeting on Monday.

In Anantnag, militants fired on a CRPF picket guarding the ancestral house of state's Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pyarelal Handoo.

The guards returned the fire. Two auto-rickshaw drivers were caught in the crossfire and were injured.

Meanwhile, a meeting of the Combined Unified Headquarters was held on Sunday to review the security scenario of the state. Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah chaired the meeting. The Defence Minister was also present. The outcome of the meeting was not immediately known.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 FEB 2001

JKLF STRIKE AFFECTS NORMAL LIFE

Fernandes, Farooq review security in Kashmir

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 11. The Unified Headquarters of all law enforcing agencies in Jammu and Kashmir today reviewed the security situation at a meeting chaired by the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah. The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, a special invitee, was briefed about the measures being taken to tackle the militants.

The meeting was called to dis-

cuss the situation following the February 3 killing of six Sikhs in Srinagar's Mehjoor Nagar area and the militants' attack on the police control room in the State capital on Friday last.

The Chief Secretary, Mr. Ashok Jaitly, the Director-General of Police, Mr. A. K. Suri, the Commanders of 15 and 16 Corps, Lt. Gen. J R Mukherjee and Lt. Gen. A. S. Khanna, were present.

The strike called by the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front to commemorate the death anniversary of its founder, Maqbool Butt, hanged in Tihar Jail in 1984, crippled normal life in the Kashmir Valley today. All shops and business establishments were closed and traffic disrupted.

Over a dozen JKLF activists, who tried to take out a procession, were arrested while demon-

strators pelted stones at the police in the Maisuma area. Last evening, militants lobbed grenades and fired indiscriminately at the house of the Law Minister, Mr. P. L. Handoo, who along with his family was here. The Minister's security guards repulsed the attack.

Lashkar 'warning'

Meanwhile, the pan-Islamic Lashkar-e-Taiba has asked the State police to resign en masse or face the consequences. The threat follows the attack on the Srinagar PCR, in which eight policemen and two militants were killed.

A Lashkar spokesman told a news agency in Srinagar that recent "custodial killings" by the Special Operations Group and other agencies prompted the warning. The outfit would intensify attacks on patrol parties and police stations and would not allow "atrocities against the people of Kashmir", the spokesman said. So far, militant outfits had spared the police, particularly those not directly involved in anti-militancy operations. The threat has triggered panic in the police department. Presently, security cover is provided only to top police officials and their families.

However, Mr. Suri said the warning would have no effect on the morale of the force. "I would rather suggest that they (Lashkar) resign as the State police is capable of meeting any challenge," he said. "They (militants) will find the police very much active and the fact that the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen and the Hizbul Momineen were wiped out was solely due to the efforts of the police. The Lashkar suffered losses at the airport and other places primarily because of police," said Mr. Suri adding "we will not be deterred by such threats."

30 injured in clashes

PTI reports:

In Jammu, at least 30 persons were injured when police resorted to lathicharge and teargas to disperse demonstrators who were protesting the abduction of a school girl by youth belonging to another community.

Reports from Udhampur said that over 5000 people, including women, defying curfew restrictions assembled in Barian Mohalla around noon and later raising slogans against the administration proceeded towards the Deputy Commissioner's office.

As they neared the office, the police resorted to lathicharge to disperse the demonstrators. When it did not bring the desired results, police later fired several rounds of teargas shells, the reports said.



The Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, addressing the Bhog ceremony of Sikhs at Mehjoor Nagar, in Srinagar, on Sunday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

THE HINDU

12 FEB 2001

H10-1
11/2

Seven children among 15 slain in Kashmir village

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, FEB. 10. In a shocking incident, 15 persons, including seven children, were shot dead before being burnt by unidentified gunmen in Sarohi village of Rajouri district in Jammu and Kashmir early this morning.

The Rajouri Superintendent of Police, Mr. Rajesh Kumar, told *The Hindu* over phone that around 2 a.m., a group of heavily-armed men descended on the village, about 80 km from Rajouri district headquarters, and asked for Mohammad Shafi, a village defence committee (VDC) member. He was not at home. They then entered a nearby house belonging to one Mr. Abdur Rasheed, where members of two families were sleeping, hurled grenades and fired indiscriminately. Mr. Kumar said seven children in the age group of 15 to 20, five women and three men died. The gunmen then set three houses on fire before fleeing. All the bodies were charred. Four of the deceased were identified as Mohammad Sharief, Rahim, Gulzar and Mohammad Bashir.

An Army unit, hearing about the incident over the wireless, reached the spot four-and-a-half hours later, while a party from the Budhal police station is expected to arrive tomorrow morning. The security forces, Mr. Kumar said, launched an operation to nab the gunmen.

The Governor, Mr. G. C. Saxena, and the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, have expressed



Police personnel paying tributes on Saturday to colleagues killed in Friday's attack by militants on the police control room, Srinagar. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

shock over the incident and condemned the militant action.

Security forces take control

Security forces today took control of the police control room in Srinagar, which was stormed by pro-Pakistan militants yesterday triggering a fierce gunbattle lasting over 13 hours that left eight policemen and two ultras dead. Six policemen were also injured in the attack, launched by four Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Umar Mujahideen militants.

All ten bodies were recovered and troops were combing the area for the two militants who managed to escape, police said.

Dr. Abdullah, who rushed to the State capital from New Delhi this

morning, convened a meeting of the Unified Headquarters tomorrow to review the situation.

According to police, four militants in police uniforms drove to the PCR around 7.30 p.m. in an Ambassador car. Two militants entered the area under the covering fire provided by the other two ultras. The police personnel present returned the fire and a fierce battle ensued in the complex, which houses the PCR, offices of the armed police constabulary, two battalion headquarters and the police hospital.

As the exchange of fire continued, the Army and BSF personnel were called and the entire area cordoned off.

The entire area, resounding with the sound of gunfire, resembled a war zone, an eyewitness said.

The Minister of State for Home and Law, Mr. Mushtaq Lone, and the DGP, Mr. A. K. Suri, rushed to Srinagar from here to take stock of the situation.

Meanwhile, a Lashkar spokesman said only one militant of the group was killed and that the other person dead was a civilian.

Fernandes' assurance

A high-level Central team led by the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, which arrived in Srinagar this morning, assured the Sikh community that adequate steps would be taken to protect them.

The team, which included the Minister for Chemicals, Mr. S.S. Dhindsa, the Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta, the SGPC president, Mr. J. S. Talwandi, the vice-chairman of the National Minorities Commission, Mr. Trilochan Singh, the Delhi GPC chairman, Mr. Avtar Singh, and the Rajya Sabha member, Mr. S. S. Ahluwalia, discussed the Mehjoor Nagar tragedy, in which 6 Sikhs were shot dead.

Mr. Fernandes conveyed the heartfelt sympathies of the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, and said the Government was aware of the trauma the Sikhs were going through. All aspects of the tragedy were being discussed and loopholes in the security network were being looked into, he said. The team impressed upon the Sikhs not to migrate from the Kashmir Valley as it would only compound the problem and fulfill the militants' designs.

Farooq asks foreign militants to leave: Page 8

THE HINDU

11 FEB 2001

Militants kill 15 in worst-ever Jammu carnage since truce

The Times of India News Service

JAMMU: In the worst carnage in the Jammu region since the unilateral Ramzan ceasefire, militants killed at least 15 members of three families at Salohi village in the sensitive Budhal tehsil of Rajouri district late on Friday night.

The Rajouri police said on Saturday that the three houses targeted by 15 armed militants belonged to three village defence committee members. The carnage occurred when the families were believed to have been asleep.

The police said that according to preliminary reports, the militants made holes in the roofs of the mud houses and lobbed hand grenades. Later, they set the houses on fire.

Fifteen charred bodies have been recovered so far.

The carnage occurred when chief minister Farooq Abdullah was in Delhi to review the security situation in the state with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and other central ministers. It is believed to have been perpetrated by foreign mercenaries who are especially opposed to the

ceasefire. It fits into the pattern of attacks on the police in the Valley since Friday. Since the Ramzan ceasefire, the militants have been targeting not only the camps of the security forces, but special police officers, village defence committee members and suspected civilian members of the security forces, apart from indiscriminately causing civilian casualties.

Although detailed reports were still awaited, first reports said that a nearby army unit swung into action on Saturday morning and, with local civilians, did the rescue work. The army troops also

launched a search operation around the village.

The police said the remote village was about a 12-hour walk from Rajouri through arduous terrain and, until last reports, a police party was still to reach the spot.

Meanwhile, in Srinagar, at least eight police personnel and two militants were killed in the exchange of fire between militants and security forces after *fidayeen* (death squad) militants tried to storm the Srinagar police control room (PCR) here on Friday evening.

Inspector-general of police, Kashmir range, A.K. Bhan, said the militants disembarked from a taxi at the gate of the PCR at about 7.30 p.m. on Friday and hurled grenades and also fired at the policemen deployed at the gate. In the exchange of fire, which continued for 13 hours, eight policemen

and two militants were killed. Seven policemen and two civilians sustained injuries, the IGP said. The Lashkar-e-Toiba militant outfit, claiming responsibility, said that only militant Abu Malviya was killed.

Security forces also killed two militants on Saturday during an encounter at Chanderban in Kulgam in Anantnag district. In the exchange of fire, the house occupied by the militants caught fire. Militants also hurled a grenade at a patrol party of the security forces at Awantipora here on Saturday, injuring seven securitymen and three pedestrians, according to a police spokesman.

Militants also shot and injured a National Conference activist and villager, while one constable, Riyaz Ahmed, was killed at his native village in Kulgam, the spokesman said.



Militants storm police control room

SRINAGAR, FEB. 9. All the four pro-Pakistan militants who had stormed the high-security State Police Control Room (PCR) here were killed along with two policemen in a gunbattle, lasting nearly three hours.

The militants, belonging to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Umar Mujahideen, which was seen in action for the first time in the State, jointly carried out the suicide attack on the control room at Batmaloo at around 7.30 p.m.

While the authorities here said constables Zahoor and Tariq were killed in the attack by the ultras, they did not immediately confirm the death of the militants.

However, the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, told PTI in New Delhi that the four militants had been killed when they were engaged by the Army and BSF personnel who surrounded the

complex, housing the control room, in a joint operation flush-out.

The dead militants were identified as Salahuddin, who led the group, Abu Hafiz, Abdullah Omar and Abu Maviya.

The militants forced their way

PM reviews Kashmir situation to reassure Sikhs: Page 13

into the control room hurling grenades at its main gates at 7.10 p.m. and opened indiscriminate fire on policemen, killing the two constables on the spot.

This is the first major attack by militants on the police headquarters during the second extension of ceasefire in Kashmir. — PTI

Our Special Correspondent reports from Jammu:

A Lashkar spokesman telephoned newspaper offices and claimed responsibility for the attack on the PCR, saying, four *fitayeen* (suicide squad) members, led by Commander Salahuddin, attacked the PCR.

Curfew was imposed in Udhampur this evening following tension between two communities. Reports said that a girl from one community had an affair with the boy from other community which led to resentment in one community. The house of the boy was set ablaze.

India to release 160 Pak. fishermen

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. India has decided to unilaterally release 160 Pakistani fishermen as part of its ongoing effort to generate good-

will. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) today said India had asked Pakistan to make urgent arrangements for their repatriation. The release of such a large batch of Pakistani fishermen in one go is unprecedented after the Kargil war, according to the MEA spokesperson.

By freeing the fishermen, India is attempting to keep up the momentum for peace which has been generated by the first ever direct conversation between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Pakistani Chief Executive, Gen. Musharraf.

However, opposition questioning "the wisdom" of the ceasefire initiative could also build up in the coming days. The killing of the six Sikhs in Srinagar last Saturday can become a rallying point to bring together the forces opposing the ceasefire, analysts say.

PM chalks policy to stop Sikh migration

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 9 FEBRUARY

A HIGH-LEVEL meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Friday finalised a two-pronged strategy to prevent the migration of minority Sikhs from the Valley.

The proposals involve enhancing of security in and around 135 villages dominated by the community and providing more avenues for employment to the Sikh youths.

In a further bid to restore the confidence of the community, a three-member ministerial team, headed by defence minister George Fernandes, will visit the Sikh hamlets in the Valley on Saturday.

The other members of the team are Union chemicals and fertilisers minister S.S. Dhindsa and minister of state for civil aviation Chaman Lal Gupta.

At the meeting convened by Mr Vajpayee in the wake of the killing of five Sikhs in Srinagar earlier this week, the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir government on Friday agreed upon increasing the deployment of security personnel in the Sikh-dominated villages in the Valley.

It was proposed during the discussions attended by the Union home minister, Mr L.K. Advani, the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, the defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, Mr S.S. Dhindsa, Mr Chaman Lal Gupta, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah and national security adviser Brajesh Mishra that more para-military and police posts should be set up in these villages.

Mr Abdullah demanded that at least 5,000 special police officers (SPOs) be deployed in the Valley. He was informed by home minister L.K. Advani that 3,000 posts of SPOs had already been sanctioned, but Mr Abdullah insisted upon being provided another 2,000 officers.

Some of these SPOs could be posted in the



STILL LIFE: Security personnel patrol the Dal Lake in Srinagar to instil confidence among tourists visiting Kashmir. — PTI

Sikh-dominated clusters and provided weapons to guard the villagers against militant attacks, he proposed.

Besides the enhanced security measures, the meeting acknowledged the need to improve employment avenues for the Sikh youths to prevent their exodus from the Valley.

Some of the suggestions that came up included induction of Sikh youths into central paramilitary forces, including the BSF and CRPF and imparting training for their employment as home guards.

Mr Abdullah offered to explore job avenues for the Sikhs in the state, even as it was decided that the vacancies in central offices and banks located in the state would be identified for recruitment of members of the minority community.

The chief minister later told agencies that employment would be provided to Sikh youths at a "rapid rate" in a bid to resolve their grievances.

Mr Dhindsa too voiced "satisfaction" over the two-pronged strategy worked out at the meeting and said he had "full hope" that the 60,000-strong Sikh community, spread in 133 hamlets in the state, would give up the idea of migrating from the Valley.

It may be recalled that Friday's high-level meeting followed an observation by BJP president Bangaru Laxman on Thursday that the ongoing cease-fire should be reviewed in the wake of militants' killing of five Sikhs in Mehjoonagar area of Srinagar earlier this week.

J&K militants storm police headquarters

Srinagar

9 FEBRUARY

A FOUR-MEMBER suicide squad of militants stormed the heavily-guarded police headquarters here on Friday evening killing one policeman and injuring two others.

The militants threw grenades at the main gates of the police co-ordination centre at 1910 hours and stormed it, official sources said. Intense firing was going on and security forces had cordoned off the area. This is the first major attack by militants on police headquarters during the second extension of the cease-fire in Kashmir.

— PTI

The Economic Times

10 FEB 2001

Ceasefire not end of J&K peace steps

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 8. - The Vajpayee government, under pressure from the Opposition to spell out its beyond-ceasefire perspective in Jammu and Kashmir and the escalated militant attacks in the Valley, is considering more "peace steps" that include sanctioning the Hurriyat team's visit to Pakistan.

Pakistan's efforts to regain the lost "diplomatic advantage" in the post-ceasefire scene has also reportedly added to the urgency to "move ahead."

The onus of breaking new ground is mainly on the Prime Minister's Office; the ceasefire move was conceived and executed at its initiative - with the ministries of external affairs, home and defence playing only supporting roles.

An influential section in the home and external affairs ministries had been - and are still - less than enthused by the PMO's moves. National Conference has been opposing the move vis-a-vis Hurriyat for political reasons.

Highly-placed sources say the PMO's argument is that sanctioning the Hurriyat visit, despite the stated official reservations about some leaders, will send a strong signal to the people of the Valley and, more im-

5/1 9/2
portantly, to the international community, about India's seriousness on the peace initiative.

On the other hand, keeping the Hurriyat waiting has also paid dividends.

First, the long wait has probably punctured the Hurriyat leaders' "over-estimated notion of self importance". Second, by overemphasising reservations about leaders like the pro-Pakistan Geelani, the government hoped to have conveyed the "limited borders" within which the Hurriyat can initiate a dialogue with Islamabad.

On a tactical front, a failure (as widely expected) of the Hurriyat initiative will discredit the outfit and put the blame for "failing to positively respond to the Indian initiative" on Pakistan.

Also, the recent statements of General Musharraf (after the traditional India-bashing on "Kashmir Solidarity Day"), sympathising with earthquake victims and, more importantly, his desire to "cooperate" with "a helpless Mr Vajpayee, surrounded by hardliners," are seen only as calculated moves by Islamabad to regain its image of being "a peace-seeker or a victim of India's non-cooperation," an image India wrested through the ceasefire.

Sources say, it is, thus, important to take more "peace steps" to sustain India's diplomatic

edge.

Even as the Opposition - mainly the Congress and the Left - accuses the Centre of lacking the "long-term" perspective in its peace initiative, government officials say the ceasefire move was more diplomatic posturing, and it is too early to expect a dramatic result.

They also say that the extension of the ceasefire despite an upsurge in attacks - ranging from the Red Fort attack to the one on Dr Farooq Abdullah - coincided with the change of guard in Washington, a crucial "behind-the-scenes" player on the Kashmir front; it was the Vajpayee government's keenness to assure the Bush administration of its intention on Kashmir front.

The government is also making conscious efforts, with an eye on the Islamabad-Beijing axis, to "normalise" Sino-Indian ties. Efforts are also being made, like inviting the Algerian President as chief guest on Republic Day and the external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, visiting Saudi Arabia, to earn Islamic nations' goodwill.

The attacks by outfits such as Lashkar-e-Toiba on sensitive targets like Sikhs, hasn't come as a surprise to the government as it was expected to do everything possible to foil the ceasefire.

THE STATESMAN

9 FEB 2001

What next in Kashmir?

By Harish Khare

The peace-makers in New Delhi have to understand that the jihadis' long-term game plan can be frustrated only by an alternative promise of a democratic federal Indian state, committed to a genuine accommodation of the Kashmiri nationalist sentiment.

IT IS entirely understandable that the devastating earthquake in Gujarat should have distracted New Delhi's attention from the immediate task of sustaining the "peace offensive" in Kashmir. But natural disasters need not totally paralyse diplomats and strategists, and the Gujarat tragedy has certainly not slowed down the vendors of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. Even then a section of the Kashmiri "separatist" leadership has felt the pain of suffering in Gujarat. And, not to be left behind, Pakistan has sent plane-loads of relief material, though it is a different matter that the practitioners of institutionalised cussedness in New Delhi and Islamabad have negated the civility of a telephonic conversation. In any case, only three weeks are left before the Vajpayee Government's latest "ceasefire" period comes to an end, and sooner than later the establishment will have to do something to demonstrate that it has not lost the initiative.

It is perhaps a reflection of the Vajpayee Government's political fragility, more from within than outside, as well as of a lack of conceptual boldness that the Prime Minister's strategy of "Kashmir ceasefire" remains mired in tentativeness and good intentions. On the one hand, he and his advisers remain unsure of the Government's capacity to absorb the domestic political costs of a possible failure of the peace strategy; and, on the other, there seems to be no convergence of perspectives and views within the Government on the correctness of the strategy. The result is frustration as neither the "peace-makers" nor the practical "toughies", within the Vajpayee Government, are able to force the momentum.

Two extensions of the "ceasefire" and yet there is no clear-cut answer to the question whether the "solution" to the Kashmir problem is a matter to be sorted out between New Delhi and Islamabad or whether "peace" is an objective to be pursued between New Delhi and Srirangapatna. The inevitable result is that it is now possible for anyone — from the incorrigibly anti-Pakistani voices within the Foreign Office to the machos within the Intelligence community, to the Home Ministry leadership, to the Farooq Abdul-

lah dynasty — to derail the Prime Minister's strategy; needless to add, the naysayers get more than adequate support from their counterparts in Pakistan. Even among those who believe that the Kashmir problem is to be basically settled between New Delhi and Islamabad, there is no agreement whether General Pervez Musharraf is the man who can deliver; and though there may be people who believe that he is not quite the man to do business with, nobody seems to have a clear-cut idea of what can be done with the incumbent Chief Executive. Then there are doubts about the General Saheb's control over his own Corps Commanders, his willingness to control the jihadis and ability to take on the fundamentalist forces. There is always some incident or statement which can be cited to sustain the argument that it would be futile and costly to trust the Chief Executive. The General himself seems to have no control over his rhetoric and continues to prey on the public imagination by imposing heavy costs on the "ground" in India that New Delhi has no option but to talk to him. For an army man, the General seems to have developed the same penchant that demagogues incurably have for bluff and bluster.

However, General Musharraf's limitations and compulsions are obvious and cannot really be helped. The question that New Delhi needs to answer for itself is whether a Kashmir peace strategy can still be pursued in a way that would surmount those limitations and help him cope with the compulsions. A whole host of Western official visitors have tried to impress upon their Indian interlocutors that the good General was really not a jihadi and that he would be able to take on the fundamentalists provided New

Delhi gave him a bit of a purchase on talks. If this argument has not been bought entirely in all the relevant corners of the Vajpayee Government, it is because the General has been singularly unappreciative of the Prime Minister's domestic constraints; and this practised denseness has emboldened the hardliners, political and bureaucratic, on the Indian side.

If it is not possible in the near future to sort things out with General Musharraf's Pakistan, will it be worth the effort to try to address the sources of alienation and separatism within Jammu and Kashmir?

When last April, after the then U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit to this part of the world, the Vajpayee Government decided to release the Hurriyat leaders, the move was seen as the opening gambit in a well thought-out game plan. In retrospect, it is clear that New Delhi did not have a game plan; it had just a vague hope that once the Hurriyat leaders were out of jail they would be able to discern and act according to the popular urge in Kashmir for peace. But New Delhi had not reckoned with the cunning of a Farooq Abdullah, who responded cleverly with his "autonomy" card; on the other hand, the Majid Dar faction of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen announced a unilateral ceasefire. A deeply divided APHC found itself bypassed by the rush of events as it now finds itself flummoxed by New Delhi's uncertain pursuit of the Ramadan ceasefire strategy.

Nothing characterises this uncertainty than the fact that for nearly ten months there has been no face-to-face interaction between the Government and the APHC leadership. Well-meaning intermediaries have helped to establish proxy contacts; but, these mediations ipso facto lack authority and legitimacy. Instead,

an entirely unproductive controversy has been whipped up over the question of passports for this or that member of the proposed Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan. While this policy queasiness has something to do with the divisions at the highest level in New Delhi, it has nonetheless allowed Pakistan to manipulate the different perspectives within the Hurriyat.

Having demonstrated that the Indian state had the staying power and no amount of jihadi exertions would be sufficient to dictate a military solution to the Kashmir "problem", New Delhi, it seems logical, should find ways and means of engaging the separatist elements in some kind of dialogue. Having established demonstratively the limited efficacy of the jihadi's gun, it becomes incumbent on New Delhi to prove the efficacy of dialogue. Those who have come to terms with the futility of the gun need to be given the space to convince fellow-separatists that there is no dishonour in exploring the peace option.

The operative part has to be an "honourable" accommodation of the Kashmiri nationalist sentiment. Notwithstanding the history of Pakistani intransigence and perfidies, we owe it to ourselves not to lose sight of our own history of omissions and commissions or of our record of arrogance and callousness that contributed in the first place to dissatisfaction, alienation and separatist urges in Kashmir. It is always possible to fall for the false and contrived categories of "our Kashmiris" and "their Kashmiris". An Indian democracy, anchored in the collective moral self-assurance of its civil society, can no longer afford to make these bogus distinctions. For decades we have sought to deny the genuineness of the Kashmiri nationalist sentiment, and in the process nationalism remains true to its own democratic pretensions and must be respectful to all elements in the multicultural Kashmir society. The peace-makers in New Delhi have to understand that the jihadis' long-term game plan can be frustrated only by an alternative promise of a democratic federal Indian state, committed to a genuine accommodation of the Kashmiri nationalist sentiment.

Farooq, Centre differ on J&K ceasefire

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. The Centre and the J&K chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, hold divergent views on 'unilateral ceasefire' in the state. A Congress delegation led by Dr Manmohan Singh met the Prime Minister and the home minister yesterday and discussed the Kashmir situation. According to the Congress, Dr Abdullah was opposed to continuing the ceasefire in J&K. The Centre, some Congress leaders said, favoured extension of ceasefire.

Dr Abdullah, on the other hand, appraised the Centre on the actual situation in Kashmir. There was no let up in the terrorists attack on security forces and innocent civilians in the three months of the ceasefire, he said. According to official sources, Dr Abdullah is also worried about the increasing terrorist attacks on the state police and the state government's failure to flush out the suspected terrorists during the ceasefire. - SNS

THE STATESMAN

8 FEB 2001

Kashmir policy lacks perspective: Cong

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 7

WHILE THE Congress today reiterated its support for any peace initiative in the Valley, it added that the Government's Kashmir policy lacked "a long-term perspective".

The party's remarks came a day after a four-member Congress delegation met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to discuss the NDA regime's Kashmir policy.

The team included Manmohan Singh, Arjun Singh, Natwar Singh and Ghulam Nabi Azad.

Azad briefed reporters about the two-hour-long meeting with the PM. He said there was no dialogue between the Government and Opposition parties on the Kashmir issue.

"Even yesterday's meeting was our initiative. But we appreciate that the PM acceded to our request for a meeting and arranged a comprehensive briefing," he said.

The Congress leaders were given a 30-minute video presentation on the situation in the Valley before and after the ceasefire. Prime Minister Vajpayee, Home Minister

L K Advani, Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and Defence Minister George Fernandes attended the meeting.

During the meet, Congress leaders expressed their concern over the recent attacks on Sikhs in Srinagar. Azad said that when several Sikhs were killed in Chhittisinghpura, the PM was told to ensure that such attacks were not repeated. "It is unfortunate that no concrete steps were taken to beef up security," Azad said.

He said there was no coordination between the Central and State Governments.

The Union ministers and Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah issued contradictory statements on the ceasefire extension, he said.

The Congress said RSS chief K Sudarshan deserved a "doctorate for inventing theories" on the Babri Masjid demolition. Azad said the RSS chief began with the bomb theory, then accused PWD employees for the demolition and the latest theory was that the P V Narasimha Rao Government was involved. "This is another attempt by the RSS to mislead the masses on a sensitive issue," he added.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 FEB 2001

STF confident of nabbing Veerappan soon

By Our Staff Reporter

MALAMPUZHA (PALAKKAD), Feb. 4. The Special Task Force (STF), led by two DIGs, and the Border Security Force (BSF) engaged in search operations to nab the brigand, Veerappan, are concentrating in the Walayar and Malampuzha forests which fall in the unique 'Palakkad Gap' where a 40-km gap opens up the Western Ghats to Kerala.

According to STF sources, Veerappan is now at a loose end in the Walayar forests as he does not have enough food items, medicine, money and communication facilities. The gang had left much of these behind when they were spotted by the STF at the Chenumanthymala in Palakkad forests on Friday. The gang escaped narrowly when the STF fired at Veerappan and his two associates, Chandran and Govindan.

The IGP (North Zone), Mr. Alphonse Louise Irayil, told presspersons at Malampuzha today that top STF officials expressed confidence that they would be able to capture Veerappan in a day or two dead or alive.

The Karnataka police had issued a shoot-at-sight order against Veerappan. The Kerala police was extending all help to the STF, he said.

On Saturday night, the STF opened fire at a seven-member gang at Parapetti in Chemmanthymala where Veerappan was spotted on Friday. Raghun of Idukki district of Kerala was captured and is under police custody. On in-

terrogation, he said that they came to the forest to buy ganja. The area has large areas under ganja cultivation.

The Walayar Sub-Inspector of Police, Mr. Sasidharan, said that they had information about ganja gardens in the area but were not carrying out any raid because of the operations to nab Veerappan.

The STF and Kerala police today began a massive combing operation in the Malampuzha forests, the fag-end of the Palakkad gap, to prevent the Veerappan gang from moving to this area from the Walayar forests. Today also Tamil Nadu Government helicopters were used in search operations over the Walayar forests. The entire Walayar Hills are now un-

Waiting car seized

By Our Staff Reporter

PALAKKAD, FEB. 4. The Palakkad police today took into custody a new Maruti Esteem, which, according to an anonymous STD call, was meant to pick Veerappan up. The Walayar police station found the car — without a registration number — after a search in the outer Walayar area. Damaged number plates, including an incomplete new one (KL7-4), were found inside the car.

The Superintendent of Police, Mr. Tomin J. Thachankeri, confirmed this.

der the control of the STF and the Kerala police. The railway line passing through the Walayar forests from Palakkad to Coimbatore is guarded by the STF and all the roads are being patrolled by the security forces.

All the entry points into Kerala are guarded by the State police and a thorough check is done on vehicles.

The STF is positioned in the Malabar Cements Limited mining area in the Chemmanthymala forests and other areas.

Combing operations in the Malampuzha, Elival and Akamalavaram and Kaba forests on the other side of the Malampuzha Dam began today with hundreds of STF personnel spreading out in the area. The Kerala police has sent 1,000 men. The operations were supervised by Mr. Alphonse Louise Irayil, the DIG (Middle Zone) Mr. Maheshkumar Singla, and the Palakkad SP, Mr. Tomin J. Thachankeri.

Night combing operations

The STF SP, Mr. Ashok Kumar Das, in-charge of operations in the Kerala side, told *The Hindu* here that a time-frame for nabbing Veerappan could not be given now when the operations were in full swing.

Mr. Das, who is camping in Malampuzha along with the top police officials of Kerala police, said the STF had begun night combing operations in the Malampuzha forests from today using night vision equipment.

THE HINDU

5 FEB 2002

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2001

HEIGHTENING PROVOCATION

THE GUNNING DOWN of six persons belonging to the Sikh community in Srinagar last Saturday, an obvious and desperate attempt by the pan-Islamic militant groups to scuttle the tenuous peace process now under way in Jammu and Kashmir, is qualitatively somewhat different in that it is a lot more sinister than the ones made earlier, since the unilateral ceasefire declaration by the Government of India on the eve of Ramadan in November 2000. By and large, the targets in the previous attacks were persons/establishments that symbolised the national honour or represented the state authority, civil or military. If on earlier occasions the likes of Laskhar-e-Taiba, Jamait-ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Hizbul Mujahideen took 'credit', this time around a lesser known group, which calls itself 'Al Qasim', has claimed responsibility. In picking on a minority community, the terrorist elements have sought to realise their objective by playing upon the highly sensitive religious factor to create a sense of insecurity and panic among its members and thereby mount pressure on the security agencies to breach the ceasefire. Along with the Chattisinghpura episode of March last year when 35 Sikhs were killed, this is seen as a part of the pro-Pakistan militant outfits' game-plan for ethnic-cleansing of the Valley.

Given this context, it is imperative for the Central and State Governments as well as the people, especially the Sikh community, not to react in a manner that would only serve the cause of those perpetrating such dastardly acts. The attack has been, quite correctly, condemned by all parties across the political spectrum nationwide. While a feeling of outrage among the Sikhs, as the ones at the receiving end of the militants' attacks, is certainly understandable, prudence demands that any precipitate action which will have the effect of jeopardising the ongoing peace process is scrupulously avoided. This casts a special responsibility on the political leadership in general — not just of the Sikh segment — and,

more importantly, on the Governments to inspire confidence in them. The four-member team deputed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to Srinagar for a spot assessment has its task cut out: allay the apprehensions of the people in the area about their security. Impassioned appeals for calm and restraint have to be matched by concrete and credible measures for improvement in the situation on the ground.

As for the response of the administration and the security forces, it should of course be their endeavour to track down the culprits and step up vigil against possible violent backlash through measures to defuse tension. In both the areas, their track record has been quite dismal. If anything, their reaction has tended to be exaggerated, skewed or even coercive; there is no running away from the disturbing phenomenon of such occurrences almost invariably resulting in the state agencies resorting to repressive ways. In fact, it is no secret that such a conduct on the part of the law enforcement agencies and security forces was one of the causes for the alienation of the people of Jammu and Kashmir which, in turn, contributed to the growth of militancy. A more recent testimony is available in the security forces' response to the Chattisinghpura massacre by militants which occurred on the eve of the then U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's visit to India. The brazenness with which some innocent civilians were branded as 'terrorists', held responsible for the killings, shot in an 'encounter' and buried post haste (as established subsequently, thanks to public protest and judicial intervention) is a sure way of causing disaffection among the people. One hopes the security personnel and the powers that be have learnt the right lessons from it. As for the ceasefire itself, despite the continuing and highly provocative attempts at sabotage, the initiative needs to be sustained without of course lowering the guard in any manner.

THE HINDU

6 FEB 2001

Violence mars Jammu bandh

By Shujaat Bukhari PD

JAMMU, FEB. 5. At least one person was killed and three others injured when security forces opened fire to quell a violent mob in the Narwal area here today during the bandh called in protest against the killing of six Sikhs in Srinagar on Saturday. As the situation deteriorated, the Army was called in to enforce prohibitory orders.

A number of vehicles were set ablaze, Government offices ransacked and over 40 people, including 30 policemen, injured as the demonstrators fought pitched battles with the police.

The authorities were forced to impose indefinite curfew in Jammu and Udhampur towns where several Sikh organisations called a bandh today. The bandh was supported by the BJP, the Shiv Sena and some other parties. Defying the prohibitory orders, Sikhs took out processions in the Gandhi Nagar, Nanak Nagar, Digiana, Simbal and Narwal areas raising slogans against the Government, militants and Pakistan.

The situation took an ugly turn in the Narwal area when a few hundred Sikhs tried to enter a mosque. Efforts to stop them from doing so failed and the police resorted to a lathicharge and burst teargas shells. The demonstrators, however, marched ahead and the BSF personnel deployed there opened fire to disperse the mob. At least four Sikhs received bullet injuries. While one Mahinder Singh of Anantnag died of injuries in hospital later another of the injured, Jeevan Singh, was air-

lifted to the PGI, Chandigarh.

The Army was then deployed in the sensitive Gandhi Nagar, Nanak Nagar localities and the Muslim-dominated Residency Road and Ustad Mohalla areas. While it was said the BSF opened fire against the mob, an official release issued in the evening

Farooq faces Sikh ire

By Our Special Correspondent

JAMMU, FEB. 5. The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, today faced the ire of hundreds of Sikhs at the Mehjoor Nagar Gurdwara in Srinagar. The Sikhs had gathered to protest the killing of six of their community on Saturday. Dr. Abdullah arrived along with the Governor, Mr. G.C. Saxena, and a Central team led by the Union Minister for Chemicals and Fertilizers, Mr. S.S. Dhindsa.

The youth in particular turned violent when they saw the Chief Minister arrive at the Gurdwara to extend sympathies to the community. He was accompanied by Mr. Saxena, Mr. Dhindsa, the Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation, Prof. Chaman Lal Gupta, the Minority Commission Vice-chairperson, Mr. Trilochan Singh, and senior BJP leaders Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Mr. S.S. Ahluwalia, but Dr. Abdullah was singled out and not allowed to enter the Gurdwara. However, his security guards, with the help of elderly Sikhs, managed to help him in.

claimed that the police had fired in the air to quell the demonstrators. The Jammu Divisional Commissioner, Mr. Anil Goswami, has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident.

Clashes between the protesters and the police continued till late in the evening. At least three vehicles belonging to the police and the Groundwater Commission and two offices of the power and excise departments were set ablaze. Dozens of vehicles were damaged in stone-throwing.

At least 40 people including a photojournalist of the *Hind Samachar* and 30 policemen were injured in the clashes.

All-party meeting

The Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, who returned here from Srinagar convened an all-party meeting at his residence to discuss the latest situation.

The curfew imposed on parts of Srinagar yesterday was lifted from seven police station areas as the situation was stated to be well under control.

Narrow escape

UNI reports:

Earlier, the Central team, on its way to Srinagar, had a miraculous escape after a portion of the screen of a BSF aircraft broke while the plane was flying at a considerable height. The pilot of the beachcraft was able to bring the plane down to safety from a height of over 25,000 feet and returned to Delhi. The party was then sent to Srinagar on a Jet Airways aircraft.

THE HINDU

Six Sikhs shot dead near Srinagar

PTI & UNI

SRINAGAR, Feb. 4. — Kashmir has been plunged into violence again with six Sikhs being killed and eight, including a woman, injured by a group of men who fired indiscriminately at Mahjoor Nagar near this city last night. An indefinite curfew has been clamped on parts of Srinagar and paramilitary forces posted.

Groups of youths, furious over the killings, today stoned shops and vehicles at Gandhinagar and Nank Nagar in Srinagar.

They burnt tyres and blocked traffic at Digiana on Jammu-Pathankote highway.

The bodies were cremated this evening in the presence of the minister of state for home, Mr Mushtaq Ahmad Lone, and the DGP, Mr AK Suri.

The Prime Minister has formed a three-member team, led by the chemicals and fertilisers minister, Mr Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, that will visit Srinagar tomorrow to assess the situation.

The BJP will also send a team to the state.

Bodies of the slain Sikhs were taken to a gurdwara at Mahjoor Nagar in a procession after police handed them over to relatives. A large number of Sikhs gathered at the gurdwara and demanded that they be allowed to take the bodies to Jammu as they were "feeling

insecure" at Mahjoor Nagar. They raised anti-India, anti-Pakistan and anti-militant slogans.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal) and Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee have called a Jammu bandh tomorrow in protest against the massacre.

This is the third attack on Sikhs in the state in the past one year. In May last year, 38 Sikhs were gunned down at Chhattisinghpura, while in March six Sikh truck drivers were shot dead on a highway.

The killings have drawn widespread condemnation. Even separatist leaders like Mr Shabir Ahmad Shah and the JKLF chairman, Mr Yaseen Malik, have expressed concern.

The BJP chief, Mr Bangaru Laxman, said the killings were another attempt by terrorists to sabotage of Mr Atal Behari

Vajpayee's peace initiative.

The Hurriyat Conference and Akali Dal (Amritsar) have called for a probe into the massacre.

Ultras held: Punjab police today arrested two Pakistan-trained Babbar Khalsa militants, who allegedly planned to set off explosions in Delhi and Punjab, and seized 9 kg of PETN/RDX explosives and 15 kg of heroin, a report from Jalandhar said.

PAK WARNING

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 4. — Gen Musharraf today slammed India for its "oppressive rule" in Jammu and Kashmir and said that the peace initiative would not succeed unless Hurriyat leaders were allowed to visit Pakistan.

Arrest warrants: A Tada court in Jammu has issued an arrest warrant against former J&K chief minister Mr GM Shah and ordered bailable arrest warrants against three Hurriyat leaders for allegedly raising anti-national slogans at a public meeting in 1987. — PTI

■ Details on page 8

■ Photograph on page 8

THE STATESMAN

5 FEB 2001

Kashmiris being oppressed: Musharraf

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 4. — Gen Pervez Musharraf today bitterly criticised India, accusing it of "oppressive" rule in Kashmir. He demanded permission for Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan.

(This comes two days after he telephoned Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee to express sympathies for earthquake victims in Gujarat.)

On the eve of "Kashmir solidarity day" being officially observed here, Gen Musharraf iterated Pakistan's "moral, political and diplomatic support to the Kashmiris' struggle to achieve the right for self-determination".

"The Kashmir dispute is not a territorial dispute between two countries. It is about the right of the people of Kashmir to decide their future by themselves," he said, adding Islamabad had "recently taken several steps for the commencement of a Pakistan-India dialogue with the participation of Hurriyat Conference for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute."

"We call upon India to ... take a positive decision on the visit of the Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan without further delay and respond positively to our peace initiatives," the military ruler said.

He said Pakistan was firmly committed to seeking a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

Gen Musharraf's latest attack on India came hardly two days after he spoke to Mr Vajpayee over the phone to express his sympathy with quake victims.

Later addressing the Press here in connection with Kashmir Solidarity Day to be observed all over Pakistan tomorrow, the Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Abdul Sattar, said not much has been achieved with month-by-month extension of ceasefire in Kashmir other than India seeking concessions on monthly basis.



An injured Satinder Kaur in a Srinagar hospital on Sunday. She was injured in a shootout that killed six people. — AP/PTI

Instead of extending ceasefire on a monthly basis, he said India should look for speeding up the recent peace initiatives by permitting the Hurriyat delegation to visit Islamabad.

Quoting Hurriyat leaders, Mr Sattar said that human rights violations by Indian security forces have been continuing in Kashmir despite the cessation of hostilities by India.

Warrants: A Tada court here has issued arrest warrants against former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mr GM Shah and eight others, a report from Jammu said. The court ordered bailable arrest warrants against three Hurriyat Conference leaders for allegedly raising anti-national slogans at a public meeting in Srinagar in 1987.

The district and sessions Judge, Mr Sain Dass, yesterday issued bailable arrest warrants to Hurriyat leaders — Mr Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mr Abdul Gani Lone and Mr Mohammad Yasin Malik, facing trial in the Tada court but were not appearing before it.

THE STATESMAN

5 FEB 2001

Curfew in Srinagar after Sikh killings

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR, FEB 4

APPREHENDING trouble in the wake of killings of Sikhs by militants on Saturday, an indefinite curfew was clamped on parts of Srinagar today and para-military forces deployed as tension ran high in the city.

Bodies of six Sikhs killed in Saturday's attack were taken to a gurdwara at Mahjoornagar here in a procession after they were handed over to relatives at the police control room.

A large number of Sikhs, furious over the killings, assembled at the gurdwara and said they would not allow cremation of the bodies till Central and state leaders visited Mahjoornagar. They said they would even take the bodies to Jammu for cremation as "we are feeling insecure here". Agitated Sikhs also raised anti-India, anti-Pakistan and anti-militant slogans.

The authorities imposed curfew in areas falling under 13 police stations in Srinagar this morning as a precautionary measure, an official spokesman said. He said the sit-

uation was tense but under control.

At least six Sikhs were killed and eight others, including a woman, injured when gunmen fired indiscriminately on a group of minority community at Mahjoornagar on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah today said the unilateral cease-fire initiative in Kashmir would be meaningless unless Pakistan reined in militants operating from there. He said, "Borders may be peaceful but killings are going on in the state."

PM sends team

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has deputed a three-member team to visit Jammu and Kashmir.

The team, comprising state Minister for Civil Aviation Chaman Lal Gupta, Minister of State for Chemical and Fertilizers S S Dhindsa and National Commission for Minorities member Tarlochan Singh, will be leaving tomorrow and submit its report to the Prime Minister after visiting the state.

INDIAN EXPRESS

5 FEB 2001

Pak links success of peace process with Hurriyat visit

Islamabad, February 4

PAKISTAN TODAY linked the success of the recent peace initiatives with Hurriyat leaders' trip to Islamabad, saying the delay in the visit would not help the process, and insisted that the Kashmir issue could not be treated as a "territorial dispute" between the two countries.

Pakistan Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar told a seminar here that Islamabad, while responding to New Delhi's ceasefire, had proposed a comprehensive formula for a dialogue which included the visit of Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan followed talks.

"Despite Pakistan's positive response to India's ceasefire, the Indian Government has not cleared the travel documents of the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan," Foreign Minister Abdus Sattar said unleashing a barrage of criticism against New Delhi, barely two days

'Stop terrorism'

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh has said that talks with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue can begin only when Islamabad stops cross-border terrorism.

"The government of India as initiator of dialogue remains committed to dialogue. But it is necessary that conducive atmosphere should be created for that," Singh told a Press conference at the conclusion of the fourth joint commission talks.

"We hope that conducive atmosphere shall be created by Pakistan by not promoting cross-border terrorism," Singh said.

PTI, Cairo

after an atmosphere of bonhomie was created by the telephonic talk between Gen Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

He said delay in the visit of the Hurriyat leaders was "not conducive for continuing the peace process" and urged India to immediately allow the trip.

He insisted that Pakistan's peace initiatives could "succeed only if India permits the Hurriyat leaders to visit Islamabad followed by talks between the two countries to work out a comprehensive settlement."

Sattar said Pakistan would "not agree to treat the Kashmir issue as a territorial dispute between the two countries but will continue to insist on an amicable solution that meets the aspirations of Kashmiris." The Mr Sattarsaid after India's ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir in November last, the situation along the LoC had improved. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 FEB 2001

CEASEFIRE in Kashmir, first instituted for the month of Ramzan and now extended for another month from Republic Day, remains in force and continues to provide hope and expectation. There is no doubt that this bold move by the government has opened the way forward, away from violence and towards reconciliation.

There has been unusual political activity in the Valley as groups and individuals, especially within the Hurriyat, try to position themselves to respond to the new development. There have also been cynical attempts by armed groups of mainly foreign provenance to disrupt the ceasefire -- they have taken a heavy toll among the innocent. Even so, the ceasefire has eased the burden on the local Kashmiri people, at the same time increasing the dangers faced by the security forces, which, to their credit, they have faced without flinching. Where all this is leading remains unclear.

The next step is not apparent and in the absence of a strong sense of direction, one can fear that nothing much may materialise from this fine initiative. There have been some developments that confuse the issue. Hurriyat, the prime interlocutor though not the sole one, has been given leave for its spokesmen to go to Pakistan in preparation for the talks, which is an enlightened move by the government.

Yet there has been a bogging down through Hurriyat's well-publicised difficulties in selecting its team and the government's reported reluctance to issue passports to some of them. Such problems are only to be expected when there is so wide a breach of mistrust between the parties. The trouble is that secondary issues of this nature have taken centre stage, pushing

519 into the wings the grand vision of reconciliation that the ceasefire has provided.

Today, now that the basic decision is taken, there seems no reason at all not to let Hurriyat send who it pleases to Pakistan. What is important is to sustain the momentum and not permit the process to be overwhelmed by smaller tactical considerations.

The projected visit to Pakistan by Hurriyat opens another range of issues. It is not clear what role, if any, is envisaged for Pakistan in the course now being readied.

The government's acquiescence in the visit amounts to a tacit acceptance, however



indirect, that Pakistan is not to be disregarded at the present juncture, even though it may have no formal part to play.

Tripartite talks as demanded by and on behalf of Pakistan are unacceptable to India -- rightly so, for this is an anathema and can only add immeasurable complications to an already deeply tangled matter.

Yet durable peace will not be attainable if Pakistan feels it is being pushed into the margin and is to be kept out of the picture. The events of last August, when the ceasefire promoted by the Hizbul Mujahideen was aborted at Pakistan's behest for precisely this reason, should serve as a reminder. If Pakistan is

not to be ignored and nobody can speak on India's behalf, then the only recourse is for India to talk to Pakistan. There are signs that there may be a glimmering of a thaw between them.

The Prime Minister's New Year musings indicated as much, and there have been other hints that meetings of officials, or even talks at a higher level, may not be as inconceivable today as they seemed a few weeks ago. A report that Pervez Musharraf was being invited to visit India turned out to be no more

than a rumour; that it gained any kind of currency bears witness to the changing mood.

Relief supplies from Pakistan for the victims of the Gujarat earthquake may have eased relations between the two countries. Not that there is any decisive shift: at best one can see a possible outline of re-engagement. In this interim between the ceasefire and the talks, it is only to be expected that the various interest groups within Jammu and Kashmir will stake out their territory.

Questions of autonomy for the state are likely to be on the table when talks start, and this is a matter on which there are many views in the different regions of the

state. In both Jammu and Ladakh there is a

vocal sentiment in favour of separation from the Valley. Trifurcation is the watchword, and there is considerable energy in the demand for it.

The Jammu and Kashmir government's own autonomy proposals envisage no less than eight autonomous sub-regions. Meanwhile, some persuasive voices call for regional councils rather than separation. There are also the grievances of the displaced Pandits. These are all demands that will need to be addressed, and they underline the complexity of the consultation process which should soon commence.

Without adequate care, such unresolved issues can submerge the essential effort towards reconciliation and peace.

The important steps already taken in Kashmir now need to be elaborated and promoted with a sense of purpose and commitment. This is not to imply that such a sense is lacking: it is that one is hard pressed to see the broader plan and strategy.

A welter of secondary and subsidiary issues

What next on Kashmir?

WIDE ANGLE

SALMAN HAIDAR

have come to the fore. One must assume that, having taken the initiative, the Indian authorities have in mind the outcome that they seek. Some means of communicating this,

albeit in the broadest outline, of showing that they have caught the tide and are not at the mercy of day-to-day developments, is now required of these authorities, if only to retain the high ground attained through the ceasefire.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

4 FEB 2001

Basu apology on Midnapore

OUR BUREAU ^{9/8/01} would not have worsened," Basu said.

Calcutta, Feb. 3: Jyoti Basu today publicly apologised for not being able to nip in the bud the violence in Midnapore during his tenure as chief minister.

"I must apologise to the people who suffered in the violence unleashed by the Trinamul Congress in Midnapore. Armed Trinamul goons on motorcycles were terrorising the people for a year. Yet the administration did not inform my government of the gravity of the situation," Basu told a rally organised by the women's wing of the CPM.

Basu later told **The Telegraph** that he had "no qualms" about admitting his fault. "I have to take the responsibility because I was then chief minister. I am definitely answerable to the people," he said.

At the meeting, Basu endorsed the hard line being pursued by his successor, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, who had yesterday asked police to tackle with an iron hand motorcycle-borne gangs.

Basu applauded the chief minister's firmness, saying it was a step in the right direction. "If we had then taken the hard measures we are taking now, the situation

The former chief minister had earlier criticised the party and the administration for the "inept handling" of the Midnapore flare-up, but this is the first time he has publicly apologised over the issue.

Today, too, Basu slammed the administration and Front managers for not giving "due importance" to the initial round of violence.

"It is still a mystery to me that I came to know about the violence in Midnapore only after a year," he said. "As chief minister, I should have been aware of them much earlier." He lashed out at the Trinamul, saying attempts were being made to let loose more violence as Assembly elections were round the corner.

The CPM women's wing leader, Brinda Karat, resented the inadequate representation of women in politics. "I strongly feel that women should be allowed to play a more active role," she said.

In the 1998 plenary in Calcutta, Karat had walked out of the CPM Central Committee protesting against party leaders' stand on not inducting women in key decision-making bodies. She was later reinducted into the panel.

THE TELEGRAPH

4 FEB 2001

Salvaging the peace process in Kashmir

By Amitabh Mattoo

In the absence of a dialogue, a unilateral package of economic and political incentives would be the right way to continue the peace process even if the ceasefire has to be terminated.

110-12

IN THE Kashmir of today, every deadline is like a Damocles sword ready to snap the only link with hope and survival. And the next deadline is February 26, the day on which New Delhi's latest extension of the unilateral ceasefire will come to an end. It is clear to even the most casual observer that unless there is a dramatic shift in established postures, and a discernable change in the ground situation, the end of February may mark the demise of one of the bravest attempts to generate a peace process in Jammu and Kashmir.

Over two months ago, the Prime Minister's announcement of a unilateral cessation of combat operations against militants in the State had brought hope and expectation. But today, in the Kashmir Valley particularly, a sense of relief at the extension is being smothered by the recognition that sustainable peace in the State may remain elusive in the foreseeable future.

Fundamentally, it is in the inability to generate a meaningful dialogue between New Delhi and separatist opinion, as represented by the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, that the peace process is floundering, even while Pakistan-sponsored militant outfits continue to spread terror, and especially target pro-Indian constituents within the Kashmiris, in cold contempt of the unilateral ceasefire. Unless, therefore, the peace initiative begins to reveal visible dividends quickly, even the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, will be constrained to call off New Delhi's boldest gesture, in recent years, towards the Kashmiri people.

But has the ceasefire initiative led to any tangible gains? Who, in any case, is to blame for the lack of obvious progress? And can the incipient peace process be prevented from being derailed? Perhaps the biggest achievement of the Ramzan initiative is the widespread acceptance within the State that ceasefire was not a tactical manoeuvre by the Central Government to secure short-term advantage, but rooted in a genuine desire, on part of Mr. Vajpayee at the very least, to bring durable peace to the State. Not surprisingly, the Prime Minister's Musings from Kumarakom have struck the right chord. Indeed, one separatist leader recently went as far as to suggest that no Prime Minister including Nehru had been so bold and for-

thright in his resolve to settle the problems of Kashmir. And he echoed Mr. Vajpayee's words: "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".

There is also no doubt that the Ramzan initiative has been able to tap, in a substantial measure, the overwhelming sentiment against violence prevailing in the State. There is sufficient evidence today, for instance, to indicate that on at least two related fronts there has been significant progress. First, there is widespread relief in Kashmir at the end of the cordon and search operations that were conducted by the security forces and which unfortunately often led to harassment of ordinary innocent civilians. This relief is slowly but surely translating into a larger peace constituency, and is gradually eroding the powerful anti-Indian sentiment prevalent particularly in the Kashmir Valley.

In recent years, the single biggest source of estrangement of the local population from New Delhi was harassment by security forces, and an end to this routine humiliation has taken away the biggest grouse of the ordinary Kashmiri. What is particularly reassuring is that the Central security forces have, despite tremendous provocations, adhered to and large scrupulously to the ceasefire. The same, however, cannot be said for the local security outfits, particularly the State task force, which — on occasion — seem to have deliberately disregarded the new terms of engagement. However, the Kashmiris are sensitive enough to make a distinction between the Centre's initiative and local forces that may be seeking to disrupt the slow march towards peace.

Second, the ceasefire has also made it possible to clearly identify and isolate those outfits that are continuing to perpetrate violence. And the verdict is clear: barring a few incidents, the two organisations that have demonstrated no sensitivity towards the powerful sentiment for peace are the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the

Jaish-e-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.

Given their suffering over the last decade and their continuing sense of fear and insecurity, it is premature to expect Kashmiris to publicly and openly distance themselves from these organisations. But there are signs that both these outfits are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain logistic and other forms of support from the local population. Indeed, the more these organisations persist with their mission of terror, the greater will be the alienation of Kashmiris from them, and it will eventually open up the possibility of active resistance from Kashmir's still-latent civil society. More important, despite the Lashkar's recent espousal of civic problems in Kashmir, the ideological distance between Kashmiri cultural norms and the Lashkar's obscurantist extremism is so huge that there is virtually no possibility that this Manichean divide can be overcome.

But the ceasefire can, at best, be only a means towards generating a meaningful engagement, in which the main actors have a stake. This has, despite persistent efforts, not happened. It would have been naive to expect Pakistan to cooperate with New Delhi's peace offensive. Nonetheless, the manner in which militant outfits and other agencies in Pakistan have sought to manipulate the composition of the APHC delegation to the country, shown not even the slightest willingness to clamp down on the militants, and escalated the violence against civilians in the Valley, leaves no doubt that Pakistan is deeply insecure about any peace process involving New Delhi and the Kashmiris.

What, however, is tragic is how the APHC is, because of pressure from Pakistan and Pakistan-based militant outfits, not responding in any meaningful manner to the Centre's open offer to enter into an unconditional dialogue, bound not by the limits of the Constitution but, in the Prime

Minister's words, within the framework of *Insaniyat*. Nor have they come out against the continued violence by the Lashkar and the Jaish. A visit to Pakistan to convince militants of the need to reciprocate the ceasefire, or to provide Pakistan with a face saver (which on present evidence it does not seem to be interested in), can only be a sideshow.

The real theatre has to be enacted here, in Kashmir and within India, by entering into negotiations with New Delhi. On the contrary, statements by individual leaders seem to suggest that they are not interested in a peaceful resolution of the problems of Kashmir. Most important, if the APHC leaders were sensitive to Kashmiri opinion, they would clarify their stand on at least three issues: Do they view the continued violence by a few militant outfits as serving political ends of the Kashmiris? Are they free agents of the Kashmiri people, or are they being pressured by forces outside Kashmir? And, finally, do they believe that that Kashmir is a political problem, which can be resolved through a dialogue, or do they consider the troubles in the State to be part of a religious war to be settled through 'jihad'? It is important for the APHC leaders to remember that if they want to prevent their political marginalisation, they must not just be more sensitive to the cause of peace through dialogue, but be seen as being pro-active in initiating a process. If this chance for peace is lost, a large share of the blame will fall on the shoulders of this umbrella alliance, and Kashmiri sentiment for one will not easily forgive.

The challenge before New Delhi will become even more acute in the weeks to come. The need is to devise policies that recognise the gains made by the ceasefire, and to advance them, even while preparing to fight the consolidation in militant ranks that has taken place over the last two months. Most important, however, is to put in place policies that are addressed at the Kashmiri people, rather than at specific individuals and groups. In the absence of a dialogue, a unilateral package of economic and political incentives would be the right way to continue the peace process even if the ceasefire has to be terminated.

(The writer is Director, National Security Programme, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

THE HINDU

2 FEB 2001

Muslim Personal Law Board rules out talks with VHP

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 21

THE ALL India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) today ruled out negotiations with the VHP on the Ayodhya issue but expressed its willingness for a "meaningful dialogue" with the Centre to resolve the issue in accordance with law. But this, it emphasised, was possible only if Government manifested its sincerity by creating a "conducive atmosphere" for it.

"There is a unanimous feeling that there is no question of any negotiations with those who demolished the Babri Masjid and plan to defy the Constitution and law," its leaders told newsmen immediately after the Board executive's marathon six-hour meeting.

Presided by its president Maulana Qazi Muzahidul Islam Qasmi, the 41-member body of different Muslim organisations, adopted a five-point resolution which not only signalled their own unity but also their sharp reaction to the dharam sansad's warning from Allahabad of beginning the construction of the Ram temple from next March without waiting for a judicial verdict.

Although the resolution does not expressly talk about it, the Board members were explicit in demanding that the Government create a conducive atmosphere by first reining in the "hot heads" who were holding out a threat to the state, the Constitution and the law by coming out with a deadline.

Board members underlined this point by echoing Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's call to Pakistan to create a conducive atmosphere for talks.

PM may have to intervene: Page 13

12 killed in J&K bomb blasts

Security forces gun down six intruders

HTC and Agencies
Jammu/Srinagar, January 21

EIGHTEEN PEOPLE were today killed and more than 50 injured in two explosions and a gunbattle in one of the bloodiest days in Jammu and Kashmir in recent weeks.

Four civilians and two soldiers were killed when a public bus was targetted in a powerful landmine explosion near Kreeri township, 45 km of Srinagar. The blast injured 22 people, including eight soldiers.

A police spokesman said the perpetrators of the crime used a remote-controlled device to trigger the explosion.

The blast took place at 10.15 am and left a huge crater on a rough link road connecting Kreeri with neighbouring Patan township.

Police said the militants had used 20 kg of RDX plastic explosive.

Hospital sources said the condition of four of the wounded civilians and three soldiers was critical.

Elsewhere, two civilians and a policeman were killed and 20 injured in a grenade explosion at Rajpora village, near Pulwama town, 30 km south of Srinagar.

The grenade was tossed at a security patrol, but missed its target and exploded among a crowd of pedestrians.

In another incident, security men shot dead six militants who were trying to sneak into from Pakistan, a state government spokesman said.

"Alert villagers saw seven men crossing the border into India.



Grieving relatives of bomb blast victims in Kreeri, 45 km north of Srinagar, on Sunday. Photos: PTI/AFP

They alerted the police and our troops immediately swung into action," K.D. Jandiyal told AFP.

Army spokesman Randhir Singh said: "Six of the Pakistanis were killed ... Two officers and two soldiers were hurt in the encounter."

The day began with a bomb explosion near the ruling National Conference's headquarters. The blast was so powerful that it damaged several vehicles parked in the area. The bomb was hidden in a

garbage trolley. Tensions were running high in Srinagar today following the overnight death in police custody of an activist from the regional Muslim League party.

Srinagar residents said Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat was arrested on Friday night and he died in the custody of anti-insurgency commandos of the state police department.

The police, however, described Bhat as a wanted militant and said he was killed in an encounter.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JAN 2007

MILITANTS ATTEMPT TO BLOW UP NC OFFICE

10 killed, over 50 injured as blasts rock Kashmir

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, JAN. 21. At least 10 persons were killed and 56 injured in two militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir today. The dead included two Army jawans and a young girl. A bomb also exploded outside the National Conference headquarters in Jammu early in the morning.

Reports reaching here said a powerful landmine triggered by suspected militants went off

around 10 a.m. near Kreeri, around 35 km from Srinagar, smashing a State Road Transport Corporation bus coming from Kawchak village to pieces. A contingent of 29 Rashtriya Rifles based in Watergam had boarded the bus, on its way to Pattan, a short while earlier.

Three civilians, Trilok Singh, Paramjeet Kaur and Manzoor Ahmed Khan, and two jawans died instantly while over 30 per-

sons, including 11 army personnel, suffered injuries. The injured were taken to a hospital at Kreeri but were later shifted to Srinagar where two civilians, Trilok Singh and Surjeet Kaur, died.

The Baramulla SSP, Mr. Abdul Qayoom Manhas, said the blast had created a five-foot deep crater. He confirmed the death of four civilians and two Army personnel.

In another incident, militants

hurled a powerful grenade at security forces at Rajpora in south Kashmir's Pulwama district. The grenade, however, missed the target and exploded on the road injuring several civilians. While two persons died on the spot another person died in hospital. About 20 persons, injured in the blast, were admitted to a local hospital. Some of them were later shifted to Srinagar as their condition worsened.

Many buses damaged

Earlier in the day, a bomb planted in a dustbin outside the Sher-i-Kashmir Bhavan on Jammu's Residency road, headquarters of the ruling National Conference, exploded causing damage to a number of SRTC buses parked nearby. There was no loss of life or injury. The building is in the compound of the Tourist Reception Centre from where buses ply between Srinagar and Jammu.

UNI reports:

Sources said the windowpanes of a car parked nearby shattered. A bus and a car were also damaged. The blast was audible in a three-km radius.

Security forces cordoned off the area and started search operations, the sources added. Meanwhile, Indian airline sources in New Delhi said the window panes of an IA booking counter in the area were also damaged in the explosion.



A policeman rummaging through the debris of a bus damaged in a landmine blast triggered by militants near Srinagar on Sunday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

BJP snub to Hurriyat pointer to J&K ceasefire withdrawal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 22

THE BJP has prepared the ground for the Government to abandon the unilateral ceasefire approach and act tough to check flare-ups in Kashmir.

For the first time, the ruling party today strongly criticised the Hurriyat Conference's proposed visit to Pakistan, which was conceived following the PM's truce to mark Ramzan.

With the Government set to take a decision on extending the ceasefire beyond January 26 in the next two days, the BJP questioned the very purpose of its planned visit to Pakistan.

Provoked by APHC's accusation that "hardliners" within the Central Government were delaying issuance of travel papers to sabotage the peace process initiated by Prime Minister A B Vajpayee, the BJP said that the Hurriyat should "enlighten all of us on the nature of their proposed talks in Pakistan."

Stating that the Hurriyat was looking for an alibi of possible failure of its trip to Pakistan, senior BJP vice president K Jana

Krishnamurti said the group should first clarify the purpose of its visit to Pakistan.

"What is the purpose of their visit to Pakistan? Whom are they going to meet? Are they going to Pakistan to meet the leaders of terrorist groups to prevail upon them to stop violence? What will be the basis for their discussion?"

Taking exception to the Hurriyat Conference's remark that New Delhi would have to bear the responsibility for collapse of the peace process, the party spokesperson recalled that the Vajpayee Government had already said that passports would be issued to anyone on the basis of eligibility.

"Whoever wants to go, is free to go. The Government is not stopping any one. What is important to note, however, is that violence is continuing in Jammu and Kashmir," the BJP spokesperson said.

"If the Home Minister or the Defence Minister are making a statement on the situation, they are not speaking in their individual capacity. It is the Government that is speaking. What is the point of trying to divide the Union Cabinet

into hardliners and softliners?" he asked.

Party president Bangaru Laxman issued a statement two days ago saying that there was no need to extend the "unilateral" ceasefire because violence continued unabated in the strife-torn State.

Worried by the impact the continuing violence would have on the Government's image, BJP leaders were telling supporters that the Government knew that Pakistan had not ceased to abet terrorism in India.

Mr Laxman's statement, on Saturday called for a "rethink" on extending the ceasefire beyond January 26 "in the context of continuing violence, and increasingly desperate attempts to sabotage India's initiative."

He advocated a hardline against the militants, saying that they should not be allowed to mistake the ceasefire initiative as India's weakness.

"Those who are unwilling to make constructive use of the PM's gesture and perpetrating violence should be taught a fitting lesson. They should be crushed with an iron hand."

between Centre-Hurriyat talks

Let Hurriyat visit Pak: Mufti to Govt

Jay Raina
New Delhi, January 22

EVEN AS the Hurriyat's Pakistan mission continues to be shrouded in uncertainty, former Union Home Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed today came out in support of the 23-party conglomerate's peace initiative.

He also sought further extension of the ongoing ceasefire in Kashmir as part of the Centre's confidence building measures.

In an exclusive interview, Sayeed, who heads the J&K Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) told *The Hindustan Times* that having distanced itself from the Hurriyat's Pak-mission, the Centre should permit the Hurriyat leaders to travel to Pakistan without appearing to be favouring any particular individual or group of leaders.

"In its bid to create a conducive atmosphere for peace talks, the Hurriyat has taken upon itself to open channels of communication with some militant groups and others in Pakistan and it would be in the fitness of things to facilitate their endeavour," the PDP chief said while drawing a distinction between Centre-Hurriyat talks

and dialogue with other democratic formations in the state.

Mufti attaches considerable significance to possible Centre-Hurriyat talks in the context of the known stand of the Hurriyat leaders against accession.

"The Hurriyat leaders are either for accession of J&K to Pakistan or its evolution into an independent entity," he explained while asserting the importance of bringing about a perceptible change in the perceptions of the 23-party conglomerate.

According to him, other things, such as a composite dialogue with the people of the state represented by several strands of political opinion can follow later.

The PDP Chief demanded a change of stance at the ground level. "Be it custodial deaths or violations of human rights, the people have to be made to acquire a vested interest in the peace process," he explained.

The PDP Chief sought immediate steps to give a feeling to the local populace that the nation as a whole was concerned at the plight. "It is a question of caring of reaching out to the people caught in a situation that was beyond their control," he said.

Crossroads in Kashmir

By Pran Chopra

HD-12
23/1

WITHIN THREE weeks we have had two somewhat differing assessments about the ground situation in Kashmir, not conflicting in substance but in tone and context. On December 20, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was reported as saying in Parliament that though there had been some decline in infiltration it had not been enough, and it had to stop entirely before the "composite dialogue" between India and Pakistan could be resumed. His tone was positive but the substance cautious, and he preferred silence at this stage on the question whether the ceasefire he had announced would be extended or not. This question he parried again on his return from South East Asia.

The need for caution was reinforced by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, in Bali, Indonesia, on January 12. While denying that an invitation for talks had been sent to General Pervez Musharraf, Mr. Mishra recalled Mr. Vajpayee's statement in Parliament that a "conducive atmosphere" was necessary "for things to proceed towards a dialogue on the Kashmir issue". He also expressed concern over an increase in attacks on civilians in Kashmir following India's ceasefire, the attack on the Red Fort by Pakistan based militants, and their threat to attack the Prime Minister's office in New Delhi.

But also on January 12, the Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. S. Padmanabhan, chose to go further. While recognising that the decision must rest with the Government, he clearly urged extension of the ceasefire. "It is a good thing to continue with," he added, as the advantages of doing so far outweighed the disadvantages. And for good measure, he added that there had been "a sea change in the overall situation", thus virtually recommending an extension.

The contrast between the two assessments is yet another reminder that when the situation is as complicated and the choices as hard as they are in Kashmir, close coordination is needed at the top

Ceasefires cannot follow each other in a vacuum. Either they must be followed up by further progress or they must come to an end.

among those who have to inform, enlighten, and prepare public opinion about the decision they might have to take. In any case, the impact of an extension or termination of the ceasefire will be greater if it is announced by the Prime Minister after taking the time he will need to assess all that has happened in and about Kashmir during his absence from India. Critical crossroads lie beyond any decision the Prime Minister might take about the ceasefire.

In the meantime, the drama of the Hurriyat's encounter with Pakistan must unfold itself. The Hurriyat might or might not be as important as, with some assistance from Pakistan, it makes itself out to be. But the outcome of its projected visit to Pakistan could be educative for the visitors as well as the host. The Hurriyat will discover, face to face, how much cooperation it can expect from the militants based in Pakistan, who have bluntly questioned its credentials, including Syed Ali Shah Geelani's. Pakistan will discover from the visitors at first hand what is the strength and what are the implications of the desire for peace which is sweeping the Valley. The outcome could offer some straws in the wind which India needs to take note of in shaping its steps as it approaches the crossroads.

The Hurriyat itself has also compounded its difficulties, and so has Pakistan. The Hurriyat's strident demands, which it issues as though they were ultimatums, could persuade some exasperated people in New Delhi to call its bluff. Pakistan is posturing as though it has invited the Hurriyat as a mediator between India and Pakistan and a partner to a dialogue between the two countries. India has never accepted that position and never will. This could affect the credibility of such counsel as the Hurriyat might wish to offer on its return to India, and that would

disappoint those very people whose interests the Hurriyat claims to represent.

Indications are that the desire of the people of Kashmir for peace has grown stronger since the last week of July last year when, bending to as well as reflecting this desire, Mr. Abdul Majid Dar, of the Kashmir-based wing of the Hizbul Mujahideen, announced his own startling, unilateral, and unconditional ceasefire. His credentials for peace were strongly confirmed when the Pakistan-based wing of the Hizbul Mujahideen (the distinction between the two wings is sometimes missed in media reports) denounced him as a peace-monger. New Delhi has also made the assessment that even "the surrendered militants", unpopular though they are with some sections of Kashmiri opinion, are now applauded publicly when they urge peace. Hurriyat leaders cannot be unaware of this fact and cannot afford to be, and one hopes they will also convey it to Pakistan.

For the Indian Government too, this desire in Kashmir is the star it must always keep within sight as it negotiates the eddies and whirlpools of Kashmiri politics and the broader politics of the sub-continent. As it is, public moods are variable. The mood in Kashmir can change if some unfortunate event occurs. It could have, on January 14, when someone fired a rifle grenade at a meeting the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, was addressing. The grenade fell far away and the police did not have to retaliate, but it could have gone differently.

The Government cannot control contingencies which it cannot foresee. But two are clearly visible, and the Government must needs prepare itself for them, and the country too. The first is that if the ceasefire is extended and it goes well, it will need to be followed by talks between

New Delhi and Srinagar on the extent of the Union Government's jurisdiction over the State, particularly with regard to the extensions of the Union's jurisdiction which were effected when Sheikh Abdullah was under detention. The second is whether India and Pakistan should talk to each other on Kashmir, and if so when and on what basis.

Both contingencies arise inescapably from the fact that ceasefires cannot follow each other in a vacuum. Either they must be followed up by further progress, whether on the New Delhi-Srinagar axis or on the New Delhi-Islamabad axis, and preferably on both. Or they must come to an end, with whatever the consequences of that may be. Some follow-up steps are discernible, and they have a respectable lineage. Some steps on the New Delhi-Srinagar axis are to be found in the accord signed by Indira Gandhi with Sheikh Abdullah in 1974, which envisaged some restoration of the autonomy Jammu and Kashmir had within the Indian Union when the Sheikh was the Chief Minister of the State. Those on the second axis have been lucidly spelt out in the Sheikh's letter to Indira Gandhi in 1976, and were more recently restated by Dr. Farooq Abdullah when he talked about the Line of Control becoming more like an international border. The basis for discussing these and other steps has been cast in cement by the Lahore documents, which neither India nor Pakistan should try to by-pass.

But the follow-up on each axis requires changes in the present positions of the Governments of the Union and the State on one axis, and of the Governments of India and Pakistan on the other. None of the three will find the changes easy to make, and all three will find them difficult to sell to their respective people. The only hope of selling them lies in the hard fact of life that anything is acceptable if the only alternative to it is worse, and the worst possible alternative for all three of them is indefinite continuation of the recent and the current tribulations of all three.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

23 JAN 2001

US to Pak: Use influence to halt violence in Kashmir

S. Rajagopalan
Washington, January 25

WELCOMING INDIA'S extension of the cease-fire in Jammu and Kashmir by a month, the US has asked Pakistan to "use its influence" with militant groups in order to halt the ongoing violence and further the peace process.

"We believe the peace process would be greatly enhanced if the militant groups responded positively to India's announcement by taking steps to halt the violence," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said on Wednesday.

The US, he said, would encourage all the parties to take initiatives to reduce violence and foster a process to end the conflict in Kashmir. Although Islamabad maintains that it has no hold on the militant groups, Washington is not oblivious to the fact that the

groups striking in the Valley with unfailing regularity have been operating from across the border.

The insistence of outfits like the Hizbul Mujahideen, which called off its talks with the Indian Government by insisting on Pakistan's inclusion, has also exposed Islamabad's claim that it does not wield any influence with the militant groups.

It was a recognition of this aspect that prompted the predecessor Clinton Administration to change tack by advocating an end to the violence creating a congenial atmosphere for talks. Earlier on, its stress used be on immediate resumption of a dialogue.

The Bush Administration is still to spell out its position on the Indo-Pak issue, notably Kashmir, but indications thus far have been that its approach may be much the same. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Colin Powell, living up to his

promise, has ordered a prompt review of the US's economic and trade sanctions on India and several other countries, imposed by the predecessor Clinton Administration for a variety of reasons.

The review is reckoned to be the first step towards the possible lifting of all or most of the punitive measures.

During his Senate confirmation hearing, Gen. Powell had sounded exasperated with the numerous restrictions and certification requirements vis-a-vis India and several other countries.

Mr Boucher said, "The process is under way. People in the building are looking at the sanctions that exist and are analysing them. But we don't have any results, conclusions or changes to announce yet."

The only definitive statement from the spokesman was in respect of Iraq: That the sanctions on Iraq will stay in place.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JAN 2001

Govt extends ceasefire by another month

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 JANUARY

IN AN attempt to ram in its point that New Delhi was reasonable in its approach towards the Kashmir issue, the Vajpayee government on Tuesday ignored the reservations of security agencies and others in the thick of the conflict and extended ceasefire by another month.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security. The meeting, which took stock of the security situation in the Valley since January 15, the security agencies' assessment about the cost involved in the extension of ceasefire and the political cost that it entails, felt that an abrupt end would not be beneficial in the country's interests.

The gamble that the Prime Minister has taken received the complete backing of the Cabinet panel.

"The initiative for peace taken by the Prime Minister on November 23 on the eve of the holy month of Ramazan was



UNREST IN THE VALLEY: BSF jawans patrol deserted streets in Lal Chowk, Srinagar, on Tuesday as the Kashmir Valley observed yet another strike called by the Hurriyat against growing incidents of custodial killings. — PTI

despite heinous acts of terrorism and violence against innocent men, women and children, extended by a month thereafter to coincide with Republic Day this year.

The government on Tuesday reviewed the entire security sce-

nario of Jammu and Kashmir, particularly acts of cross-border terrorism and their crimes against the civilian population, external affairs minister Jaswant Singh told reporters.

The government reiterated its principal formula of laying the

onus of peace in the Valley on the hostile neighbour. "It is regrettable that Pakistan has not recognised the demand of time for peace and continues to promote, encourage and abet cross-border terrorism. This must cease and the activities of organisations like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad curbed and controlled by Pakistan. The government believes violence must be ended and peace given every chance."

The government's ceasefire announcement comes in the backdrop of worrying reports that militant outfits have been targeting informant SPOs and civilians.

The security agencies are of the view that an extension could prove counterproductive as the militants have been successful in using the ceasefire period to replenish their stock of armmunitions and networks in villages.

The political cost of the decision is quite high as the continued violence in the Valley could put the government on the defensive.

Ceasefire fails to defuse tension in Kashmir Valley

Indrani Bagchi
NEW DELHI 23 JANUARY

GIVEN THE political risks involved in the extension of ceasefire in Kashmir, a careful assessment of the government's decision points to an international PR exercise aimed at resumption of a dialogue with Pakistan, perhaps with the indirect support of the US.

The second extension is fraught with political risks. Four weeks ago, the first extension, announced by the Prime Minister in Parliament was in the background of a genuine brightening of the situation in the Valley, with infiltration and firing on LoC significantly reduced.

Today, it is in an environment of deep distrust — terrorist groups like Lashkar and Jaish continue to strike at random and the human costs, while perhaps less than what would have been otherwise, are still large enough to hurt.

There is every reason to believe and intelligence agencies seem certain of it, that militant attacks as well as Fidayeen operations are likely to continue if not intensify in the near future, clear from their rejection on Tuesday.

Sections within the government are equally averse to extending the suspension of combat operations.

The ruling party, BJP, has been against it. The main Opposition will need just that one major incident to underscore their attack against the government.

Ms Sonia Gandhi said on Tuesday, "We have said from the beginning that we will support the government in any initiative it takes to bring back peace in the Valley of Jammu & Kashmir... However, we have also cautioned the government that we must not let our guard down as we had very serious negative experiences in the past."

Therefore, sources here are speculating that the extension might pave the way for bilateral dialogue with Pakistan, with the help from a third party, possibly the US. Pakistan indicated this with their statement that the ceasefire would be meaningful if it "signals... The commencement of a purposeful dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute."

The Hurriyat experiment has been shown to be a no-brainer, while Musharraf needs that extra toehold to sell peace to his own establishment. India, by extending the ceasefire could be sending unmistakable dialogue signals to Pakistan. It is no coincidence that at a conference of the corps commanders in Islamabad on Monday, Musharraf announced an improvement of relations with India.

The US is still in the best position to execute this, given its hold on a much needed IMF tranche to Pakistan. Besides, with the sanctions against the Taliban hurting Pakistan the most, there appear to be indications that Pakistan can be brought around and 'persuaded' to reduce the violence in the Valley.

The first steps have been taken with the meeting of Vijay Nambiar and General Musharraf which was the first conferring of legitimacy on the chief executive.

The reason this speculation gains credence is that in conventional circumstances, it is difficult to visualise a credible endgame. While the government clings to the 'cessation of terrorism' condition, two months of suspension of operations has demonstrated that Pakistan is unwilling to do anything of the sort.

The only casualty to this scenario is the fact that despite strenuous Indian denials, if India has to talk Kashmir, Pakistan is emerging as the only other credible party.

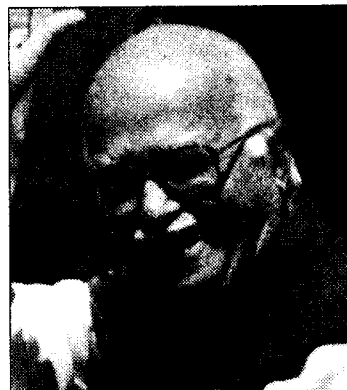
Reports confirm Lashkar's plot to kill Advani on R-Day

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 23 JANUARY

UNION HOME secretary Kamal Pande on Tuesday confirmed the receipt of intelligence inputs about the Lashkar-e-Toiba's plot to target Union home minister L.K. Advani around Republic Day, even as top sources in the Delhi Police claimed that the head of the Lashkar Fidayeen squad, Ejaz Rasool alias Dinesh Sharma, was yet to enter the capital.

Speaking to reporters here on Tuesday, Mr Pande said "intelligence inputs have given this indication (that a Fidayeen squad of the Lashkar is on a mission to assassinate the National Security Guard (NSG)-protected Advani)...we are acting upon the information and taking all precautionary steps."

According to Delhi police sources, the information about



Advani: IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Lashkar's plot to target the Union home minister was received on Monday evening. The inputs, said to have been passed on by intelligence officials based in Nepal, indicated that a four-member squad — comprising head Rasool, Hashim Baig, Usman and

Sikandar — was on Mr Advani's trail and would try to strike on January 26. Reports suggested that the militants would be moving around in police uniforms.

However, the sources added that the information with the police until now was that Ejaz Rasool was yet to enter Delhi. "Even if he enters, locating him will be like finding a needle in a haystack," admitted a senior police officer.

The receipt of intercepts about the assassination plot was immediately followed up with a discussion between Delhi Police commissioner Ajai Raj Sharma and Union home ministry officials.

Apart from flashing Rasool's photographs in the media, instructions were given for double-checking the identity of police officers on R-Day duty in order to detect the uniformed militants.

Hizbul, Lashkar reject ceasefire

Islamabad
23 JANUARY

TWO FRONTLINE Pakistan-based militant organisations, Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Toiba, on Tuesday rejected further one-month extension of ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by India even as Islamabad hoped the step would be "meaningful" and lead to commencement of dialogue for resolution of the Kashmir issue.

The ceasefire would be meaningful if it "signals... the commencement of a purposeful dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute," a foreign office statement said here.

"The decision (to extend the ceasefire), it must be hoped, will be implemented on ground," the statement said accusing India of violating the ceasefire in the past two months. — PTI

Kashmir's first panchayat election emphatically shows that its people have voted for a democratic India

Kashmir has spoken

BY ANAND K. SAHAY

THE FIRST phase of the panchayat election in Kashmir changes everything. It decidedly challenges the decade-old belief — propagated assiduously by Pakistan and prominent Western circles — that the rural population of the overwhelmingly Muslim areas of Jammu and Kashmir has gone over to the ideology of secession from India, and concomitantly nurses the urge to be integrated with Pakistan on the basis of religious affinity.

Any genuine Indian strategy in respect of J&K and Pakistan will necessarily have this just-revealed reality to deal with, whatever the temptation to play to the international gallery. It will have to call for thinking that goes beyond illogical constructs such as a 'unilateral' cease-fire, which is plainly a unilateral absurdity. After all, a 'cease-fire', by definition, entails an agreement between two sides to sort out issues across the table by effecting a pause in hostilities.

Typically, for the effort to succeed, the two sides must be entities that are accountable for their actions. Which are the two sides in the present context? It is precisely because there is no clarity on this question that probably the worst recorded violence for a comparable period has occurred in the last two months of the so-called unilateral cease-fire.

Security forces and civilians alike have been targeted. Ministers' homes have been attacked in Kashmir. Political functionaries have been killed. The state Chief Minister was nearly rocketed. The national symbol of Red Fort — which is national precisely because it was here that a decrepit, forlorn nominal ruler was approached jointly by Hindus and Muslims in 1857 to lead them against the 'Yeringtee' — was made a killing ground. And the worst infamy — the life of India's elected Prime Minister was openly and belligerently threatened.

If this goes on much longer, the people of Jammu and Kashmir are entitled to develop doubts about the Government's ability to protect their vital interests, which include not just life and limb but also the right to live under a democratic dispensa-

tion. Quite plainly, the hokum of unilateral cease-fire cannot be a substitute for policy. So far, it has been deployed only to cloak the absence of clear thinking.

The most practical lesson to emerge is that peace cannot be pursued as an objective unless two well-defined parties, which have the capability to undertake as well as fulfil obligations, agree to play ball according to a commonly agreed set of principles. Point two: there is no need to get all mushy or excited just because elements given to double-speak try to win friends by invoking peace. Indeed, peace is about more than just word games. Those who truly care for it must take the trouble to plot, plan and strategise with all they've got to make it come real.

While the so-called unilateral cease-fire has been given another month-long lease of life, it is possible to relieve the pressure on the people in the Valley in other ways. First, by humanising the LoC. With some imagination and without prejudice to its interests, it is possible for India to offer to operate exit-entry points on the LoC — a sort of subcontinental 'Checkpoint Charlie' of the old Berlin — so that people with valid travel papers on both sides may come and go freely.

This can be a hugely democratising experience whose reward will become evident in due course when people estranged by the closing of frontiers get to exchange notes. It is futile to worry about unsavoury elements exploiting the facility, for they are already able to cross the line at will. The net gainers of the experiment will be ordinary folk on both sides of the divide.

To make this happen, everyone in J&K should be

able to get a passport on demand by going through the normal formalities. Let debates such as the one about issuing passports to the representatives of the Hurriyat Conference become a thing of the past. The effect of this on the stifled civil society in J&K can be revolutionary.

Secondly, sustained and steady efforts are needed to systematically secularise the system of education in J&K, which at present is at the mercy of medieval-style *madarassas* that catch children young to purvey 'jihadism' to impressionable minds. This must constitute the underpinning of any long-term policy on Kashmir.

While the Government appears trapped in cobwebs of its own making arising from the desire to please foreign interlocutors — look at the messy record from the Lahore bus ride through two misconceived 'cease-fires' — the people of Jammu and Kashmir have heroically resisted fear during the recent panchayat elections and shown the way. If we are wise, we can use their courage as a scaffolding to construct and safeguard peace.

Let's just remember that the panchayat election was held in the border (LoC) districts that were thought to be most receptive to the *jehadi* sentiments being provoked from the other side. Even so, it remained entirely peaceful (no internal clashes), and the polling was very high — close on 70 per cent, in spite of sub-zero January temperatures. The presence of the Indian security forces, which in all past elections has instigated motivated allegations of rigging and forced voting, was almost entirely absent.

In effect, people were saying they didn't care a

tuppence for terrorism, even if they had to pay a price — as some did. This is an example that will stand out in the annals of Kashmir. Indeed, in a wider sense, and in its own quiet way, the episode stands comparison with the 'Quit Kashmir' movement of 1944. Only this time those being subtly asked to depart are members of the *ummah* intent on dispersing the seeds of *jehad*.

It is pertinent to note that the political backdrop to the panchayat election was ominous. All the Hurriyat groups had called for a boycott, and the terrorists threatened violent disruption. The Hurriyat also ostentatiously talked of visiting Islamabad to finally resolve matters. In the end, none of this mattered as people dug in and exercised their democratic choice.

It is also of the first importance to recognise that in the overall recent politics of Kashmir, the close involvement of the Muslim villagers in the panchayat election has come after the rejection by Parliament of the J&K Assembly's resolution on autonomy. The resolution was emphatic about returning the state to the status that was obtained before 1953 when, in spite of accession, it was associated with India only very loosely. In the context, it is well worth asking what the people of Kashmir may think of *azadi* when they have shown themselves not too concerned even with the issue of 'autonomy', let alone joining Pakistan.

True enough, panchayat elections are seldom fought on party lines, and do not generally concern themselves with high principles of political theology. But in Kashmir, disobedience to *jehadi* gangs on any count can mean violent death. And it is large-scale disobedience that has just been witnessed.

There can be little doubt on any reasonable reckoning that the vote so far has been for a democratic India, no less. The moral settles well with the observations made a couple of years ago by General Jahangir Karamat, the former Pakistan Army Chief, who reportedly told a gathering of officers that they needed to ponder over the fact that the Indian Muslim remains loyal to India even after the formation of Pakistan as the home for Muslims of the subcontinent.



Jihad Council rejects ceasefire in Kashmir

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, January 24

THE MUTTAHIDA Jihad Council (MJC), an umbrella alliance of 18 militant groups fighting in Kashmir, has rejected the extension of ceasefire in the Valley terming it as a drama.

"We reject the latest ceasefire drama because we believe that it's the same old trap of New Delhi. The MJC's member-outfits would continue their struggle till a lasting solution to the dispute in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir was achieved," MJC spokesman Ishtiaq Hamid said on Tuesday.

"India has not acted in accordance with its own announcement as there had been no let-up in custodial killings, molestation of women and search operations in occupied Kashmir," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JAN 2001

EXTENDED INITIATIVE

Matching moves urgently required

IN rising above domestic pressures and extending the Jammu & Kashmir ceasefire, the government has established that it is prepared to go that extra mile to try and get a peace process moving. There were more than adequate reasons for the security forces being directed to abandon their Non-Initiation of Combat Operations posture. Doing so might have also garnered some political mileage for it is an open secret that a large section of Vajpayee's party maintains that his approach to militancy has been a trifle soft and no quarter should be given to terrorism. They would do well to try and understand that the ceasefire is not directed at placating militants, but at creating an atmosphere in which the militants are rejected by the local populace. It is a calculated risk, but one that is worth the taking. In stretching the ceasefire to all of 90 days, the government has created the space in which political movement ought to progress. The denial of travel documents to the hardliners can be a two-way sword. The flip side is that the Hurriyat make no bones about wanting to bring in Pakistan as a third party, if India and Pakistan have to talk they can do so without intermediaries. On the other hand they would be exposed should they return rebuffed and empty-handed. It would be an opportune time to put the Hurriyat's credentials to test.

The Government has rightly called upon Pakistan to use its clout and rein in the militants, without its backing the extremist outfits would not be able to function with the determination and proficiency that they currently display. The ceasefire has projected India's commitment to a non-violent settlement but that would amount to little more than brownie points unless greater international pressure can be brought to bear on Pakistan. The spirit manifested at Lahore and which survived the bitter experience of Kargil has been the underpinning of the twice-extended ceasefire. Yet that spirit cannot be sustained in the absence of a more visible response than has been exhibited so far.

THE STATESMAN

30 JAN 2001

Army's assessment was crucial to extension

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, January 23

GOVERNMENT SOURCES say despite reservations within the ruling coalition and outside, the Cabinet decided to extend the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir as it felt its advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

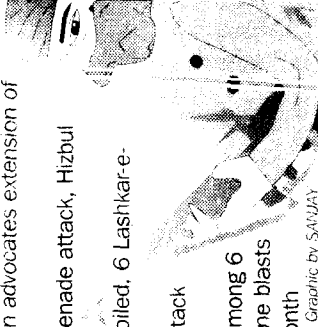
The decision was partly based on Army's assessment of the situation in the state. Army Chief Gen S. Padmanabhan, who attended the meeting of Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), favoured an extension but had singled out jihadi groups like the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) and the Jaish-e-Mohammed as being against the peace process.

It is understood that the Army saw situation conducive enough to give peace yet another chance, the same was conveyed to the CCS. Sixty-five to 85 per cent turnout in panchayat elections, according to the Army, showed that the threat of militants was not working in villages that had some active grass-roots organisation. Otherswise, a

CEASEFIRE: A REALITY CHECK

- Dec. 26:** Ceasefire extended
- Jan 5:** 27 people, including 4 BSF men, injured in grenade explosions in Srinagar
- Jan 9:** 50 people, including 2 CRPF men, injured in explosions in Srinagar and Anantnag
- Jan 11:** Hurriyat names 5-member delegation for Pak ceasefire
- Jan 12:** Army chief S. Padmanabhan advocates extension of ceasefire
- Jan 14:** Farooq Abdullah survives grenade attack, Hizbul Mujahideen claims responsibility
- Jan 16:** Attack on Srinagar airport foiled, 6 Lashkar-e-Toyyaba men, among 11 killed
- Jan 17:** Militants launch grenade attack on police station
- Jan 18:** BSF deputy commandant among 6 security personnel killed in 2 landmine blasts
- Jan 23:** Ceasefire extended by a month

Graphic by SAIJAY



massive turnout, even after discounting bogus votes, would not have been possible in the border districts of Rajouri and Poonch.

Army's reading, therefore, was that the jihadi groups were getting isolated and were unable to attack in a coordinated manner. They

militants were being forced to target civilians, as was the case with blast triggered in the State transport bus this Sunday, to keep up the tempo. The Army viewed these attacks as sporadic and desperate attempts by pan-Islamic jihadis to maintain a visible opposition to the peace process.

The other major factor that convinced the CCS is that the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has softened stand on the passports issue. Earlier, the Hurriyat was perceived to be dictating terms to the Centre on who should be sent and on which date. However, apparent lack of enthusiasm from the Pakistani side, has forced it to review its stand.

The perception is that the Hurriyat, which had called for a boycott of the panchayat polls, has limited influence on jihadi groups and is of little relevance to any future Indo-Pak dialogue. The APHC, according to the Army, is a political group and should be treated as such.

The Army's situation report, it is

learnt, was given to the CCS after taking all views into account.

Another factor that warranted the ceasefire extension was its positive spin-off in context of Pak observing "maximum restraint" along the Line of Control (LoC) and in the Siachen glacier. The fact that the attrition levels have gone down after reduced cross-border infiltration and the artillery guns falling silent on both the sides, was a good enough reason for any general to advocate truce extension.

The Government must have taken into account that for the past 58 days, the Army and the paramilitary forces have been able to reorganise themselves on the border. In fact, the period has been used to beef up the intelligence mechanism and strengthen anti-insurgency grid in the State.

The grounding down of six LeT militants at Srinagar airport is one such example of better coordination among security forces. This encounter also undid the myth of invincibility of foreign jihadis in the eyes of Kashmiris.

Ceasefire in J&K extended by ^{HPT} 29/1 another month

Jay Raina
New Delhi, January 23

THE VAJPAYEE Government has decided to carry forward its peace initiative by extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by another month beyond the Republic Day. The announcement was made here this afternoon after a stormy session of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Vajpayee and his close aides including External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh could prevail upon the hard-liners within the CCS by arguing that the Centre's failure to extend the ceasefire could derail the composite Kashmir peace process.

Reliable sources said the CCS decision was influenced by four factors — positive international response, the public's welcome to the peace initiative, creation of political space for Hurriyat moderates and indigenous militant outfits and support from all State-centric democratic formations.

In a statement, Mr Singh regretted that Pakistan has not recognised the "demand for peace" as it continued to promote, encourage and abet cross border terrorism. "This must cease and the activities of organisations like Lashkar-e-Tayebba and Jaishe-e-Mohammad curbed and controlled by Pakistan," he said after the three-hour meeting.

The sources clarified that cessation of combat operations only meant that there would be no "search and cordon" operations. But

security forces would not hesitate to act against mercenaries on the basis of specific intelligence. "The intention is to isolate the foreign mercenaries with the active support of the local population, which has been the main victim of Pak-sponsored violence during the ongoing ceasefire," they explained.

Delinking the extension of truce from the possibility of an early resumption of talks with

Pakistan, the sources said Islamabad's international isolation had also weakened its hold over several militant outfits. "No wonder it is asserting its relevance through violent acts of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and Jaishe-e-Mohammad's foreign recruits," they averred.

Even Mr Singh, while reiterating New Delhi's commitment to resuming dialogue with Islamabad, remarked: "Dialogue and gun-talk cannot go together." His comments are significant in the context of information obtained by *The Hindustan Times* that the CCS took no decision on the Hurriyat's Pak visit.

The CCS was given to understand that no purpose would be served at the current juncture to promote the Hurriyat interface as the multi-party conglomerate was divided on the question of visiting Pakistan. The pro-talk elements in their ranks have also been disheartened by hostile statements emanating from across the border.

The extension is expected to provide the Hurriyat time to subject its planned mission to "closer" scrutiny.

4 good reasons

- Failure to extend ceasefire could derail peace process.
- The intention is to isolate foreign mercenaries and put pressure on Pakistan with positive international response.
- Attempt to create space for Hurriyat moderates and indigenous militant outfits.
- No decision taken on Hurriyat's visit to Pakistan. This may allow them time to review their mission.

ON PAGE 11

- Army's perception influenced decision
- PM had his way despite BJP misgiving

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 JAN 2001

40-13 Ceasefire extension irks Farooq

By Our Special Correspondent

JAMMU, JAN. 24. The second extension of the ceasefire announced by the Centre in November last has pushed the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, to the wall again. Despite his efforts, he failed to persuade the Central leadership to call the ceasefire off.

A visibly upset Dr. Abdullah refused comment on the extension. At a function organised to release a calendar in the name of his mother, the late Begum Akbar Jehan, the Chief Minister refused to speak on the subject to reporters, registering his anger over the decision. He left the venue in a huff to take off to Leh to witness an ice hockey match.

However, on Tuesday evening, Dr. Abdullah told a TV network that there was no meaning in the ceasefire. "To hell with this ceasefire." Though Dr. Abdullah has not yet made his resentment pub-

lic this time, he is expected to reach Delhi on Saturday and may take up the issue with the Centre.

But sources close to the Chief Minister said he was very upset with the Centre's decision taken despite his strong opposition to the extension to the ceasefire. Though the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, had assured that they would take his views into consideration, there was a "big shock" in store for him. Dr. Abdullah's contention — that it would worsen the security situation in the State — is based on increasing violence in the Valley. He even tried to capitalise on the grenade attack on him in Habbakadal, besides the attack on the Srinagar airport.

Though Dr. Abdullah is armed with the figures which prove an increase in the violence after the ceasefire, the Centre has preferred to stick with the peace initiative. He is also understood to be

under tremendous pressure from the National Conference leadership to oppose the ceasefire since during this period 15 out of the 16 political activists killed belonged to the NC. 9-87 JAK

Observers are of the view that Dr. Abdullah is "genuinely unhappy" that during the ceasefire the security forces are a mute witness to the militants' movements. Also, he resents his being marginalised in the whole process. Dr. Abdullah does not want to see the separatist conglomerate, All-Party Hurriyat Conference, being recognised as a representative of Kashmiris. He has been all along opposed to their visit to Pakistan while all the mainstream parties are supporting a role for them.

On the other hand, Dr. Abdullah's son and Union Minister of State for Commerce, Mr. Omar Abdullah, has favoured the extension. But it is not being seen as a dissension between father and son, but could be a part of an or-

chestrated "mutual understanding".

Differences in Hurriyat

PTI reports from Srinagar: Differences within Hurriyat Conference surfaced again today. "Hurriyat leadership should make public its agenda before sending its five-member team to Pakistan to remove suspicions in the minds of people," the Islamic League leader, Mr. Shakeel Bakshi, told presspersons here.

He insisted that the Hurriyat leaders "cannot pursue individual agenda". The Hurriyat "will have to follow its Constitution, which envisages resolution of Kashmir issue through U.N. resolutions, in letter and spirit," he said. "If that is not possible, Hurriyat has to endeavour for a negotiated settlement of the issue through trilateral talks," Mr. Bakshi said.

The Muslim League general secretary, Mr. Farooq Tawhgedi endorsed Bakshi's views.

THE HINDU

25 JAN 2001

Clarify Kashmir policy: Congress

By Our Special Correspondent ¹¹⁰⁻¹

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24. After supporting the Government's decision to extend the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, the Congress has begun to ask questions. A party delegation headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh will call on the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to seek clarifications on the Kashmir policy even as the Bharatiya Janata Party urged Pakistan's military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, to translate into action his statement that no opportunity should be missed for normalising relations with India.

Stopping short of criticising the Government outright, the Congress sought an explanation about the wisdom of the Kashmir policy. Briefing mediapersons this afternoon, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, convener of the party's Kashmir group, said they had decided to call on the Prime Minister to find out what the Government had in mind.

This had become necessary because despite the Government's claims to the contrary, his party had not been consulted or taken into confidence. From the way the Government was going about things it did not appear it was clear about what it wanted to achieve, he said.

The Congress stand was that while it welcomed any move aimed at restoring peace in the Valley, the Government must keep its guard up.

The party had been viewing with alarm the spate of killings in the State, increase in mil-

itant activity evident from the attempt on the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah's life, the attack on the Srinagar airport and killing of security forces personnel. "We cannot allow the security forces to become soft targets," said Mr. Mukherjee.

Asking the Government to explain the objectives of its policy, the Congress leader said, "the Government must give a cogent explanation of what it had achieved so far". Mr. Mukherjee seemed to suggest that the Government's approach not only lacked clarity but was also not a well thought out policy. "Their handling appears messy and confusing."

Advising the Government to think through its policies before trying to implement them, Mr. Mukherjee said rather than react to situations, the Government should anticipate the fallout and be prepared for it and cited the impasse over the proposed visit of a Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan.

The Congress was willing to support any measure that helped bring back peace to the Valley but had serious reservations about the way the Kashmir issue was being handled. "They must really convince us that they know what they are doing and are moving in the right direction," said Mr. Mukherjee.

The BJP spokesperson, Mr. Jana Krishna-murthi, referred to Gen. Musharraf's reported statement during an address to the Pakistani corps commanders, and said it was the first time the military ruler had talked about peace

and the need to normalise bilateral relations. It was a positive development, he said and was keen on suggesting that, after all, the decision to extend the ceasefire could, and perhaps would, lead to a positive outcome. In short, the extension of ceasefire was justified.

'Govt. compounding miseries'

PTI, UNI report:

In Patna, the former Prime Minister and Samajwadi Janata Party president, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, hit out at the Vajpayee Ministry for deciding to carry forward its peace initiative by further extending the ceasefire in the State.

"The Government seems least bothered about the bloodbath in Kashmir... It wants to further compound the miseries of the people there," he told a press conference here.

'Wrong policies'

Speaking in Guna, the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Digvijay Singh, asked the Centre to "first set its house in order" and minimise Pakistani interference in Kashmir.

The Congress leader said "wrong policies — the way of functioning and the anti-minority stance of the BJP" gave a chance to Pakistan "to incite the feelings of Muslims in the Kashmir Valley".

In Etawah, Uttar Pradesh, the former Defence Minister, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, said the move would still not bear fruit. The Centre should have consulted all major political parties before taking the decision, he said.

THE HINDU

25 JAN 2001

THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2001

PERSISTING WITH PEACE INITIATIVE

IN DECIDING TO extend the two-month-old ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir by one more month, beyond January 26, the Government of India has acted with commendable judiciousness. Unlike the last occasion when the Ramzan initiative came up for review for the first time, it has now had to contend with a host of contra indicators both on the security and the political fronts, notably the worrisome escalation in the wanton killings by the jihadi militant outfits and the cracks it caused in the national matrix of pro-ceasefire political consensus. In fact, the tone and tenor of the recent pronouncements of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and his senior colleagues in the Cabinet did give room for doubts about the continuance of the ceasefire. It is to the Government's credit that, in the event, it did not allow itself to be overwhelmed by these adverse circumstances but, instead, chose to persist with its peace initiative. Having taken the bold step and, thereby, created a substantial constituency for peace among the people of Jammu and Kashmir, any abrupt termination of the ceasefire would have meant playing into the hands of those secessionist elements who, having no stakes in the restoration of peace to the traumatised State, are hell-bent on frustrating any move in that direction.

Tactically speaking, the Government would seem to have gone by two calculations. One, the way the externally-backed terrorists are targeting the civilians — a trend perceptible in the current phase of ceasefire — they would stand further exposed and alienated from the peace-craving local population. And, two — which is more important — the image of India at the international level as being genuine about its peace initiative and quite reasonable in its approach to Kashmir-related issues would get a boost. This comes out loud and clear from the official statement announcing the Government's decision, wherein it has blamed Pakistan for continuing to "promote, encourage and abet cross-border terrorism" and pinned the respon-

sibility of curbing the activities of outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad (which have figured prominently in the recent attacks) on the Gen. Pervez Musharraf regime. By all accounts, there has been considerable improvement along the Line of Control, thanks to Pakistan's positive response by way of exercising "maximum restraint" and announcing partial pullout of its defence forces. On the militancy front, however, the signals emanating from the military establishment have been admittedly feeble and less than positive, whatever might be the reasons for it.

What should not be lost sight of in all the accusatory polemical exchanges over the ceasefire-linked concerns is the basic truth that ceasefire is not an end itself but only a preliminary, albeit crucial, step in the search for a solution to the Kashmir tangle. Given the sort of complexities and multi-dimensional sensitivities associated with the problem, it will not only be prudent but necessary that credible moves, by way of confidence-building as well as addressing the immediate concerns of the key players, are initiated, even if subtly, as a follow-up to the ceasefire once it had held ground for a reasonable period. In fact, some properly calibrated initiatives by the Government of India might well go a long way in combating terrorism and neutralising the impact of the 'jihadi' groups. Of relevance, in this context, is the planned visit of a Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan for talks with the militant groups and the military regime. True, it will be unrealistic to expect the venture to yield anything spectacular, and the team may not even be able to carry conviction with the 'jihadi' outfits. But the visit, apart from being a grand gesture, should certainly help considerably to get a view of the big picture, showing clearly 'who stands where'. What is of the essence is that the second extension of the ceasefire should be used by all concerned to give a big push to the peace effort.

THE HINDU

25 JAN 2001

Hurriyat still undecided, blames hardliners

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR, JAN 20

IN the face of delay in its plans to visit Pakistan, the Hurriyat executive today failed to take a decision whether to go ahead with it but blamed some "hardline elements" in the government of trying to derail the peace process.

Maintaining that the Prime Minister's decision on the ceasefire was a "positive step" to resolve the Kashmir issue, the Hurriyat Executive Council, which met here, said "to obtain passports and going to Pakistan is not our goal." But there

are elements in the Central government who have vowed to derail the peace process," the seven-member executive said in a statement after day-long deliberations. The executive council at its crucial and extraordinary meeting discussed the proposed visit of an Hurriyat delegation to Pakistan and matters relating to the ceasefire in detail. The participants reiterated Hurriyat's view that the ceasefire was a positive step to resolve Kashmir issue, the statement said.

"It was in this regard to make the ceasefire meaningful, visit of an Hurriyat team to Pakistan was sug-

gested by the conglomerate but some hardline elements in the Central government have taken a vow to derail the peace process set in motion by the Prime Minister."

"We are meeting to take a final

PAKISTAN VISIT

decision regarding whether or not to send a delegation to Pakistan because the Government of India has adopted indifferent approach as it is not in favour to carry forward the process of peace in the state", former chairman of Hurriyat and Awami Action Committee Chief

Mirwaiz Umer Farooq told reporters before the meeting.

Ruling out any change in composition of the team announced by the committee on January 11, Mirwaiz said "it is not possible to select a team on the conditions and directions of the government."

"First they (Govt) accused us (Hurriyat) of not being serious about going to Pakistan but when we announced the five-member team they started putting hurdles and impediments by not issuing passports in favour of the team members to facilitate the visit," the Mirwaiz said.

Asked to comment on Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's remarks that Hurriyat leaders are in constant touch with Pakistan and are visiting Pakistan embassy in New Delhi at their will, Mirwaiz said "we want to go to Pakistan to have talks with the government and militant leadership based there to explore possibilities of the resolution of Kashmir issue."

"After all Pakistan is an important party to the Kashmir issue," he said, adding we have received an invitation to visit that country to explore possibilities of the solution of the Kashmir issue.

Prospect of Kashmir envoy becomes dim

From Page 1

THIS IS where — despite the unprecedented attention that America showered on India in the past couple of years — India will be grateful for a Bush administration. One of the first signs that Dubya will do things differently was when his new secretary of state, General Colin Powell, revoked all special coordinators and special envoys who peppered the Clinton administration. The cheerful news in this for India is that prospects of a special Kashmir envoy are more and more dim.

This may not be good news for Pakistan, but it's music to India's ears. As a matter of fact, with Gen. Powell urging sagacity in US dealings with India, the fear in New Delhi that it may have to reinvent the wheel with the new administration has given way to relief.

This relief was articulated by foreign minister Jaswant Singh a couple of days ago when he said India had no fears of the new US administration following a policy of "political isolationism." "Given the kind of economic primacy the US has, any kind of political isolationism in the Bush presidency is simply not there."

Political isolationism is not a fear. Neither is CTBT, a Docles' Sword the Clinton administration dangled over India for years before a Republican-controlled Senate put paid to Bill Clinton's own non-proliferation dreams.

Mr Bush has indicated in no uncertain terms that the CTBT is dead. Even Jesse Helms, chairman of the Senate foreign relations panel, made no bones about his opposition to the treaty.

The Economic Times

The Economic Times

21 JAN 2001

Hurriyat softens stand on passports

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Srinagar, Jan. 20: The All-Party Hurriyat Conference today appeared to have softened its stance on getting passports for the five leaders selected to visit Pakistan, saying travelling to the country is "not our goal".

"We are not stubborn regarding the issue of passports. Obtaining passports and going to Pakistan is not our goal," Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said after a meeting of the organisation's executive committee.

Bhat criticised the Centre's delay in taking a decision on issuing the passports. "Hawks are out to derail the peace process and don't understand the rationale behind the Hurriyat members' keenness to travel to Pakistan. We want to resolve the problem peacefully and that is why we want to travel to Islamabad," he said.

"It is for the government to decide whether or not to issue the passports. We won't ask for it now. We have decided it," he added.

The Hurriyat's climbdown came hours before Pakistan accused India of a negative attitude that it said could cause the chance of resolving the dispute to "slip away".

Pakistan foreign ministry spokesman Riaz Muhammad Khan said Pakistan was hoping Hurriyat leaders would be able to visit the country soon. "We hope that the formalities for their travel will be completed soon.

"However, with the delay and with the visibly... negative attitude on the part of the Indian authorities, the opportunity for addressing the Kashmir dispute by initiating a peace process, appears to be slipping away," he said.

Hardliners in Govt. sabotaging peace process: Hurriyat

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, JAN. 20. Accusing the hardliners within the Indian leadership of sabotaging the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference today said it would not insist on travel documents for all its leaders as issuing them was the Centre's prerogative. After a meeting

of the APHC executive in Srinagar, the spokesman, Sheikh Abdur Rasheed, read out a statement:

"The hardliners within the Union Government are bent upon sabotaging the peace process initiated by the Prime Minister and in this connection issuance of travel documents is being held back on one pretext or the other...

The Hurriyat reiterates its commitment to a meaningful and purposeful process to resolve the Kashmir issue."

"The Hurriyat makes it clear to the international community that the process initiated by Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, with the announcement of a unilateral ceasefire, and the creation of a conducive atmo-

sphere is being ruined by hardliners within the Indian leadership, who have created hurdles in the resolution of the problem and restoration of peace."

If the Centre's attitude became a hurdle in the peace process, the responsibility of its collapse would be the Government's.

The Jamat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, was indisposed. The executive members including, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Mr. Yasin Malik and Sheikh Abdul Aziz, besides Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, who chaired the meeting, were present.

Before the meeting, the former chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, told presspersons that the Hurriyat had to take a final decision on the Pakistan visit. But, the conglomerate would not be guided by the Centre's terms. "Whatever decision is taken will be in the interests of the movement."



TO GO OR NOT TO GO? Hurriyat Conference leaders discussing the long-dragging issue of their trip to Pakistan, at the outfit's headquarters in Srinagar — Photo: Nissar Ahamed

No need to extend ceasefire: Page 11

THE HINDU

21 JAN 2001

Ceasefire move hasn't worked, says Farooq

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JAN 18

WITH barely a week left for ceasefire announced by the Centre in Jammu and Kashmir to end, Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah today hinted his reservation about continuance of the peace initiative but said he would stand by the decision of the Centre.

"The killing of innocent people has not stopped and infiltration has also been reported during the ceasefire period," Abdullah told reporters after a half-an-hour meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The suspension of combat operations against the militants began on November 27 and was extended till January 26.

Asked whether his government had insisted on extending the ceasefire, Abdullah said "I have put forth my views to the Prime Minister and it is for him to decide." However, he said ceasefire did not only mean that borders should be silent

but there should be an overall improvement in situation and violence should reduce.

"But what is happening here is that violence is increasing in the state and series of suicide attacks are carried out by militants," Abdullah said.

He said it was high time for the Centre to tell the world that "though we have been sincere in our efforts, it was lacking from the Pakistani side."

Abdullah said if Pakistan can reduce tension along the border then it can very well rear in the militant groups which created by them.

Abdullah said all these aspects and continued killings by militants need a thorough inspection by the Centre before extending the ceasefire with Pakistan.

"The terrorist groups like Jaish-E-Mohammad, Lashkar-E-

Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen are under Pakistani control ... they are attacking common citizens and do not want peace to prevail," Abdullah said.

Asked whether talks should be held between India and Pakistan, the Chief Minister said "India has never been averse to dialogue and it is this country which has taught the entire world the path of non-violence. We also want to talk to Islamabad but let them atleast take steps to stop trans-border terrorism". During the meeting with the Prime Minister, Abdullah discussed the trend of fidayeen (suicide) attacks in response to peace initiative announced by India and expressed his doubts over the seriousness of Pakistan towards such a step.

Earlier, Abdullah met the Union Home Minister L K Advani and discussed with him the prevailing law and order situation in the state and "how things were on the border".

The Chief Minister, who flew in here after militants carried out a suicide attack on Srinagar Airport on Tuesday, also met

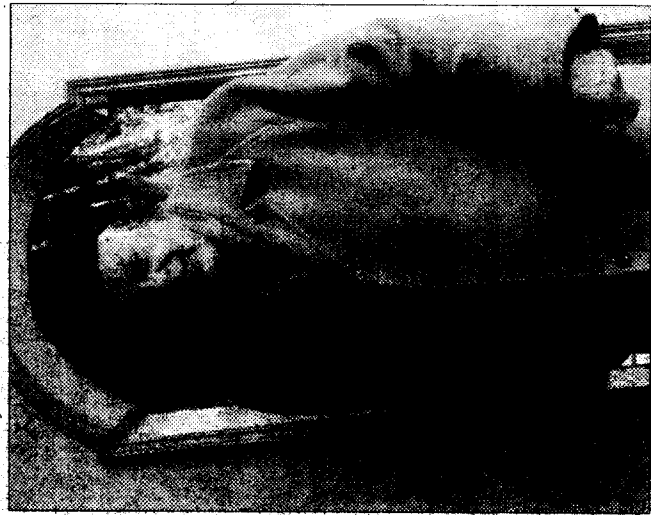
Defence Minister George Fernandes last night and briefed him on the sudden spurt in militancy during the second month of the ceasefire in the state.

Abdullah also said he was not averse to the idea of sending Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan but questioned what good purpose they could solve there when they have failed to control the booming guns in the valley.

"What can they do in Pakistan is a mystery. Let them make the beginning and condemn the attacks carried out by militants here," Abdullah told reporters after a half an hour meeting Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

The Chief Minister made it clear that as far as granting of passports to the Hurriyat leaders was considered, it was solely the decision of the Centre and the state government had no role to play in it.

"These self-proclaimed leaders only want to travel to Pakistan. But yes, if the Centre is convinced that the trip could lead to some peace, I have no objections," Abdullah added.



Abdullah at the PM's residence on Thursday - PTI

INDIAN EXPRESS
19 JAN 2001

6 securitymen killed in J&K blast

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

SRINAGAR: Stepping up violence, the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen on Thursday blew up two vehicles of security forces, killing seven jawans, including a BSF deputy commandant, and a daughter of an army captain in south Kashmir. Eleven security personnel were also injured, an official spokesperson said.

In the first incident, the militants blasted a vehicle carrying a BSF team to a nearby camp. Minutes later, the militants struck on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway at Chechkote-Chursoo near Awantipora, setting off a powerful land-mine explosion which extensively damaged an army bus carrying soldiers to Jammu, the spokesperson said. The blasts, within half-an-hour of each other, were the third major strike by militants in five days.

As a follow-up, the Pakistan-based Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) issued a new threat to target vital government, army and security force installations across the country if power supply was not restored to the people in the Kashmir Valley within five days. LeT spokesperson Abu Usama said, "If our demand is not fulfilled, activists of the outfit will target installations across India."

LeT, which carried out a suicidal attack on the Red Fort last month and had threatened to target the Prime Minister's Office, however, said, "Civilian installations will never be attacked by us."

Meanwhile, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has decided to make changes in the list of members who are to visit Pakistan to further the peace process initiated by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee.

The decision had been made as the Centre did not grant travel documents to the present APHC delegation, an APHC insider said.

A senior APHC leader said on Thursday that the visit to Pakistan would be undertaken under all circumstances provided the central leaders reacted positively to the proposal initiated by the PM for the restoration of peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Insiders in the APHC said that the executive council might remove the names of controversial members from the delegation at its meeting to be held on Saturday.



WALKING IN A WIRED WORLD: Border Security Force personnel patrol the Indo-Pakistan border fencing at Kangarh on Thursday.

Extend ceasefire only if violence ceases: Abdullah

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah, who briefed Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani about the prevailing law and order situation in the state in separate meetings on Thursday, has expressed his reservations about the extension of the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir. The ceasefire deadline, already extended once, expires in a week's time.

Talking to reporters after his meetings, Mr

Abdullah said that he would stand by the Centre's decision but, at the same time, pointed out that militant attacks against innocent civilians were still continuing.

"Terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen are under Pakistani control..they are attacking common citizens and do not want peace to prevail," he said. In his meeting with the PM, Mr Abdullah is learnt to have discussed the trend of suicide squads and expressed his doubts over Pakistan's seriousness towards the ceasefire.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 JAN 2001

Take it or leave it, Advani tells Hurriyat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

NEW DELHI, Jan. 17. — Reiterating the government's resolve not to grant passports to all Hurriyat Conference leaders, Mr LK Advani has said only "eligible delegates" would be granted travelling documents to visit Pakistan.

In an interview to RSS mouth-piece *Panchajanya*, the Union home minister said: "Those who ought to get passports would get it and if it is their precondition that they would go to Pakistan only if all of them are issued passports, then let them not go. That is their decision."

Mr Advani also made it clear that the government was firmly against holding tripartite talks on Kashmir. "There's no question of tripartite talks and that is the end of the matter."

Emphasising the need to accept the concept of "federal crime" to help the Centre tackle anti-national activities, he said though the states had not accepted the idea, the Centre would keep at it.

On the situation in Kashmir, he said the government would not consider it normal till Kashmiri Hindus are able to return to the valley and live in peace.

Meanwhile, the Hurriyat today said a meeting of its executive committee would soon be called in Srinagar when it is



Firemen douse flames that destroyed a shopping complex near Srinagar airport after Tuesday's Lashkar attack. The shoot-out toll has risen to 12 with the death of a wounded woman CRPF jawan on Wednesday. — AP/PTI

likely to reconsider its decision to send a team to Pakistan in the wake of the delay in issuing passports to three of the five delegates chosen by it.

The Hurriyat nominated five persons, including fire-brand Jamaat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, the People's League chairman, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, the People's Conference chief, Mr Abdul Gani Lone, Shia leader Maulana Abbas Ansari and the former Hurriyat chairman, Mr Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, for the Pakistan visit.

Of them, only Mr Lone and Mr Farooq have the necessary

travel documents. Insiders said the organisation was not threatening cancellation of the proposed visit and was, in fact, making its stand as flexible as it could. Mr Geelani, undergoing medical treatment in Delhi, has visited the Pakistani High Commission and discussed the Kashmir situation, and reportedly conveyed that he would be unable to visit Pakistan for health reasons.

- Editorial: Traditional perspective, page 6
- BJP for close look at J&K ceasefire, page 8

THE STATESMAN

18 JAN 2001

6 *fidayeen*, 3 CRPF men die

Ultras raid Srinagar airport

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE and AGENCIES

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, Jan. 16.

Six Lashkar-e-Taiyaba suicide bombers in police uniform tried to storm the high-security Srinagar airport this afternoon, triggering a gun battle that killed all six ultras, three CRPF jawans and two civilians.

Flights were not disrupted and no passenger was harmed.

The *fidayeen* (suicide squad) hurled grenades and began firing around 3.40 p.m. on the CRPF personnel posted near the airport's first gate in a bid to storm the main complex, about 2 km away.

CRPF and Army personnel retaliated and the hail of bullets which went on for nearly 15 minutes left four *fidayeen* killed and 11 security personnel, including four women constables, injured. Three wounded security personnel died in Air Force Hospital.

While four militants were killed on the spot, the other two died at the nearby shopping complex which was surrounded by security personnel who engaged them in a gun battle.

The two civilians killed in the shootout were a bank manager and a 16-year-old girl. The girl is suspected to be an associate of the militants.

Police had prior information of such an attack, said the state DGP, Mr AK Suri. "We had erected extra barriers leading to the airport," he said, adding that the militants seized a vehicle of the state forest corporation and followed the motorcade of a minister who was heading for the airport to catch a flight to Delhi.

On 7 January, five *fidayeen* in police uniform appeared near the same gate in a stolen car and tried to breach the CRPF security cordon to enter the main complex.

Dr Farooq Abdullah, who himself survived a Lashkar grenade attack on Sunday,

surveyed the airport after the shootout. Later, after releasing the first issue of *J&K Secretariat Newsletter*, he said there would be no bilateral talks with Pakistan till it "brings down violence to zero level".

He said he would meet the Prime Minister soon and apprise him of his view on the extension of the ceasefire. "Though the ceasefire has silenced the borders, the killing of innocents by militants have increased."

On the tremendous response of voters in the panchayat polls, the chief minister said this reflected the people's faith in government's honesty in devolution of power. Some 663 candidates were today declared elected from the 125 panchayats that went to polls yesterday.

Defying threats and boycott calls by militants and the Hurriyat Conference, about 74 per cent of the nearly 2.5 lakh voters exercised their franchise in the border districts of Poonch, Rajouri and Kupwara.

The government also announced that the census operation in all parts of the state had been completed.

An alert has been sounded against ISI-sponsored militants entering Uttar Pradesh via Haryana through the Delhi-Wagah border by Samjhauta Express to strike at Delhi and other places on Republic Day-eve. Meanwhile, Rajasthan police today said it busted a Pakistani espionage ring allegedly involving some Army men, with the arrest of a Karachi-based man in Jaipur.

BJP condemns attack: The BJP today condemned the attack on Srinagar airport and said it showed Pakistan's determination to continue its proxy war. This was likely to affect the proposed Hurriyat trip to Pakistan, Mr JP Mathur said. He said the attack proved Gen Pervez Musharraf was not sincere in restoring peace in Kashmir, adds SNS from Delhi.

Srinagar airport raid foiled

Six Lashkar *fidayeen*, 3 CRPF jawans, 2 civilians killed

Arun Joshi
Jammu, January 16

A SIX-member Lashkar-e-Tayyeba suicide squad was wiped out after it attempted to barge into the heavily guarded Srinagar airport today. Three CRPF men and two civilians also died in the initial burst of fire by the intruders. At least 13 persons were injured.

The attack, among the most brazen in the 12-year-old history of secessionist violence in Jammu and Kashmir, has cast an ominous shadow over the current ceasefire in the state.

Around 3 this afternoon, six men approached the first of the multiple checkpoints leading to the airport in a State Forest Corporation jeep they had commandeered a while earlier. The killers pulled up at the checkpoint, some 1.5 km from the airport's terminal building.

The barrier had been erected only yesterday as the state police had "specific information about an imminent attack".

When the militants, in combat dress, were asked to identify themselves, they opened fire. The policemen chased them and killed two of them. By the time the encounter ended, the four

other militants too were killed, but so were three CRPF men and two civilians - a bank official and a teenaged girl.

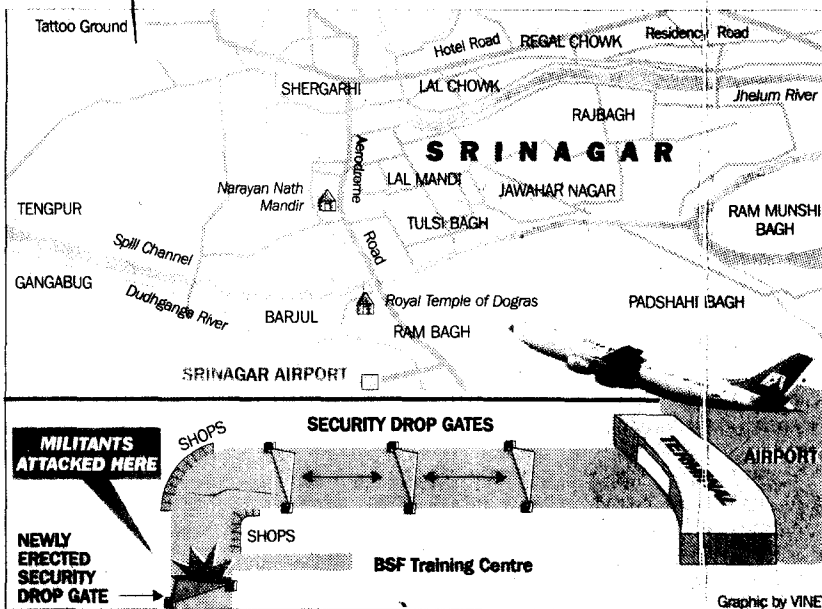
The jeep used was the one officially provided to forest official Mohammad Yusuf Gabroo, who

was on his way to Delhi. The police are probing the role of the teenaged girl who was killed in the gunbattle. Sources said she had been seen frequently in a three-wheeler near the airport. The three CRPF casualties were the result of the suddenness with which the militants opened fire. The militants took control of the X-Ray room at the Old Drop Gate at Humhuma and started marching towards the airport.

It was then the Army, Central Reserve Police Force and Jammu and Kashmir policemen engaged them in an encounter resulting in the death of six militants, sources said. Many shops on the roadside were burnt during the exchange of fire and hurling of grenades. Abu Osama, a spokesman of the Lashkar, told *The Hindustan Times* on phone that a group of six of its activists has entered the airport complex and killed and wounded the security personnel there. He identified his group's activists as Abu Abdullah, Abu Abdullah Tariq, Abu Nazaulah, Abu

Osama, Abu Saif and Abu Khabib.

The latest attack comes close on the heels of an attempt on the life of Farooq Abdullah two days ago and one day after the beginning of the panchayat polls that registered a very heavy turnout.



Graphic by VINEY

was taken captive with his driver Mir in Basantar by the six militants. Gabroo and Mir were held captive till 6 p.m. at the Jhelum Valley Medical College grounds. The jeep had tailed the convoy of Works Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar, who

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 JAN 2001

55-6 WINNING WAYS (M)

Security and development are linked

SSOMETHING like Operation Sadbhavana launched by the Army in border areas of Jammu and Kashmir should have been attempted decades ago, and not necessarily by the army, whose core area of competence is not development work. The Kargil Committee Report nailed some drawbacks in military intelligence and preparedness, but what contributes to insurgency is the tendency of the administration to misdirect expenditure, or worse, line their own pockets with funds meant for development. Luckily, the state of development in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir is worse, with madrasas nurturing *jihad* in place of education. This cuts both ways: PoK's poor economic situation means thousands of unemployed youth are available for recruitment in militant ranks.

The availability of schools, hospitals, opportunities to work and trade for Kashmiris this side of the LoC would give them a greater stake in rendering at least the passive support that the army needs for counter-insurgency operations. It is clear there is a yearning for peace in the Valley; it is equally clear that some elements at least in Pakistan are intent on keeping the pot boiling in Kashmir. India's blind support for the Soviet cause in Afghanistan has stoked the *jihadists'* ire against India. Musharraf's government does not appear to have acquired any serious stake in reining them in; Nawaz Sharif fell because he was perceived as being too soft on India. In this situation, government should persist with ongoing peace efforts, but also attempt to change the ground realities in its favour, an important component of which would be toning up the administration and ensuring that development activities take place in the Valley.

THE STATESMAN

17 JAN 2001

A high stakes game — the prize, peace

WAGING PEACE in Kashmir is turning out to be as hazardous an enterprise as waging militancy or containing terrorism. The Ramzan ceasefire is barely holding, and the Vajpayee Government has come under tremendous pressure to abort this exercise in self-restraint. The strategic question is whether the Indian State can find the political resourcefulness and administrative resilience not to allow itself to be provoked by Pakistan into calling off the ceasefire.

The imperative to keep cool becomes all the more urgent because the ceasefire initiative is aimed at undermining the major planks of Pakistan's strategy in Kashmir. In the last decade or so, Pakistan has forged four major instrumentalities in Kashmir, but each of these four has been cracked open.

The first, and foremost, of these is the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, set up on September 3, 1993. By bringing all the disparate groups under one umbrella, Pakistan imparted a coherence to the secessionist sentiments and autonomist urges. The APHC's task was to sustain, stoke, and mobilise the dissatisfaction with the Abdullah dynasty, to capital-

The strategic question is whether the Indian state can find the political resourcefulness and administrative resilience not to allow itself to be provoked into calling off the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir, writes HARISH KHARE.

ise on the popular alienation, to question the legitimacy of Jammu and Kashmir's links with India, and, to undermine the political respectability of the National Conference and other "pro-India" outfits.

For a while, the APHC was able to paper over the cracks between the secessionists, who wanted merger with Pakistan, and the autonomists who preferred an "independent Kashmir". But this divergence was too fundamental to be managed; Mr. Shabir Shah parted company early. Nonethe-

less, the APHC was able to project itself as the voice of the "Kashmiri resistance".

Second, on the "military front", Pakistan put in place a number of militant outfits, of which the Hizbul Mujahideen was the largest. These militant groups were armed, financed, trained and motivated by the ISI professionals, and were able to pin down large numbers of security forces. Each instance of high-handedness on the part of security forces provided new recruits for the "jehadi" outfits. Perhaps Pakistan had underestimated the Indian state's staying power; no doubt the Indian security forces suffered but the political leadership, cutting across party lines, was able to absorb losses. Pakistan was eventu-

ally forced to induct "foreign" militant groups to clinch the issue militarily. That also did not work.

Third, on the religious front, the Jamaat-e-Islami was encouraged to Islamise the "struggle". A whole chain of madrassas was funded, which in turn became the breeding ground of religious intolerance and bigotry, and provided just the motivation to sustain a "jihad". It is as the Jamaat-e-Islami leader that Syed Ali Shah Geelani earned a name for himself as a hardliner. The task assigned to the religious fundamentalists was to inject a "Muslim Kashmir" versus "Hindu India" dichotomy.

The fourth, and last, instrumentality was to forge an international network of "Kashmiri

groups", especially in Europe and America, who would work the "cause" constituency. From Geneva to London to New York, allegations of human rights violations and denial of civil liberties were wantonly made. There were enough instances of brutality and insensitivity to provide grist to the propaganda mill. The Kashmiri diaspora was mobilised. The international community, it seemed, was quite prepared to pronounce India "guilty".

These four instrumentalities were used imaginatively to make secession look respectable and to depict militants' terror and violence as a legitimate tool in the hands of "freedom fighters". The militants *ipso facto* could commit no excesses and the security

forces simply could not do anything right or honorable; the APHC and the Jamaat-e-Islami were deemed to be the authentic voice of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, while everyone else, a Farooq Abdullah or a Ghulam Rasool Kar or a Mufti Mohammed Syed was pronounced an Indian "stooge". Nor was anyone prepared to consider that Pakistan's accent on a religion-centric incompatibility was against the grain of the Kashmiri people.

Nonetheless, the stalemate persisted. The combination of the four instrumentalities was not enough to "liberate" Kashmir; nor, were the Indian forces capable of so overwhelming a brutality as to totally subdue the "resistance". Then came Kargil, when

Pakistan could not force the issue militarily. What was worse for the Kashmiri "freedom fighters" was that the international community began to rethink its one-sided assumption of rights and wrongs in the Kashmir conflict.

It is in this context that the ceasefire initiative has begun paying some dividends. The decision to cease operations against the militants meant an immediate relief for the populace in the Kashmir Valley; the citizens were no longer subjected to the hassle of investigation, intimidation and humiliation at the hands of the security forces. Suddenly, the citizens could visualise a scenario other than the daily dance of death. Much to the horror of Pakistan, the people of Kashmir suddenly realised how tired they were of violence, between the security forces and the Mujahideen. The indigenous "freedom-fighters" themselves appeared fatigued after ten years at the barricades, and, were now willing to give "dialogue" a chance.

The artificial patch-up between the pro-merger secessionists and the Kashmiri "nationalists" came apart; finally, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone could gather the courage to spell it out that if the "jehadis" wanted to capture the Red Fort, there was no need for them to do so at the expense of the Kashmiri youth. Perhaps the "nationalists" could tell the Islamists that neither was Pakistan capable of changing the military balance nor would the international community permit any redrawing of maps with blood.

The ceasefire upset the balance of calculations that had informed Pakistan's approach, especially because New Delhi appeared to be setting the agenda from a position of strength. It was only natural that Islamabad should want to do everything possible to derail the peace offensive, even if Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee had announced his willingness to talk to Pakistan at any level. The increase in the militant violence in and outside the Valley is not only an attempt to keep alive the fiction of a well-entrenched "resistance movement", it is also a cunning ploy to exploit the differences within the Vajpayee Government so that New Delhi itself says enough is enough and refuses to extend the ceasefire beyond January 26. Pakistan has invested so heavily in violence as the idiom of diplomacy that it has no use for dialogue; and, it shrewdly relies on the hawks in New Delhi to ensure that the gun regains its primacy in Kashmir.



PRAYING FOR PEACE: At a mosque in Srinagar.

THE HINDU

21 JAN 2001

Fire in the valley

THE RECENT blasts in Jammu and Kashmir have exploded hopes of an early solution of the issue. Despite the ceasefire, the situation vis-a-vis militancy in the State in general and the Kashmir valley in particular continues to be disturbing. The *Fidayeen* (suicide squads) have made a comeback. From the attempt on the highly-protected Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, to the attack on the Srinagar airport, the militants have been adamant in their disregard of the much-publicised ceasefire.

Hopes of complete peace and normality returning had risen but now clouds of doubt are gathering. The panchayat elections have only added to the list of civilian casualties as militants target political activists.

Comparing the 50 days of the ceasefire with the

compared to 206 killed in the 50 days prior to the ceasefire. But 158 civilians were slain during the ceasefire as against 128 in the 50 days before it. The casualty rate among the security forces was on the decline as they were not going after the militants.

The *Fidayeen*, meanwhile, are spreading terror. Official sources say that since the ceasefire came into force they have struck nine times, the latest being at the airport. The attacks on "soft targets" such as political activists and informers have also touched a high. Of the 14 political activists slain in the ceasefire period, 13 belonged to the ruling National Conference (NC).

Though the Army has publicly supported extension of the ceasefire, the State Government seems to be dead against it on the basis of the changing situation on the

The recent blasts in Jammu and Kashmir have exploded hopes of an early solution, says SHUJAAT BHUKARI.

previous 50 days, the Chief Minister speaks against it.

The State authorities say the ceasefire has failed to deliver and is "proving to be a big risk for India". According to statistics with the State Government, being furnished to the Union Home Ministry on a daily basis, 509 incidents of militancy-related violence were reported in the 50 days of the ceasefire which started in the last week of November and is in force till January 26.

The number of such incidents in the 50 days before the ceasefire is put at 508. And, the officials point out that the security forces did not initiate any operations during the ceasefire. "Operations at their (security forces) instance have not been there and the violence by militants has gone up," said a senior officer. The number of militants killed fell during the ceasefire period — 95 as

ground. The central intelligence agencies are also not in favour of any extension, though the ceasefire was initiated on their reports, say top official sources.

The only dividend from the ceasefire has been quiet on the borders, said a security official.

It is a win-win situation for the militants. Last Wednesday, there were spontaneous protests by over 6000 people demanding the bodies of the six militants killed in the airport encounter. "This shows the strong bonds of love, cooperation and assistance between the Mujahideen and the Kashmiri people," said Prof. Hafiz Mohammad Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba. Officials admit that it had a bearing on the situation as a whole. "People feel the militants have an upper hand so they switched over to their side," said an official.

'We need to review ceasefire'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 15



HOME MINISTER
L. K. Advani today said the government would soon review the Kashmir situation and a decision on extension of the ceasefire beyond January 26 would be taken only after assessing the militants' activities, including an attack on CM Farooq Abdullah. Talking to media-persons here today after delivering a lecture on women's par-

ticipation in democratic politics', Mr Advani said that in the government's perception, the situation could be described as normal if there was a decrease in the number of violent incidents and the Kashmiri Pandits were able to return to their houses. "Only then can we say we are satisfied. But in the light of recent developments, we will have to review the entire gamut of the ceasefire process. A collective decision would be taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security," he stated.

Reacting to the militant attack on Dr Abdullah in Srinagar yesterday, the Home Minister said, "We will have to see how and in what manner Prime Minister

Atal Bihari Vajpayee's peace initiative will continue". He expressed relief that the J&K Chief Minister was not hurt in the grenade attack.

Congress slams Kashmir policy: The Congress today rubbished the NDA's Kashmir policy as "messy, confusing and directionless". It said the policy shifts in recent months from bilateralism to trilateralism and multi-lateralism "violated the basic tenets" of the 1972 Simla Pact.

Speaking to newsmen today, AICC spokesperson Anand Sharma said Mrs Sonia Gandhi spoke to Dr Abdullah late last evening "to inquire about his safety and to convey her concern and sense of shock over the grenade attack".

AILING HEARTS



Geelani

Heart disease, chest congestion and prostate problem. Treated at Escorts, New Delhi.



Lone

Heart disease. Underwent by-pass surgery in the US



Malik

Heart disease. Underwent by-pass surgery. Will go to US, UK for further treatment.

iyat, it's of heart

much rather be in Islamabad than in Delhi but his health demands regular trips to the Capital.

Speaking to *The Hindustan Times*, Geelani said, "I am suffering from chest congestion and I have problem of prostate". The Jamaat leader, who also has a heart problem, visit Escorts Institute for treatment.

Peoples Conference chairman Abdul Ghani Lone's may differ with Geelani as far as his political beliefs go but they share a common ailment-heart disease.

Lone a soft-liner and now a supporter of the Prime Minister's peace initiative, had undergone by-pass surgery in the United States two years ago. He needs regular check ups and last month his doctor had to remind him to come for one. "It was my doctor who told me to come and get examined," Lone said.

JKLF chief Mohammad Yasin Malik underwent a by-pass surgery sometime ago and has been permitted to travel to the UK and US for further treatment.

Infiltration up after truce

Arun Joshi
Jammu, January 15

INFILTRATION OF armed militants from Pakistan into Jammu and Kashmir has gone up this winter, with almost 70 to 80 of them crossing the border every month.

According to the reports available with the security agencies, in the past 45 days alone, nearly 150 militants — most of them foreign mercenaries — managed to sneak into the border state.

More than 3,000 militants are reportedly waiting for a chance to cross the border, the reports said.

Earlier, the Line of Control (LoC) had been the favourite route into India, but now the militants are using the international border for the purpose.

Northern Command chief Lt. Gen. H. M. Khanna confirmed that infiltration figures had gone up and the international border was being used to enter into India. "We cannot sit on every inch of the border and prevent infiltration. This is a porous border with treacherous terrain and stopping infiltration a" ether is very diffi-

cult," he said. The Army had set up a very strong counter-infiltration grid, he said.

As of now operations against militants stand suspended in the wake of unilateral ceasefire announced by the Prime Minister. "Even if we assume that the level of the infiltration is low, we need to address the fact that there are no operations against militants in the hinterland," a senior security

official said.

With increased infiltration, militant activities are on the rise. While more than 60 security personnel and nearly 150 civilians fell victim to militancy, only 50 militants have been killed after the ceasefire came into effect.

The frequent attacks on security camps, blasts and shootouts are causing concern among security forces.

For Hurr a matter

Arun Joshi
Jammu, January 15

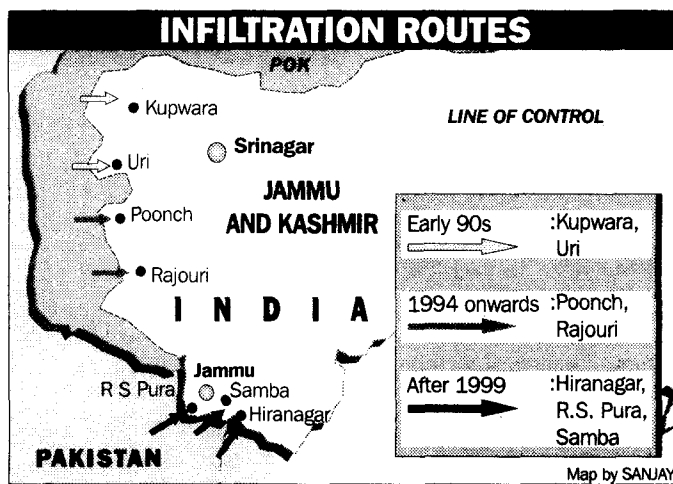
FOR THE past month, the All Party Hurriyat Conference has been struggling to overcome its adversities and has partly succeeded in undoing some of the jinxes. However, the conglomerate is helpless as far as the health of some of its leading lights is concerned.

Very often when some of the Hurriyat leaders are not available for interviews or on telephone, it is a foregone conclusion that they are unwell. They don't pose political illness, they really are ill.

"I am sick", is a common refrain of some of these leaders. "My health is not good and I cannot travel long distances," is another often-heard comment from them.

On Thursday, Jamait-i-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, keeping in mind his weak heart, stayed off the crucial APHC meeting that included him in the five-member Pakistan-bound team.

On Friday, Geelani was in Delhi. Politically speaking, he



Tripartite talks on J&K ruled out, says Govt

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 15

INDIA HAS nipped in the bud Islamabad's bid to project the Hurriyat delegation's proposed visit to Pakistan as an exercise aimed at preparing ground for a tripartite dialogue on Kashmir.

"We would like to make it clear that there is no question of a tripartite process and India rejects the very notion of tripartite talks," a spokesman of the Ministry of External Affairs told newsmen here tonight. His remarks came in the backdrop of Indian High Commissioner Vijay Nambiar's courtesy call in Islamabad earlier in the day on the Pak military ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

However, the spokesman reiterated New Delhi's desire for resumption "at an early date" of the composite Indo-Pak dialogue process. But for that to happen "cessation

of cross border terrorism...to create an appropriate environment was an obvious requirement," he emphasised.

However, the MEA spokesman did not confirm whether India's blunt rejection of any tripartite engagement on Kashmir was also conveyed to Gen Musharraf by Mr Nambiar. The spokesman said his comments on the subject were in response to a question posed to him on the Pak Foreign Office's January 12 statement in which Islamabad had tended to paint the Hurriyat's Islamabad visit as a precursor to tripartite talks on Kashmir.

BJP on Geelani

THE BHARATIYA Janata Party has said the government should not allow All Party Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani to visit Pakistan due to his open 'anti-India' stance. Senior party leader J P Mathur said considering Mr Geelani's 'background' and open utterances against India, it would not be 'appropriate and timely' to allow him to be a part of the APHC delegation to Pakistan for talks.

UNI, New Delhi

The prepared MEA statement was read out by its spokesman at a hurriedly convened Press conference after a high-level meeting presided over by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to take stock of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir.

There was no official word about what the high-level consultations. But from all available indications, it seemed that the Hurriyat leader's journey to Pakistan might not materialise as early as initially expected.

According to sources, the question of providing passports to all the five-members of

the Hurriyat's designated-team did not figure at the deliberations. Yet, it is well known that the inclusion of Syed Ali Geelani in the conglomerate's delegation has put the Government in a spot, more so on account of the Jamaat-e-Islami leader's open support of mercenary groups and the attempt yesterday on the life of J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

Just a day before bombs were hurled at a meeting he was addressing in Srinagar, Dr Abdullah had questioned the utility of the Hurriyat's Pak mission.

The two-hour deliberations on Kashmir were attended by four of the five members of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)--- the PM, Home Minister L K Advani, Defence Minister George Fernandes and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh--- besides the PM's principal secretary Brajesh Mishra and other senior officials.

Musharraf regrets Lashkar 'threat'

By B. Murallidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 15. The Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, today expressed regret over the reported threat made by the Lashkar-e-Taiba to target the office of the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee.

Gen. Musharraf expressed his regret when the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Vijay Nambiar, called on him this morning and pointed out the activities of militant outfits like the Lashkar that gave room for suspicion that they enjoyed official patronage.

The Chief Executive did not hold out any promise to contain the militant outfits that had been making noises against the peace moves. His thesis was that absence of dialogue and the lingering Kashmir conflict

gave encouragement to such elements.

In his meeting Gen. Musharraf reportedly referred to the new year musings of Mr. Vajpayee and said Pakistan was encouraged to note his will to 'resolve rather than address' the Kashmir problem.

In the course of the hour-long interaction, Gen. Musharraf also reportedly expressed disappointment over the decision of the Indian Government to call off the cricket tour to Pakistan and said that he would have personally welcomed the team.

Mr. Nambiar told him that in the face of provocative acts from some of the organisations based in Pakistan, Delhi was not sure if the proposed tour would have led to an improvement of relations.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 15. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, reviewed tonight the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of the attack on Sunday on the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

He summoned his senior colleagues — Mr. L. K. Advani, Mr. Jaswant Singh, Mr. George Fernandes, and Mr. Brajesh Mishra — for an assessment of the situation in the troubled State.

The meeting was called for a security review, and there was no discussion of the developing nuances on the "peace front".

Meanwhile, the Centre is yet to take a final decision on the question of issuing travel documents to all the five members of the proposed All-Party Hurriyat Conference delegation to Pakistan.

The team was scheduled to

leave today, but the trip now stands postponed in the absence of travel documents for at least two members, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Sheikh Abdul Aziz.

The most controversial name in the team, Mr. Geelani, is still here, undergoing medical treatment. He has been reportedly advised rest for a few days, and it is not clear whether, given the state of his health, the team would have left for Pakistan had the travel documents been made available.

As far as the Vajpayee Government is concerned, one view is that it is bad enough that so trivial a decision as issuing a passport to a citizen has been made

the business of the Prime Minister, in this view, it will be even worse if the Prime Minister on his first day back from an foreign visit is seen as being rushed into taking a decision. For now it appears

that a delay in the team's travel plans cannot be avoided.

The APHC itself seems reconciled to the idea of a delay, and its various voices have preferred to emphasise that there is nothing sacrosanct about January 15, and what is important is that the visit should materialise.

A section in the APHC believes the attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, yesterday is bound to force a re-think on the entire peace offensive.

The Vajpayee Government

Hurriyat visit delayed; PM reviews J&K situation

PTI reports:

cannot be seen as bent on pursuing its peace offensive, notwithstanding provocations from the militant groups and a pronounced lack of reciprocity from Pakistan.

The Centre would be examining the nuances of Gen. Musharraf's views, as conveyed to the Indian envoy in Islamabad today.

It is also being realised that if a decision on passports for the Hurriyat team is further delayed, it gets tied down with the larger decision whether or not to extend the ceasefire beyond January 26.

Earlier, Mr. Advani told reporters that the Cabinet Committee on Security would review the situation relating to the peace process initiated on the Kashmir issue, in the backdrop of the growing militant attacks.

"We are not ready to believe that the Pakistan Government has no control over the militant outfits, which were carrying out attacks when the peace process was on," he said when asked to comment on the grenade attack on Dr. Abdullah in Srinagar.

Abdullah challenges ultras after bid on life

SRINAGAR, Jan. 14. — Militants today made an abortive attempt on the life of Dr Farooq Abdullah, firing two rifle grenades when the chief minister was addressing a gathering after inaugurating a bridge at Habbakadal here.

Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the attack and vowed to continue striking against him and other Indian leaders unless they "reversed their treacherous policies," said an AFP report from Muzaffarabad, PoK capital.

One grenade fell into the Jhelum, the other exploded outside the meeting venue. There was no loss of life, officials said.

Undeterred by the attack, Dr Abdullah said he won't be cowed down by bullets and bombs, and nobody could deter him from the path of restoring peace in Jammu & Kashmir.

"Farooq na pahle ghabraya hai na agey ghabrayega," (Farooq has never feared in the past nor would he fear in the future), he said, resuming his address disrupted for a short while when the militants fired grenades towards him around 12.30 p.m. Security forces deployed there fired shots in the air to scare away the militants.

Dr Abdullah rejected the demand for tripartite talks among India, Pakistan and representatives of J&K people as demanded by the Hurriyat Conference. "There is no purpose in tripartite talks and Pakistan would soon realise that it had to hold talks with India alone."

He said the only solution to the Kashmir problem was granting

autonomy to the state and suggested that the Line of Control be converted to an international border. He said the process of peace initiative would be taken to its logical end.

Dr Abdullah said he had told the Centre to allow all Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan to see for themselves the plight of the people there. He said Mr Abdul Gani Lone, after his return from Pakistan, had admitted that the gun had wreaked havoc in Kashmir.

Ceasefire extension?

In Bali the Prime Minister today was non-committal on extending the ceasefire in J&K beyond 26 January, accusing "certain elements in Pakistan" of continuing with terrorist activities in the state.

But after his return to Delhi, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said: "There is a view that the ceasefire should be further extended...All issues will be considered and a final decision on the issue will be taken by the Cabinet Committee on Security."

"Wait for some more time," he said in Bali when asked to spell out what sort of future direction he wanted to give to his policy on Pakistan in the light of Lahore declaration, Kargil conflict and the ceasefire in J&K.

Advani condemns attack: Mr LK Advani has condemned the "dastardly attack" on Dr Abdullah. "Following the recent incident at the Red Fort and now with today's incident in Srinagar, the entire situation will be reviewed before 26 January 26," SNS adds from Delhi.

■ Focus on Geelani
passport: page 8

THE STATESMAN

15 JAN 2001

Geelani visit sparks speculation

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 13. Senior Hurriyat leader, Syed Ahmed Shah Geelani, arrived here today, triggering speculation whether he was the advance party of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) delegation which is scheduled to visit Pakistan on January 15. The Government is yet to take a final view whether or not to issue passports to two of the five members of the Hurriyat team.

However, it was being stated that Mr. Geelani arrived here because he wanted to be medically examined. It was learnt that he had been advised a few days rest, again raising a question mark whether the Hurriyat leadership itself was preparing ground for a delay by a day or two in travelling to Pakistan.

On the other hand, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, who has been camping here for a few days (again, for a medical check-up) and who has been named as part of the five-member delegation, is planning to leave for Srinagar tomorrow.

Mr. Lone had earlier announced his disinclination to visit Pakistan as part of the APHC team.

A mood of pessimism prevails in the Hurriyat camp here. The APHC leaders believe the Government of India is not "sincere" in its "peace-offensive"; otherwise why would the Union Home Ministry keep trying to dictate terms to the APHC.

This attitude is "an insult to the

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HDI
being off days in the Government departments, the Centre can make available travel documents to the Hurriyat delegation only by Monday."

Hurriyat", according to a senior leader. The decision on whether or not to let Syed Geelani and Sheikh Aziz travel to Pakistan would be taken by the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, when he returns on Sunday from his visit to Vietnam and Indonesia. The Government appears to be divided on the issue, as the apprehension is that Pakistan would go out of its way to project Syed Geelani as the most authentic voice of the Hurriyat; this may not be much appreciated by others like Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, Mr. Yaseen Malik or even by Mr. Lone.

Meanwhile, Mr. Bhushan Bazzaz, president of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Forum and a political mentor to the Mirwaiz, has issued a statement demanding that the Centre issue passports to the APHC delegation. "The Centre showed its positive attitude by declaring unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and then extending it. It should continue to show that attitude and issue passports to all the five Hurriyat leaders."

UNI reports from Srinagar:

The APHC Chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, today said they were ready to accept "extension by a day or two" of the January 15 date, set for their team to leave for Pakistan for talks on Kashmir.

He said they were yet to receive a communication from the Government of India. "We can understand that Saturday and Sunday

being off days in the Government departments, the Centre can make available travel documents to the Hurriyat delegation only by Monday."

Asked whether he would visit Pakistan at a later date, he said "yes, I will. If all goes well, the Hurriyat leaders will have to travel extensively between New Delhi and Islamabad till a lasting and peaceful solution to this 50-year problem is found."

About the statement of the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, that the Government would take an independent decision on giving passports, he said the Hurriyat had nominated its delegation and "now the ball is in the Centre's court. They have to decide on it."

Pak. to keep all channels open: Page 10

THE HINDU
wishes its readers a Happy Pongal and Sankranti.

Our office will remain closed today and there will be no issue of THE HINDU dated 15th January, 2001. Consequently, the Metroplus supplement normally published on Mondays has been released with today's issue.

JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR

THE HINDU

10 JAN 2001

Army favours extension of J&K ceasefire

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 12. — The Army is in favour of further extending the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir beyond 26 January. That would be its recommendation to the Centre, the Chief of the Army Staff said here today.

General S Padmanabhan, however, made it clear that it was for the Centre to take a decision based on an overall assessment of the situation.

"There is reason to hope that the ceasefire will lead to better things", he told reporters. The situation was much better now, there were fewer civilian and military casualties along the frontier and there had been a reduction in infiltration, he said.

Also "holding" was Pakistan's directive to its army to observe maximum restraint along the Line of Control, Gen Padmanabhan said. However, two militant outfits that had openly opposed the ceasefire were continuing their strikes. But "the more they act they more they lose the confidence of the people", said the General. In the days ahead they would find it hard to function in the absence of local assistance, he felt.

Even though most of the local outfits had made statements rejecting the ceasefire, the reality was that they had scaled down their activity. There may have been no formal reciprocation of the ceasefire, but the response was positive. Pakistan's maximum restraint order had to be seen in that context, he said.

Perhaps more important thing that happened after 27 November was the substantial political activity taking place that might lead to a peace

process, and above all the "huge burgeoning of hope in the people", he said. The atmosphere in the Valley was much more relaxed of late, people could be seen on the streets after 10 p.m. All that augured well.

In comparison to these the gains that might accrue to the militants were "insignificant" the General said. Even if they used the ceasefire to regroup, the security forces knew where they were and could get them if necessary. The ceasefire would not prove a handicap if operations had to be resumed.

"Non-initiation of combat operations" would be a more appropriate term than "ceasefire", Gen Padmanabhan said, because even now the forces took action on the basis of specific information about the militants' activity.

The General rejected the view that the morale of the troops would suffer as a result of the suspension of the operations against the militants.

There had been no reduction of the Pakistani army's deployment along the LoC/ border in J&K, the Chief asserted, but troops that had been moved to the forward areas for training or other purposes had been withdrawn. By that logic so also had the Indian forces pulled back.

A conscious effort was on to gradually prune deployment to the irreducible minimum levels, Gen Padmanabhan said. **BJP hails Army stand:** The BJP today welcomed Gen Padmanabhan's comments favouring extension of the ceasefire. The party leader Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi said positive results came after extension of the ceasefire.

No invitation to Musharraf, says Brajesh

PTI & UNI

BALI (Indonesia), Jan. 12. — India today said it had not invited General Pervez Musharraf to visit Delhi for talks.

"No invitation has been extended to Gen Musharraf," the Prime Minister's principal secretary, Mr Brajesh Mishra, told reporters here referring to a Pakistani newspaper report.

On the Hurriyat delegation's proposed visit to Pakistan, Mr Mishra said: "After the Prime Minister's return to Delhi, it will be decided whether permission should be given to one or some or all of them."

The Hurriyat chairman Mr Abdul Gani Bhat said the delegation wouldn't go to Pakistan if passports were not issued to all the five members, a report adds from Srinagar.

Meet on N-risk: Experts from India and Pakistan will meet in Islamabad tomorrow to discuss ways of averting an accidental nuclear conflict.

An Indian delegation of former diplomats and defence experts will attend a seminar organised by an NGO in Islamabad on nuclear restraint and risk reduction, reports AFP.

Kashmir violence: Abdul Majid Mir, brother of National Conference MLA, Mr Dilawar Mir, was killed by militants in north Kashmir this morning. In Sopore, five people were injured in a grenade explosion. Elsewhere in the Valley, four ultras and a jawan were killed.

THE STATESMAN

13 JAN 1991

Hawks and doves don't fit in my politics: Bhat

Arun Joshi
Jammu, January 12

ALL-PARTY Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat said the APHC had effected an accommodation within itself while announcing the five-member delegation to Pakistan on Thursday evening. Bhat said this in a telephonic interview on Friday.

He said that the delegation composition was a "sufficient and fair demonstration of accommodation. We have also shown that we are not guided by self aggrandisement".

When asked if the "accommodation" meant the nomination of the two hard liners, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Sheikh Abdul Aziz, in the delegation, the Hurriyat Conference chairman replied, "I don't draw lines between hardlin-

ers and softliners nor do I believe in hawks and doves. These things do not fit in the mathematics of my politics."

Geelani unhappy

FORMER CHAIRMAN of the AHPC Syed Ali Shah Geelani is angry with the executive council for having announced a five-member delegation for the proposed visit to Pakistan, without the Indian Government first giving passports to all its seven members. **UNI, New Delhi**

Bhat disclosed that he would visit Pakistan later. "Let them make a beginning. We will go and say well done."

"Now, when there are signs of friendship emerging between India and Pakistan, I can go anytime. There will be many more vis-

its," the Hurriyat Conference chairman said.

He was hopeful that the Centre would give passports to all members of the delegation.

"Our delegation will not go to Pakistan unless all the five members are given passports. We are not going for a pleasure trip to Pakistan," said Ghani Bhat.

When reminded about Union Home Minister L K Advani's observation that the Centre would not go by the Hurriyat's choice on whom to send to Pakistan, Bhat said, "Advani is right. The Centre has its own priorities and strategies and we have our own. We will go by our own choice and not by that of the Centre."

He said that Peoples Conference Chairman Abdul Ghani Lone, who is among the five nominated for the delegation, "will have to go". "We will request him to go," Bhat said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JAN 2001

Allow Hurriyat men to visit Pak: Qureshi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JAN 12

HURRIYAT Conference leaders should be allowed to go to Pakistan if they think it could help the peace process in the state, founder member of JKLF and hijacker of Indian Airlines plane Hashim Qureshi said here on Friday.

"It is all right if somebody makes a move to buy peace and the move should be appreciated by everyone," Qureshi told newsmen while being taken to Srinagar to stand trial there.

The 47-year-old Qureshi asked all groups to unite and usher peace in the state. "After all peace has to be restored at all costs as this is the cry of every Kashmiri," he said.

Asked whether he would be participating in the peace process initiated in the state after the announcement of ceasefire by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, Qureshi said "I have come here leaving my business and family only to extend a helping hand in bringing lost prestige to the state."

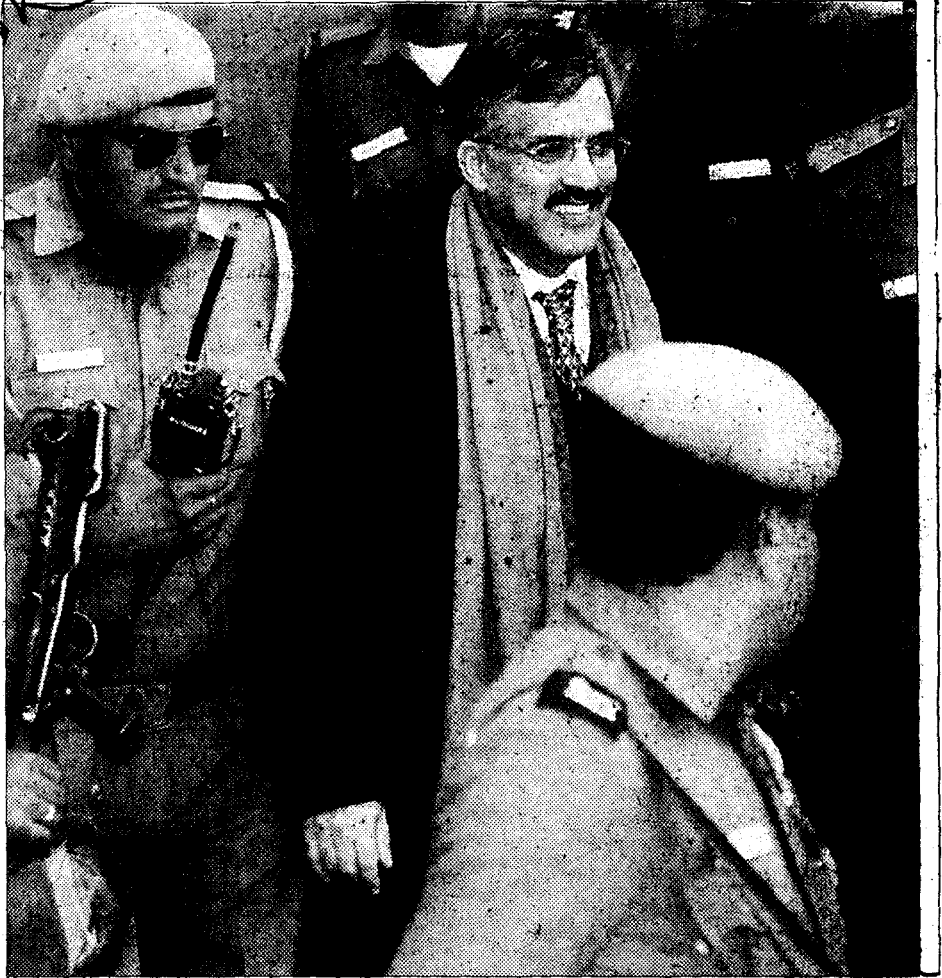
Taking a dig at Pakistan, Qureshi said "Pakistan should be made to understand that when the final dispensation of Kashmir comes, it will include Gilgit, Baltistan and Hunza, which have been illegally annexed by Pakistan."

Denying the charges levelled by Pakistan-based JKLF chief Amanullah Khan that his arrest was stage managed, Qureshi, who arrived here on December 29 from Copenhagen, said "there is no deal between me and the Government. If there was a deal than I would not have been languishing in Jail for last 14 days."

Qureshi said that he would even consider going to Pakistan if it was required to bring peace to Kashmiri people.

Asked specifically whether he would go to Pakistan to talk to militant groups, Qureshi, who has been quite vocal against Islamabad's policy towards Kashmir, said "I do not know as of now but I may."

Qureshi, who later formed Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Liberation Party (JKDLP), pledged his full support to the Centre's peace initiative in the state saying, "I have



JKLF founder member Hashim Qureshi surrounded by security before being produced in front of the additional chief metropolitan magistrate V K Maheshwari in Delhi on Thursday —PTI

come here to support (Prime Minister Atal Behari) Vajpayee's peace initiative."

Encircled by a team of Jammu and Kashmir policemen headed by Deputy Superintendent of Police R S Sharma, Qureshi said he was very happy to go to his motherland after nearly three decades.

"This love for my motherland forced me to withdraw the petition from Delhi High Court

challenging my detention and subsequent transit remand to the state police," he said, adding "I love Kashmir and I am going back for the people of my motherland."

Travelling on a Dutch passport, Qureshi was arrested at the Indra Gandhi International Airport after he surrendered before the immigration authorities, who later handed him over to the Delhi Police.

'Defer announcement on temple'

By Our Special Correspondent

AHMEDABAD, JAN. 11. The BJP president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, today appealed to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and its "Dharma Sansad" to defer announcing the dates for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya to help settle the dispute outside the court.

Talking to mediapersons here, Mr. Laxman referred to the statements by the Prime Minister, pointing out that the dispute could be settled either through negotiations or in a court of law.

He requested the VHP and the "Dharma Sansad", which is scheduled to announce at the "Kumbh Mela" in Allahabad the dates for beginning the temple construction, to give "a fair chance to the efforts being made to resolve the dispute outside the court".

On the party's recent reverses in the municipal corporation and the panchayat elections in Gujarat, Mr. Laxman contradicted the Chief Minister, Mr. Keshubhai Patel's claim that his Government was not responsible for the debacle. Holding both the party-led Government and the organisation "equally responsible", the BJP chief said corrective measures would be taken before the month-end to restore the people's confidence in the party.

**Sadhus question VHP
Hindulsm: Page 13**

Hurriyat rejects jihad

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JAN. 11. The Centre is likely to give passports to all five Hurriyat leaders who have been selected by the APHC chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat. The Centre's decision will be made after the Prime Minister's return, but the crucial consideration will be that the Hurriyat executive is seen as having rejected the 'jehadis' in Pakistan and has, instead, opted for the 'peace process'.

Though the composition of the delegation appears to be tilted in favour of the hardliners, it has been noted that the APHC executive has refused to sing to the United Jihad Council's (UJC) tune, which has consistently rejected the 'peace process' strategy.

The resolution passed by the executive simply, but significantly, notes: "Our agenda is too clear to need any repetition. We hope that the Government of India will see to it that the peace process to resolve the Kashmir dispute is not put in jeopardy." This is total variation with the UJC's persistent demand that the APHC should not come to Pakistan if it wanted to further the 'peace process'.

After today's development in Srinagar, the Centre feels the controversy over the composition of the Hurriyat team has already served a crucial purpose in bringing out in sharp contrast a basic divide within the separatist constituency, between the Kashmiri nationalists and the Islamic religious nationalists. While the former hold the view that the Kashmir 'dis-

pute' is a political struggle for rights, dignity and autonomy of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, the latter believe that what is going in Kashmir is a religious struggle between Islam and others.

The religious view has been most forcefully put forward by the senior Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, while the 'nationalist' view has been advocated, among others, by another senior Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone.

Significantly enough, Syed Geelani's views have been disowned by his own organisation, the Jamaat-e-Islami. Its chief, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed Bhat, has asserted that the Kashmiris were engaged in a political struggle. "It is an issue of all the people living in the State. If we have to find a solution of this vexed Kashmir issue, then we have to take people of all faiths along. We believe that this issue can be settled through peaceful means."

Outside the Hurriyat, another important leader, Mr. Shabir Shah of the Democratic Freedom Party, has not only suggested that the Hurriyat was yet to prove its representative character, but thinks that "the Hurriyat has to take people into confidence. Besides, there should be the inclusion of all the sections in it, including Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists".

In the last analysis, the Centre may allow the Hurriyat team to visit Pakistan.

Red Fort closed

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, JAN. 11. The Red Fort was once again closed to the public today. However, it was not the fear of terrorists but a war of words between the Delhi police, the Archaeological Survey of India, and the Army over security of the complex that resulted in its closure.

While ASI officials refused to say whether the fort would be open tomorrow, the day left many visitors, who had already bought tickets, feeling cheated.

Sources in the ASI said police formally gave it in writing yesterday that they would be unable to provide security to the fort as they were short-staffed. The ASI-run museum had been guarded by over a dozen Delhi policemen between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. since December 29 following the Red Fort shootout.

The matter came to a head today at 9 a.m., official hour when the Army hands over charge to the police. Apparently, there were no policemen to take charge. Asked to hand over the charge to the ASI, the Army refused, saying the ASI's security personnel were unarmed and were not trained for the job. After a 30-minute wait, the Commanding Officer of the post ordered closure of the fort.

Insisting that the ASI had the workforce to provide security, an ASI official said, "We have the staff to look after the museum, but the Army says they are not efficient. The Delhi police, who have been asked to provide security, say they do not have the men."

THE HINDU

12 JAN 2001

Wahid supports Vajpayee position on Kashmir

By Amit Baruah

JAKARTA, JAN. 11. The Indonesian President, Mr. Abdurrahman Wahid, today said he supported the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee's stand on Kashmir as five agreements, including the formation of a Joint Commission and defence cooperation, were signed in the presence of the two leaders.

At a joint press conference, Mr. Wahid said a recent proposal put forward by his Defence Minister, Mr. Mahfud M.D., for a defence pact among Indonesia, China, India and Russia did not come up in his talks with Mr. Vajpayee, but would be discussed at the ministerial-level.

Confirming the change in approach on backing India for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, Mr. Wahid said "personally, of course" he supported the idea but it had to be "discussed within the Government". He also opposed terrorism "everywhere".

On his Defence Minister's proposal, Mr. Wahid said "specific items" like this did not figure in the discussions. It, however, has to be added that the Indonesian President can often take "personal" stands of "support" which may or may not transform themselves into institutional positions. Though there could be discussions on the "security pact", such proposals are unlikely to go very far.

The agreement on defence is significant as India could supply some naval patrol boats and pro-



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with the Indonesian Vice-President, Ms. Megawati Sukarnoputri, at her residence in Jakarta on Thursday. — PTI

vide repair facilities to Indonesian naval craft. There is also talk of supplying spares to Indonesian craft. Referring to what appeared to be a new appreciation of each other's bilateral concerns, Mr. Vajpayee said, "as multi-ethnic, multi-religious and diverse societies, both our countries support each other's unity and territorial integrity."

"The theme unity in diversity is at the core of nationhood of both our countries. We have common maritime borders and common security concerns. For this and other reasons rooted in our age-old friendship, India and Indonesia will always stand by each other

through good and difficult times."

Underlining India's understanding of Indonesia's current domestic problems, he said: "At the present juncture your great country is again going through a process of political and economic transformation which is affecting your society and polity at many levels. India wholeheartedly supports the people of Indonesia in the process of national transformation."

"We are friends who have helped each other at difficult times in the past. Our friendship and understanding has grown as a result of our experience with colonisation. We are both founding fathers of the NAM movement... today we need to join together, with other developing countries, for equitable global economic and social development," he said.

India was prepared to share its development experience with Indonesia. "We have specially offered assistance in ground water management and minor irrigation projects. To promote human resources development, India will offer to Indonesia a number of training courses under the ITEC (India's technical cooperation) programme.

Earlier, welcoming Mr. Vajpayee, the Indonesian President appreciated that the former had come here "although he just underwent a leg operation". "In the political arena, India and Indonesia shared so many similar views on international affairs... we will have to share our own experiences... the South-South dialogue, for example, will bear more fruit in the face of many challenges from other parts of the world."



The Chairman of the National People's Congress of China, Mr. Li Peng and his wife, Ms. Zhu Ling on their arrival at the Palam airport in New Delhi on Thursday. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi (in the background), and the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Najma Heptullah (left), look on. — Photo: V. Sudershan (Reports on Page 13)

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BHAT, YASEEN MALIK NOT PART OF DELEGATION

Hurriyat team announced

By Shujaat Bukhari

JAMMU, JAN. 11. In a move forward in the peace process begun by the Centre in November, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today announced the team for its Pakistan visit scheduled for January 15. Significantly, the APHC chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, and the JKLF chief, Mr. Mohammad Yaseen Malik, will not be part of the team.

After a five-hour meeting of the APHC executive at its Rajbagh headquarters in Srinagar today, Mr. Malik said the forum chairman had constituted the delegation in accordance with the powers vested in him as per the executive's decision on January 2. "We will go by his decision," he told presspersons.

The delegation would have five executive members, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone (People's Conference), Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (Awami Action Committee), Syed Ali Shah Geelani (Jammat-e-Islami), Moulvi Abbas Ansari (Ittehad-ul Muslimeen) and Sheikh Abdul Aziz (People's League).

About the visit, Mr. Malik said the Hurriyat's agenda was 'too clear' and needed no 'repetition'.



The executive council members of the All Party Hurriyat Conference at a meeting on Thursday to finalise the team for visiting Pakistan on January 15. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

It was an obvious reference to the Lashkar-e-Taiba's statement that the Hurriyat should not come to Pakistan if it carried an 'India agenda'.

On issuance of passports to the team members, Mr. Malik said "we hope the Government will see to it that the peace process to resolve the Kashmir dispute is not put to jeopardy". The APHC would not wait for the Govern-

ment's response on the issuance of travel documents.

Mr. Geelani and Mr. Lone could not attend today's meeting as the former is in hospital and the latter is away in Delhi. They were represented by Mr. Ashraf Sehrai and Peer Hafizullah Makhdoomi.

The APHC faced a lot of pressure from the United Jihad Council (UJC), the Hizb-ul Mujahideen and the Jamaat-e-Islami

for including Mr. Geelani in the team. The issue took a different turn following reports about the Government's unwillingness to issue passports to Mr. Geelani and Mr. Aziz.

The duo, considered hardliners and pro-Pakistan, has found a place in the team. It is not yet clear whether the visit would take place as scheduled as the passports have not been issued yet.

More reports on Page 13

THE HINDU

12 JAN 2001

Hurriyat picks 5 for Pak visit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 11. — With only a couple of days left for the Hurriyat leaders' scheduled visit to Pakistan, pressure is already mounting on the Centre. The All Party Hurriyat Conference executive today decided to send a five-member delegation including hardliner Jamaat-e-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani to the country.

Of the five members, only Mr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq of Awami Action Committee has a valid passport and People's Conference leader Mr Abdul Gani Lone's short-duration passport lapses in February.

The foreign ministry has issued passport to Mr Yasin Malik so that he can go to the USA and UK for treatment. His name had been suggested for the delegation.

The other delegation members — Maulana Abbas Ansari of Itheudul Muslimeen, Sheikh Abdul Aziz of People's League and Mr Geelani — don't have

MUSHARRAF TRIP?

NEW DELHI, Jan. 11. — *The Pakistan Observer*, quoting diplomatic sources in Islamabad, reported today that Gen. Pervez Musharraf would visit Delhi later this month to hold talks with Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee but the ministry of external affairs here said it had no knowledge of it.

The newspaper said the Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Mr Vijay Nambiar, would meet Gen. Musharraf to deliver a letter from Mr Vajpayee inviting him for talks. — PTI

passports. APHC had authorised its chairman Mr Abdul Ghani Bhat to decide on the team.

The APHC has now thrown the ball in the Centre's court. The executive council of the umbrella group said: "We all go by this decision. Our agenda is too clear to need any repetition. We hope the Government of India would

see to it that the peace process to resolve the Kashmir dispute is not put to jeopardy."

While the Pakistan government and militant groups based there have been suggesting that all seven Hurriyat executive council members, including Mr Bhat and Mr Malik, should travel to Islamabad, the Centre has made it clear that it would issue passports to APHC members on a case by case basis.

Mr Advani has said the government would not bend to any pressure and it would be at government's discretion to whom it would issue passports. **Minister's house attacked:** Militants attacked the house of the J&K minister of state for home, Mr Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, injuring two CRPF jawans in Kupwara, adds PTI.

Qureshi: Hashim Qureshi will be flown to Srinagar tomorrow to stand trial for the 1971 hijacking of an IA plane, adds UNI.

■ **Editorial: Problematic passports, page 6**

THE STATESMAN

12 JAN 2007

India is messing up its Kashmir policy by giving the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan a role to play

A perilous course

BY BRAHMA CHELLANEY

THE RENEWED attention on Kashmir is a reminder of how India continues to define its international image in terms of an issue it has chronically mismanaged.

With the mysterious rise of the Hurriyat as a supposedly representative force, its leaders are set to tour Pakistan on a visit sponsored by New Delhi and Islamabad on US advice.

For more than a half-century, Kashmir has posed the single biggest challenge to India's security. Far from blocking or containing that challenge, New Delhi has been damaging its interests through its own ineptness. India's distinguishing trait is that it does not learn from mistakes. Rather it lives up to George Santayana's saying that, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

Now, unreminded of even the recent past, India has embarked on a new experiment in Kashmir without undertaking any study or examining the consequences of another failure. What has repeatedly brought India to grief in the past is again on display — personality-driven policy, pockmarked with individual idiosyncrasies, but bereft of any institutional planning or thought.

The latest stage show is more than a new play: It signals a fundamental shift in India's Kashmir posture. It lends support to the Pakistani contentions India has publicly disavowed: That Kashmir is the core problem; that its resolution holds the key to subcontinental peace; and that a potential settlement demands a third-party role. India has now started acquiescing in Pakistan's central tenets on Kashmir, with Prime Minister Vajpayee's description of the "problem" increasingly mirroring the language of Islamabad and Washington.

Without any discussion in Parliament or outside, the principles that have guided India's Kashmir policy since the 1972 Simla Agreement are being jettisoned on the plea that New Delhi will not "travel solely on the beaten track of the past". Such is the country's preoccupation with petty issues and the Government's deftness in camouflage policy reversal has escaped national scrutiny. Consider the following:

■ Intermingling the Kashmir issue with India-Pakistan relations: It has been widely recognised from the Nehru days that the Kashmir issue is the consequence, not the cause, of Indo-Pak problems and that the rivalry between the two will survive

any Kashmir solution, if one could be found magically. Also, it has been the policy of successive Indian governments that J&K is an integral part of India and that there can be no negotiations on its future. Vajpayee, however, has publicly accepted Washington's and Islamabad's view that the J&K 'problem' is at the heart of Indo-Pak tensions.

Further, by blessing the Hurriyat's Pak visit, he has conceded that Islamabad has a role to play in India's J&K. Today, the line between India's J&K issue and Indo-Pak relations has got completely blurred. Vajpayee's *Musings* from a Kerala retreat repeatedly mix the J&K issue with Indo-Pak ties. India has gone from resistance to J&K's inclusion in Foreign Secretary-level talks during I.K. Gujral's term in office, to Vajpayee's sudden readiness to "recommence talks with Pakistan at any level" so as to find a "lasting solution" to the "problem".

■ Giving outside powers a role to play on Kashmir: A key tenet of Indian policy since 1972 has been that there is no role for any outside power on J&K. This principle was upheld by every PM from Indira Gandhi to Gujral. But now it is being abandoned. The United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are being discreetly allowed a role on J&K. That the United States has been quietly playing a pivotal backstage role has been apparent from the Lahore process and Kargil war. But now it has taken to scripting parallel Indo-Pak moves. Desperate to secure a foreign-policy legacy during his final days in office, Bill Clinton continues to meddle in Kashmir, underlined by his special December 20 statement.

The incoming Bush team comprises hardnosed hawks who will fully exploit the leeway and leverage New Delhi conceded to the caretaker Clinton administration on J&K. It is extraordinary that India should allow Saudi Arabia, a State closely tied to Pakistan and the Taliban, to host a meeting of Kashmiri militants. It is even more odd that New

Delhi should facilitate the travel of such militants to a country that has been exporting an extremist brand of Wahabi Islam and bankrolling fundamentalist activities in India and Nepal.

■ Allowing Pakistan to define the Kashmir issue and dictate the agenda: Vajpayee has acquiesced in Pakistan's definition of the Kashmir "problem". The problem is not the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) or Islamabad's annexation of PoK's northern areas but India's J&K. The 20 per cent of the original J&K state occupied by China is also not an issue, with Vajpayee's statement from Kerala portraying Kashmir as a bone of contention just between India and Pakistan. The entire focus is on the Kashmir Valley, just 9 per cent of the original state.

Moreover, Pakistan has dictated to India who it should talk to in J&K (the Hurriyat). It has also imposed its demand for a three-way dialogue in the form of Pak-Hurriyat and India-Hurriyat talks, to be followed by direct Indo-Pak discussions that Vajpayee is all set to allow.

■ Communalising the Kashmir issue: The pluralistic J&K state symbolises India's unity in diversity. If the Valley were to get self-rule, it would trigger the unraveling of India. Having conceded what the "problem" is, Vajpayee has also concluded from the ethnically cleansed Valley that it is an "Islamic problem" to be tackled by Islamic means. He first declared a 'Ramzan' cease-fire and then agreed to a role for two Islamic States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

Reinforcing the international portrayal of Kashmir as a flash-point: Vajpayee has done more than any recent PM to strengthen India's pairing with Pakistan and increase J&K's international salience. Although India's interests demand that it free itself from the subcontinental straitjacket, Vajpayee's string of botched initiatives since Lahore have only tied it stronger to that framework.

■ Letting the ground situation become more

adverse to India's interests: No peace initiative can succeed in the face of qualitatively escalating terrorism. When Vajpayee took office, the J&K situation had been improving for the first time in several years, with a majority of extremists either killed or jailed. The situation has progressively deteriorated under him, however, with the terrorists for the first time taking the battle to the lion's lair, confronting the Indian Army in its own camps.

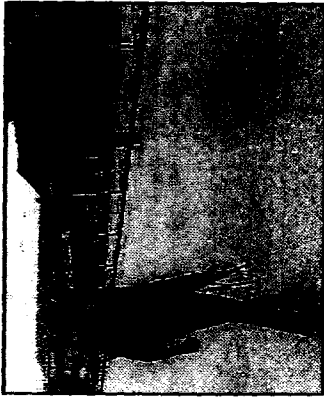
Instead of devising a strategy to counter terrorism's metamorphosis from a hit-and-run campaign to direct assaults on security camps, New Delhi has tried to pull wool over the citizens' eyes. The weather-induced decline in cross-border shootings and infiltration — common at this time of the year — has been passed off as a cease-fire product.

The daring Red Fort raid struck at the heart of the Indian State. The Red Fort symbolises Indian authority as India has been ruled since the 17th century by those who occupy it. Today, the Indian State has sunk so low that, far from contemplating any reprisal against Lashkar-e-Tayyeba for owning up to the raid, it permitted an hour-long telephonic conversation between the terrorist group's chief and the Hurriyat's Ali Shah Geelani.

No Prime Minister after Nehru has made a bigger mess of Kashmir policy than Vajpayee. Despite Lahore, Kargil, the secret Hurriyat talks that prompted Farooq Abdullah to play the autonomy card, and the bungled cease-fire with the Hizbul, Vajpayee is willing to put the nation through bigger risks.

When the price of elusive peace becomes heavy, with one initiative after another foundering, it is time to take a break and reflect on one's actions. Vajpayee needs to think over why his pursuit of peace has engendered more bloodshed. In allowing outside advice to influence him, he should remember that India is still paying for Nehru taking Lord Mountbatten's counsel on Kashmir.

Vajpayee knows he is on his last legs, physically and politically. With his burning desire to win a Nobel Peace Prize on Kashmir in the twilight of his career, he could end up as another Mikhail Gorbachev, sowing the seeds of his country's disintegration. His presence in Jakarta should serve as a reminder that unless he stops jettisoning the nation's bipartisan J&K policy, he could set in motion the 'Indonesianisation' of India, with Kashmir serving as the East-Timor-style trigger.



30 injured in RDX blast in Srinagar

The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: At least 30 persons were injured, six of them seriously, when militants detonated RDX planted on the boundary wall of the Central Telegraph Office (CTO) here on Tuesday morning.

An official spokesman told *The Times of India News Service* that the victims were standing in a queue to pay their telephone bills when the blast occurred.

In another incident, unidentified gunmen fired at Hurriyat leader and former chief of the Hizbullah Shahid-ul-Islam near his residence at Dalgate on Tuesday. The militant-turned-politician escaped unhurt, a police spokesman said.

One sub-inspector of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was killed by his subordinate when a fight broke out between them. They had been drinking at the abandoned residence of a Congress leader at Hyderpora, reports said. The deceased has been identified as Harinder Thakur. The accused, Balbir Singh, a constable, has been arrested.

Some Border Security Force (BSF) jawans posted in the old city near Jamalatta fired shots at each other, killing three, an official spokesman said. Senior BSF officers reached the spot and apprehended those responsible for the act.

In a militancy-related incident, some militants killed the Imam of a mosque near Ahmadnagar on the outskirts of the city on Tuesday evening. The deceased, identified as Mohammad Akbar Wani, had been involved in militant activities after he severed his links with the National Conference in 1992. He had also served a jail term, residents of Ahmadnagar said.

Claiming responsibility for the killing, a militant outfit told a local news agency that the Imam was killed because he was a National Conference agent.

Meanwhile, the Jammu and Kashmir police smashed a Jamait-ul-Mujahideen (JUM) network, a pro-Pakistan militant outfit which has bases in Srinagar and Kolkata, on Monday. A.K. Bhan, inspector-general of police (IG), Kashmir range, said the forces carried out simultaneous raids at various hide-outs of the outfit.

Mr Bhan told journalists that the militant outfit had planned to carry out a number of activities, including bomb blasts, the assassination of some political leaders and a disruption of Republic Day celebrations in Jammu and Kashmir.

The police arrested Nisar Ahmad Gandroo, the outfit's ISI contact, the IG said. On the basis of information given by him, the police later apprehended Muzaffar Mirza, chief of the JUM, and others.

"After investigations, it has been established that the group was responsible for a number of explosions and grenade attacks here, including the recent grenade attack near Hanuman Mandir in which 27 civilians and four BSF personnel were injured," Mr Bhan said.

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



What made you think they wouldn't accept it, sir. I told you not to submit your resignation!

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 JAN 2001

Specify agenda, Lashkar tells Hurriyat

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, Jan. 9. — Even as Pakistan is gearing up to receive the Hurriyat delegation, the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba has asked the APHC to specify its agenda before visiting the country.

The delegation is scheduled to visit Pakistan this month.

The Hurriyat is tight-lipped about its agenda and is still awaiting issue of passports to its leaders by the Centre. The Lashkar chief Hafiz Mohammad Syed, however, talked to the former Hurriyat chief and hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani over phone on Saturday and asked him to come to Pakistan with a

QURESHI WITHDRAWS PETITION

NEW DELHI, Jan. 9. — Hashim Qureshi today withdrew a petition in Delhi High Court challenging his detention by Delhi Police on his return from Amsterdam on charges of hijacking an Indian Airlines plane to Pakistan in 1971. A Division Bench of Mr Justice Cyriac Joseph and Mr Justice SN Kapoor dismissed as withdrawn his petition. Qureshi will be taken to Jammu and Kashmir by state police for his trial at Srinagar. — PTI

■ Two blasts rock Kashmir: page 8

specific agenda on Kashmir.

It is understood that Hafiz has told Geelani that they cannot expect the Mujahideen to declare a ceasefire. The ceasefire is possible only if it gets a assurance from India about the la-

ter's withdrawal from Kashmir.

Geelani has said they would go to Pakistan with their own agenda and not the agenda of the Centre.

The Jamat-e-Islami leader also told a religious gathering

that his agenda will be the sacrifice of 80,000 people.

"The leaders will apprise the people in Pakistan about human rights violations in Kashmir. Our agenda is to congratulate the Mujahideen and the people of Pakistan for their contribution towards our freedom movement," he said.

Meanwhile, the People's Democratic Party led by Mufti Mohammad Syed has urged the Centre to issue passports to all the seven Hurriyat leaders.

The Hurriyat leaders, however, accused the Centre of "scuttling" their Pakistan visit.

■ LASHKAR: page 8

THE STATESMAN

10 JAN 2001

Two blasts rock Kashmir

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Jan. 9. — Kashmir valley was rocked by two major blasts today, including one at the Central Telegraph Office, which injured 54 people while in other incidents a Congress leader and three militants were among 10 killed.

The militants made yet another abortive bid to blow up the heavily-guarded CTO here when they detonated a powerful improvised explosive device near one of its gates this morning. Of the 32 civilians injured, three received serious injuries.

In another blast, at least 22 bystanders were injured in a grenade explosion at Ganglat mandi in south Kashmir this afternoon, taking the number of injured in the day to 54.

Elsewhere in the Valley, a Congress leader, five security personnel and three Jaish-e-Mohammed militants were among 10 people killed. In other incidents during the past 24 hours, forces captured three Hizbul militants and a senior separatist leader escaped a bid on his life. Officials said militants detonated the device at the CTO around 9.50 a.m. when people had started lining up to deposit telephone bills.

At least 32 people were injured, three critically, in the blast which was so powerful that windowpanes of the nearby main telephone exchange building and the United News of India office were shattered. The blast occurred barely 48 hours after five Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants made an unsuccessful attempt to enter the high security airport in police uniform.

Close shave for lensmen

Around 6:15 p.m., a group of photo-journalists and videographers had a narrow escape as militants fired grenades at the Srinagar unit of Special Operations Group of Jammu and Kashmir police headquarters, adds PTI. The photographers were on their way to the unit to photograph four top activists of pro-Pakistan Jamiatul-Mujahideen, arrested earlier in the day.

The grenades fell short of the target however and exploded over a park just as the press party neared the SOG headquarters.

LASHKAR:

(Continued from page 1)

They objected to the statement by Mr LK Advani yesterday that only some of the leaders would be given passports, adds UNI. Hurriyat will hold a meeting in Srinagar on Thursday to discuss the delay over the issuance of passports. Insiders said they would discuss a new strategy in case the Centre didn't give travel documents to all the seven leaders.

Meanwhile, General Pervez Musharraf was today quoted as saying that there could be no talks with India unless the Kashmir issue was on the agenda, adds DPA from Islamabad.

Ultras held: Calcutta Police arrested Nasir Khan and Jahur Ahmed, alleged Kashmiri militants, from a house on Zakaria Street last night, SNS adds from Kolkata. Nasir was involved in the killing of CRPF jawans in Badamibagh, police said. They told police that they had been assigned to smuggle a religious teacher out of the country. They came to the city in the guise of shawl traders.

THE UNITED NEWS

1 1 201

Kashmiri Pandits must come home

Wisdom of the Valley

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2092

KASHMIR, wrote Jahangir, "is a garden of eternal spring, or an iron fort to a palace of kings—a delightful flower-bed and a heart-expanding heritage for dervishes". By far the most important observation of the Mughal emperor, though implicitly stated, related to the long tradition of religious tolerance and pluralism in Kashmir, starting with Syed Ali Hamdani and Sheikh Nuruddin in the 14th century.

In one tale, it is said that when a baby, Nuruddin refused to take his mother's milk and would drink only from Lalla Deb, the Kashmiri panditani mystic. A century later, Sultan Zainul Abidin exemplified a more civilised adherence to harmonious communal relation and a syncretic culture. According to Srivara's Rajatarangini, he participated in Hindu religious festivals, visited Hindu shrines and had the Sanskrit texts read to him. English observers of the late 19th and early 20th century in Kashmir found shared popular religious traditions especially in the countryside. Thus W. Lawrence referred to the "delightful tolerance" which existed between the followers of Islam and Hinduism.

By invoking such fragments from Kashmir's history, I wish to underline that Islam did not come to the subcontinent in a single time-span; consequently, its diffusion took place in a variety of forms from class to class and from one area to another. In its local and regional specificity, therefore, Islam cannot be portrayed as a social entity whose "essential" core is immune to change by historical influences. Thus in Kashmir, as indeed in the south of the Vindhyas, Islam evolved a tradition of worship marked by a striking capacity to accommodate itself to indigenous patterns of faith and worship. It gained a foothold because of its capacity to forge links with the religions and peoples of the wider society, and to offer a form of access to the divine which could be grasped and built upon through means already pre-

sent within these societies. This intermixing was neither 'degenerate' nor a product of superficial accretions from Hinduism. The sharing of beliefs and practices was built up into a dynamic and expansive religious system. The nationalist movement drew upon these syncretic to create a "national sentiment", an statement that has recently acquired special significance. But the major differences in its usage, then and now, must not be lost sight of.

For one, most of the nationalist leaders — from Gokhale to Nehru — realised that a national sentiment (whatever that means in so diverse and segmented a society) can be created, particularly in a colonial context, by



MUSHIRUL HASAN

It is outrageous to displace, as the Palestinian and Kosovo experiences tell us, people from their land of birth just because they profess a different religion

drawing upon the shared experiences and memories of the country as a whole and not a segment thereof. Hence they used symbols that reflected the composite and pluralist character of our society. That would explain why the historical memories associated with Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura were not invoked. Indeed their aim, which the Muslim League leadership in the 1940s failed to grasp, was to forge a joint anti-colonial front and to unite the people rather than divide them along religious lines.

One can fault their judgement and lack of foresight in dealing with minority fears and aspirations, but it would be hard to place them in the dock for mixing up the misguided religious fanaticism of a majority segment with the "sentiments" of the nation as a whole. By all

means one should dutifully talk of national duty and sentiment when armed infiltrators and their patrons threaten the nation's security. But not otherwise. A cursory glance at the political landscape in the 1930s and '40s, particularly in Punjab and Bengal, reveals systematic attempts to strengthen the region as a powerful and cohesive entity. This was the logical consequence of the political arithmetic worked out in the Act of 1919.

After independence, the spurt in provincialism, often rooted in ethnic and linguistic assertions, found statement in the clamour for linguistic states. Increasingly, the identity of the nation as such (which is, at any rate, a construction), meant little to, say

dentally, the Sheikh nurtured the vision of a Kashmiri identity within the Indian nation. His was, indeed, a singularly secular and forward-looking movement for the Kashmiris and not only for the predominantly Muslim population in the Valley. Sadly, the self-righteous statesman in Delhi lost the import of his message. He was ignored, rebuffed and incarcerated by Nehru and the wise men, some from the Valley itself, around him.

Today, the Valley is not how Jahangir had found it. Sheikh Abdullah's secular dream also lies in tatters. Devotees that once thronged the lofty temples that Jahangir described in his memoirs are apprehensive. The Dal Lake, surrounded by armed garrisons, weeps for the dead and wounded. The flowers at Chashm-i Shahi and the Nishat Bagh have yet to blossom. Moreover, the streets of Srinagar, as indeed the glorious saffron fields that Jahangir described so vividly, seem desolate without the Kashmiri Pandits who embody all that was beautiful in Indo-Islamic society and culture. They seem to be saying to each and every passer-by: Kashmir will have no peace without their presence. They have been and will remain an integral part of our being. Instability and terrorism may well have forced the Kashmiri Pandits to abandon their home.

At this juncture, however, it is important for the disparate Muslim groups in Kashmir to make strenuous efforts to free the beleaguered Pandits to return to their homeland. In fact, the moral legitimacy of their movement would depend on their capacity to respect the identity of the Pandits and accommodate their interests. It is outrageous to displace, as the Palestinian and Kosovo experiences tell us, people from their land of birth just because they profess a different religion. This is what Syed Ali Hamdani and Sheikh Nuruddin, the great Kashmiri mystics, would have said way back in the 14th century.

The Economic Times

10 JAN 20

Former Orissa Cong minister convicted on graft charges

Nageshwar Patnaik

BHUBANESHWAR 9 JANUARY

CORRUPT MINISTERS in the erstwhile J.B. Patnaik government in Orissa seem to be getting poetic justice at last. Special vigilance judge Bhupendra Chandra Deb, on Monday, ordered a former minister to three years of rigorous imprisonment for amassing property disproportionate to his known source of income.

Bata Krushna Jena, urban development minister between 1985 and 1990 in the J.B. Patnaik-headed Congress government, was also slapped with Rs 50,000 fine or six more months of imprisonment for non-payment of the fine.

Mr Jena is the second minister after Mr Sarat Rout to be convicted for corruption in public life.

In 1990, during the Janata Dal government headed by Mr Biju Patnaik, vigilance sleuths had raided Mr Jena's houses along with Mr J.B. Patnaik's and 10 others in 1990. Mr Jena's property was estimated to be worth over Rs 8 lakh. The cases were referred for trial, under the Prevention of Corruption Act, to a special court formed by the then JD government.

By the time the Biju Patnaik government bowed out of office, the cases were being heard in the special court. But with Mr J.B. Patnaik returning to power in 1995, the special court was disbanded amid a hue and cry from the Opposition and concerned citizens about the charge that the raids were conducted to get "political vendetta."

Hurriyat travel papers to be studied separately

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 9 JANUARY

THE CENTRE appears to be firm on its view that the inclusion of Jamaat hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani will only aid the Pakistan-backed Jehadi elements' efforts on India bashing.

The Vajpayee government, which is unanimous on the view that the Hurriyat — which does not represent the Kashmiri aspirations — should not be given the right to choose the team for visiting Pakistan, has already made it clear that there will be a case-by-case consideration of travel documents. This was articulated on

Monday
by home
minister

L.K. Advani himself.

The government is clear on two counts. One, Hurriyat is only among the many organisation with the jihadi mindset operating from Kashmir. It does not have the credibility nor clout to represent itself as the sole voice of the Kashmiri people.

Secondly, the government treats the proposed visit as only an independent initiative. It is felt that giving all seven leaders — as demanded by the militants based in Pakistan — passports would mean that there is an official stamp on the visit. The government is firm that the Hurriyat cannot occupy the space of "official negotiators." At best, theirs can be an effort on the lines of Mr Lone's Pakistan visit.

Government managers feel that Mr Geelani — who routinely

charges the government with masterminding genocide in Kashmir — cannot be allowed to usurp the centrestage. His fundamentalist outlook and jihadi mindset would only make Pakistan's task easy. As a matter of fact, the militants in Pakistan are planning a series of meetings parading Geelani and his viewpoints. In the event of Mr Geelani travelling to Pakistan as a member of the Hurriyat team — which has gained acceptance in the vulnerable sections of the media as a negotiator — and peddling his views, there is a serious risk to the cease-fire initiative.

The Pakistani-backed militants, meanwhile, have begun increasing pressure. They have said that any delegation minus Geelani was unwelcome and have announced bandhs to protest against the visit of the Hurriyat team. This is a clear indication of their ploy to use the Hurriyat team to mount an ideological assault on the Indian establishment.

However, this represents a tricky problem for the government.

With the Hurriyat, which has managed to sell itself as a peace deal maker to the international media, the denial of travel documents would be used by the secessionists to point fingers at the government's "insincerity." The government cannot afford to jeopardise a positive international opinion.

KASHMIR CONUNDRUM

The
Pakistani-
backed

The Economic Times

10 JAN 2001

Peace efforts on, but violence continues in J&K

Panchayat polls schedule out

THE CHIEF Electoral Officer has announced the poll schedule for the panchayat elections for eleven blocks in Jammu district.

Filing of nomination papers for Samba, Vijaypur, Bishnah and Purmandal blocks panchayats is to begin on Jan 10 and end on the 13th. The date of scrutiny has been fixed for the 15th. The last date of withdrawal is the 17th. Polling will be held on February 1.

For Satwari, RS Pura, Dansal and Bhalwal blocks, nominations can be filed on January 15, 16 and 17 while the scrutiny of will be on the 18th. January 20 is the last date for withdrawal of candidature for these blocks. Polling will be held on February 4.

National Conference pessimistic about talks with Hurriyat

Arun Joshi
Jammu, January 8

THE RULING National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir is not too optimistic about the Centre's move to court the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) for a dialogue to resolve the Kashmir problem.

In an exclusive interview with *The Hindustan Times*, Public Works Minister Ali Mohammad Sagar said APHC's failure to control violence during the ceasefire showed that their leaders had no control over the militants and could not bring peace to the State.

Sagar is one of the most vociferous of the National Conference leaders. What would the Centre talk to the Hurriyat leaders about,

Gunmen kill Auqaf chief

Srinagar, January 8

JENAB SAHIB Soura Auqaf Committee chairman Mohammad Akbar Wani and National Conference activist Khazir Mohammad Ganai were among eight killed by unidentified gunmen in the Valley since last evening.

An official spokesman said that unidentified militants shot at and critically wounded Mr Wani at Buchpora Chowk in the downtown city at about 2.10 pm.

Mr Wani, also one of the trustees of Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Auqaf Trust headed by CM Farooq Abdullah, later died in the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences at Soura.

Sagar said the National Conference offered the best solution to the Kashmir issue.

"We want greater autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir and that is in the interest of both the country and the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Our agenda is peace and prosperity and if the Centre-Hurriyat talks can bring that, we welcome that. We are for peace".

He agreed with Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah's suggestion that the Line of Control be made a permanent international border.

Sagar said, "National Conference is the real representative of all the three regions of the State and that was proved in the 1996 Assembly elections and subsequently in the parliamentary elections of 1998 and 1999."

he asked. "Some of them are demanding *azadi*, while others

SC on autonomy

The Supreme Court today dismissed a PIL challenging the autonomy report approved by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. The petitioner Mr Pyare Lal Kaul had sought the court's directions for striking down the report. He contended that the report was illegal.

HTC, New Delhi

want to merge with Pakistan. Now it is for the Central Government to decide what to talk to the Hurriyat and under what parameters. So far as we are concerned, we are waiting and watching," he said.

All 7 Hurriyat leaders won't get passports

UNI & PTI

NEW DELHI, Jan. 8. — Mr LK Advani today said the Centre would not give passports to all the seven Hurriyat leaders who want to visit Pakistan for talks with militant leaders.

"Some of them will be given passports," the Union home minister said, while Hurriyat leaders expressed apprehension that their 15 January visit may not materialise because of the Centre's "dilly-dallying tactics" in issuing passports.

Earlier in the day, Hurriyat chairman Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat said: "I'm not sure we will get the passports before 15 January."

In Pakistan, the council chairman, Syed Salahuddin Ahmed, said the Hurriyat team's visit would not yield results unless all the seven members were given passports.

A government spokesman here said some Hurriyat members already had passports, while the cases of others were being considered. "Their applications would be considered under normal

existing rules."

Prof Bhat and other Hurriyat leaders, including Mr Abdul Ghani Lone and Mr Yasin Malik, will leave for Srinagar tomorrow to attend a Hurriyat executive meeting on 11 January.

Prof Bhat said there was no question of finalising the delegations before the passports were issued. He said: "We have clearly stated that we want passports for all the seven members of the executive. I do not draw lines between so called moderates and hardliners."

He said the executive would decide "whether a delegation would go (to Pakistan) if passports are not issued to all the seven members."

On the United Jihad Council's demand that the Hurriyat should spell out their agenda before visiting Pakistan, Prof Bhat said: "What agenda? We will hold talks with the Pakistani government, intelligentsia and militant leaders."

Charge against Hurriyat: The Jamiatul Mujahideen has alleged that some Hurriyat leaders were trying to weaken the "jihad" against India in Kashmir, AFP adds from Muzaffarabad.

THE STATESMAN

9 JAN 2001

Kashmiri pandits oppose Hurriyat's trip

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. Insisting that the Hurriyat Conference is not the "true representative" of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, Kashmiri pandits have opposed the proposed visit by its delegation to Pakistan on January 15 and demanded that the separatist conglomerate specify its agenda before the trip.

The leaders of the Kashmiri Samiti, the Panun Kashmir, the Kashmiri Pandits United Forum (KPUF) and the Kashmiri Dis-

placed Employees' Forum (KDEF) also attacked the Centre for declaring a unilateral ceasefire, terming the offer "unilateral surrender which would enable militants to regroup".

Stressing that the pandits were not against restoration of peace in the militancy-torn State, the Panun Kashmir chairperson, Dr. Shakti Bhan, said "we are against the ceasefire which has been rejected by militant groups. The ceasefire will only help the mili-

tants to regroup and stockpile arms."

"We believe that the government's unilateral ceasefire is a unilateral surrender," said Dr. Ramesh Raina of KPUF, questioning the government's move to hold talks with militants "whose hands are soaked in the blood of Kashmiri pandits".

Opposing the proposed visit, Mr. Raina said it was "not the true representative of the people of entire Jammu and Kashmir"—PTI

THE HINDU

8 JAN 2001

COMPOSITION OF DELEGATION STILL UNDECIDED

Case-by-case clearance for Hurriyat leaders, says Govt.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. The Government is not averse to allowing more leaders of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to travel to Pakistan but will consider all such requests on a case-by-case basis, sources close to the Union Home Minister clarified here today. *J. S. J. S.*

Earlier, the Government indicated willingness to issue passports to the APHC chairman, Mr. Abdul Gani Bhat, and a few colleagues. And although there were reports that the Government might like to see a small and restricted delegation going to Islamabad, the executive committee of the Hurriyat, which met in Srinagar some time ago, was unable to decide the composition and left the decision to Mr. Bhat. With the composition of the team mired in controversy, there was a view that all seven members should be part of the delegation.

The dispute within the Hurriyat arose over taking the Jamaat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, after the Pakistan-backed Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, vociferously

demanded his inclusion. There is also the likelihood of the People's League leader, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, and Mr. Javed Ahmed Mir of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, being in the team. The announcement of the delegation has been held up even as pres-

sures have built up from the different organisations which are part of the Hurriyat.

The Government's position seems to be that the Hurriyat should decide who will be going and they should apply for clearances, and it will consider giving the

green signal on a "case-by-case basis". Indications are that at least a section of the leadership of the Hurriyat, a grouping of some 23 militant organisations, feels the urgency of seriously following up on India's peace initiative in Kashmir with meaningful talks

with leaders of groups based in Pakistan. Several leaders of the Hurriyat feel that this time the initiative should develop into full-fledged talks to resolve the Kashmir dispute and bring lasting peace to the State.

With India not at all keen on tripartite talks among the Kashmiri groups, New Delhi and Islamabad, one suggestion was that the Hurriyat leadership could talk to India and also to Islamabad separately. After this groundwork, a dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad could begin, provided Pakistan stopped abetting cross-border terrorism.

The Pakistan visit by the Hurriyat delegation could strengthen the peace process or break the momentum depending upon the attitude of groups such as the Hizb and, above all, the Pakistani establishment, which controls these outfits. The Hurriyat chairman is also faced with the task of ensuring that the delegation does not speak at cross purposes and is united in its approach.

Jehadis pitch for APHC line: Page 13

Lashkar bid to sneak into airport

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, JAN. 7. A red alert has been sounded across the Kashmir Valley following an "attempt" by a Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) *fidayeen* (suicide squad) to sneak into the high-security Srinagar airport.

The militants hired a Tata Sumo with the registration JK 01 D 7464 for Sopore from the Lal Chowk taxi stand around 10 a.m. The taxi driver, Nazir Ahmed Dar, was dropped off at Hyderpora, where the vehicle was taken over by five people in police uniform. Nazir Ahmed immediately reported the matter to police. At the same time, a spokesperson of the LeT in Pakistan rang up a local news agency, CNS, claiming that its suicide squad was on its way to the Srinagar airport. It was later confirmed that the five members of the *fidayeen* reached the first entry gate of the airport and asked CRPF personnel there to allow them to meet their officer. When not permitted, all the five returned without any inci-

dent. According to CNS, the five have been identified as Abu Hanzal, Abu Osama, Abu Khulbaib, Abu Unus and Abu Abdullah Sayaf. Police said the matter was being investigated. However, they confirmed that such a vehicle had indeed tried to force an entry into the airport. There was no further claim from the LeT.

Subsequently, a red alert has been sounded across the Valley to foil further attempts by this group to sneak into any sensitive installation. A manhunt has also been started for the vehicle.

Two persons, including a minor girl, were killed and 30 injured in two separate blasts in the Valley. Militants hurled a grenade towards a security pick-up in Sopore which missed the target and exploded on the road. At least 25 people were injured; a girl later succumbed to injuries. In Beerwah, a blast took place near a vehicle of the 34 Rashtriya Rifles. Six soldiers were wounded, of whom one later died.

Army at war with peace in Valley

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, January 7

FOR THOSE used to a daily dose of cross-border firing on either side of the divide in Jammu and Kashmir, even peace can sometimes be dangerous. This was amply demonstrated on the international border in Kathua on Wednesday when security forces from both sides exchanged several thousand rounds of small arms fire after a month-long lull.

Official sources indicated firing in the Jammu sector was not to facilitate infiltration or cross-border intrusion by the Pakistanis. It was apparently the result of reflex action of the Pak Rangers and the Border Security Force (BSF) personnel, who are on the tenterhooks since cross-border firing stopped following India's ceasefire initiative.

Directed to give up their pro-active stance against militants in J&K, the Indian security forces, particularly the para-military outfits are finding it difficult to restrict their role to just keeping watch on the militants.

Sources said in the past month, there have been no less than three 'actionable' intelligence

reports -- in the Kashmir Valley, the Rajouri sector and near Srinagar -- about militants hide-outs. But these could not be acted upon due to ceasefire enforcement. While senior para-military officers understand the Centre's emphasis on a political solution to the Kashmir imbroglio, they are hard put to explain the same to their subordinates, who view the current situation as another instance of opportunities frittered away. To get over the piquant situation,

Behind the News

traditional bondings within units have been activated to keep up motivation levels of the troops. Likewise, para-military forces are trying to divert the attention of their men to peacetime activities, including physical exercises. However, the subordinate ranks are clear that the ceasefire was only a passing phase and given half a chance, the militants under surveillance will strike at them.

The military establishment's assessment also is that while the level of infiltration might reduce in the coming months, it might not be

possible to make Pakistan and the mercenaries sponsored by it to give up their violent offensive. It is believed that even if Pakistan tries to rein in the foreign jihadi outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, there will be no let up in sporadic even spectacular strikes. The objective of these outfits is to stay in the limelight and keep working against any peace process in the strife-torn State.

The Indian Army brass is also awaiting the outcome of the two-day meeting of the Combat Development Board in Islamabad next Monday, where the situation on the Line of Control (LoC) is likely to be discussed. The meeting, expected to be chaired by Lt General Mohammed Yousaf, Chief of General Staff, is to formulate a proposal for further de-escalation of tension along the LoC without impinging on Pakistan's security interests.

However, according to reports available here, a predominant section of the Army hierarchy in Pakistan is not in favour of "softer measures" in J&K as such an approach would rob the country's civil-military setup of its political credibility and clout.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 JAN 2001

Hurriyat leader seeks unity amidst diversity

NEW DELHI: In the wake of divergent views expressed by a few Hurriyat conference leaders and some militant outfits, chairperson of the amalgam, Abdul Gani Bhat, said that the delegation visiting "Pakistan will speak in one voice".



Abdul Gani Bhat

"The Hurriyat has to speak in one voice and any discord is unexpected, particularly when the stakes are high," Mr Bhat, who is in the capital, said.

Stressing that the delegation would do its best to ensure that the peace process initiated by India and Pakistan was not derailed, Mr Bhat said, "We (Hurriyat) have to agree on a non-reducible minimum programme."

The views of Mr Bhat came close on the heels of some Hurriyat leaders expressing their

reservation over the outcome of the visit and even going to the extent of remarking that if they went to Pakistan they would "pat militants on their back and return".

Some militant outfits have reportedly said that the Hurriyat delegation would have to spell out its agenda before coming to Pakistan.

"We have to be up and doing—up with a deep sense of sensitivity and doing with a subtle sense of responsibility," Mr Bhat said.

The Hurriyat chairman said, "All of us in India and Pakistan will have to understand that now is the time to address issues effectively and leave behind a legacy of harmony and goodwill with no problems to disturb it."

He has not lost hope like some other amalgam leaders and is still optimistic about the release of travel documents to all executive members. "In my opinion, when you deal with a sensitive issue (like Kashmir) procedural

requirements should create no problem. The passports should be issued in favour of all seven executive members and I trust the government will do it," Mr Bhat said.

Asked about the composition of the team that would be travelling to Pakistan for holding talks with militant leaders and other Pakistani officials, Mr Bhat said, "Till now I have not done it. I will be doing it before January 15. I will have to make it abundantly clear that whoever goes and whatever the number be, the delegation will represent the Hurriyat." With consensus elusive on the composition of the team, Mr Bhat has been authorised to nominate the team.

Insiders say that Mr Bhat will have to do a tight-rope walk as it will be difficult for him to choose a team in the wake of statements by pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen asking them to include fire brand Jamaat-e-Islamia leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani in the team. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

8 JAN 2009

Allowing Kashmiris to decide their fate is not an idea which Pakistan would like

Towards peace

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

47-10
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ATAL BIHARI Vajpayee's remark in Kerala on the first day of the New Year that Pakistan had not yet created the right conditions for a dialogue between the two countries reflects not so much a retreat from the peace process as genuine perplexity about Pakistan's commitment to it. Since the start of the cease-fire in Kashmir on November 26, no fewer than 35 members of the security forces have died at the hands of *jehadi* militants in bomb explosions, ambushes and isolated shootings.

The *jehadis*, now identified as belonging to the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, have infiltrated the Red Fort and killed two army jawans. The Lashkar and the equally fanatical Jaish-e-Mohammad have vowed to carry out suicide attacks in India, including on the Prime Minister's Office. These attacks and threats have nothing whatever to do with 'liberating Kashmir', but are direct, if symbolic, assaults on the Indian State.

They are being launched from Pakistan and, as the interrogation of Ashfaq Muhammad has revealed, with the full connivance of the ISI. Pakistan claims that it wants a dialogue that will lead to peace in Kashmir and between it and India. Yet, till Vajpayee sounded his warning, it had not uttered a word, or done anything to dissociate itself from these attacks.

Vajpayee and his advisors are aware of the fragility of the Pakistani State, the high degree of autonomy that the ISI enjoys, its links with the *jehadis* and of the possibility that Gen. Musharraf does not fully control either it or the *jehadis*. But till Musharraf does something that distances him from the *jehadis* and demonstrates his capacity to control them and the ISI, India will lack the assurance that Pakistan will be able to live up to any commitments that it might make at the conference table. New Delhi cannot be blamed for insisting that the resumption of talks on the future of Kashmir will serve no useful purpose till Pakistan demonstrates both the will and the capacity to control the *jehadis*.

Unfortunately, the signals emanating from Islamabad suggest that Pakistan, after responding constructively to Vajpayee's cease-fire offer, might now be having second thoughts. After expressing some initial doubts about the sincerity of

Vajpayee's offer, Islamabad had announced a cease-fire on the Line of Control. It followed this a few days later with the announcement that it intended to pull some of its forces back from the LoC in Kashmir. This was followed by a decline in the number of violent incidents in the Valley.

These developments played a part in New Delhi's decision to allow a Hurriyat delegation to visit Pakistan later this month. Islamabad responded by making the most important concession to date: it dropped its demand that talks on the future of Kashmir should be tripartite from the very beginning, and agreed that the Hurriyat could talk to Delhi and Islamabad first and India-Pakistan talks could follow.

Vajpayee also softened India's insistence that Pakistan end all cross-border terrorism as a precondition to talks, and raised the possibility of talks if there was a sustained reduction in these incursions. In his *Musings*, he went a step further and raised the possibility of direct talks with Musharraf, provided Pakistan reined in the *jehadis*.

It is only in the last week that Pakistan's second thoughts have begun to surface. These are not being voiced by its own spokesmen, but by the Islamabad-based Hizbul Mujahideen. The first indication came from the Pakistani Hizb chief Salahuddin, who said in an interview to *The Dawn* that the Hurriyat had no mandate for asking the 'Mujahideen' (*jehadis*) to respect Vajpayee's cease-fire in order to give peace a chance. He went on to threaten that the *jehadis* and the Hizb would intensify their strikes if India did not make a declaration that Kashmir was a disputed territory and agree to resolve the dispute through 'meaningful' tripartite talks.

A day later, a spokesman for the Hizb in Islamabad stated that the Hurriyat could not play the role of mediator in the dispute between India

and Pakistan. This was a departure from the position that the Pakistan Government had taken only a fortnight earlier.

Two days later, this refrain was taken up by the Muzaffarabad-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, which expressed a lack of confidence in the leaders of the Hurriyat, and added that meaningful progress on Kashmir was only possible if the *jehadi* organisations were included in the talks between India and Pakistan. A spokesman for the Harkat questioned the Hurriyat's right to talk on behalf of the Kashmiris. This stand is diametrically opposed to the one Pakistan has been taking for the past eight years.

All this could have been dismissed as no more than the jostling for power between different militant groups had there not been two consistent strands in what they are saying. The first is a deepening distrust of the Hurriyat Conference. The second is a steady convergence of the positions held by the Islamabad-based Hizb and the Muzaffarabad-based *jehadis*. Both are a reflection of the developments that have taken place in Kashmir since Vajpayee announced his cease-fire.

The cease-fire has been overwhelmingly popular in Kashmir. It was welcomed unambiguously by Yaseen Malik, Abdul Ghani Lone and, in sharp contrast to his reaction last July, by the chairman, Abdul Ghani Butt. The desire for peace threatens those who have continued to wage war, with isolation. And that threatens to deprive Pakistan of its chief instrument for keeping the pot boiling in Kashmir.

The cease-fire has also put the pro-Pakistan elements in the Valley on the defensive, for the longer it lasts, and the more the *jehadis* refuse to honour it, the more will they appear to ordinary Kashmiris as the warmongers and the source of all their misery.

The issue was brought to a head by Lone when he demanded that the *jehadis* respect the cease-fire.

This brought the simmering differences between the pro-Pakistan and pro-independence factions in Hurriyat out in the open and isolated Ali Shah Geelani who remained the sole supporter of merger with Pakistan. (Butt, who shares Geelani's views, chose to remain silent).

Geelani responded by instigating a near riot by little known pro-Pakistani groups against Lone, Malik and Mirwaiz Omar Farouq, the principal advocates of *Kashmiriyat* and independence, on December 17. Since then, although Butt has made heroic efforts to maintain the unity of the Hurriyat Conference, the differences have persisted, so much so that the Hurriyat was unable to decide who would go on its behalf to Pakistan on January 15.

Even more disturbing for Pakistan than the antipathy to it within the Hurriyat is the divergence of positions between the Hizb in Kashmir and Islamabad. This was brought out by an interview with the Kashmir supremo, Abdul Majid Dar, by the Washington-based Stimson Centre on December 8.

In this interview, Dar said unequivocally that Kashmiris wanted peace and a negotiated settlement of the dispute that allowed both India and Pakistan to 'save face'. He asserted that although foreign militants first came to help the Kashmiris fight the Indian forces, Pakistan should stop them now in the interests of starting a dialogue with India. Pakistan, he believed, had the capacity to do so. He thus aligned himself with Lone.

The convergence of views between the Islamabad-based Hizb and the *jehadis* is a mirror image of the consolidation of the pro-independence forces in Kashmir. It directly reflects Pakistan's growing concern that allowing the Kashmiris to dictate the kind of solution they want could lead to something that falls very far short of its long cherished goal of annexing Kashmir.

This does not mean that Pakistan has decided to sabotage the peace initiative. But it does mean that it needs a lot more time to accept the fact that once the Kashmiris are brought into it, the outcome of the process can no longer be wholly controlled. Vajpayee's demand that Pakistan do more to curb the *jehadis* may not evoke an immediate response. But it will give Pakistan a breathing spell that it most definitely needs.



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6 JAN 2001

Pak looks forward to APHC team's visit

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, January 5

PAKISTAN'S TOP defence and strategic body, the National Security Council (NSC) has expressed the hope that the visit of All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) delegation to Pakistan would lend impetus to the tripartite dialogue process on the Kashmir issue.

An official handout issued after the NSC meeting yesterday, said that the meeting, headed by General Pervez Musharraf and attended by services chiefs and key ministers, reviewed the general security situation in the region with special focus on Kashmir.

Later talking to state-run PTV, Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar stated that Pakistan is optimistic about the resumption of dialogue with India in near future to resolve the Kashmir issue, which is the root cause of tension between them.

"We hope that in the near future the dialogue will begin and we will embark upon purposeful negotiations with India on the root causes of tensions that have existed between the two nations," he said.

Welcoming recent statements made by Indian Prime Minister

Atal Bihari Vajpayee, he said that Pakistan has taken due note of the statements that have been made especially by India and the Indian Prime Minister on the New Year eve. "We are impressed by what Indian Prime Minister has said," Sattar added.

Sattar further stated that the NSC has also discussed the forthcoming visit of All Parties Hurriyat Conference delegation to Pakistan and prospects of dialogue with India for a durable settlement of the Kashmir question in conformity with the wishes of the people of Kashmir.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office has urged India to allow all the seven members of the executive council of All Parties Hurriyat Conference to visit Islamabad for preparing ground for tripartite talks for a solution to the Kashmir dispute. "It is regrettable that India has not yet responded to the request of the APHC that they be enabled to travel to Pakistan.

"During the visit of the APHC team Pakistan will hold consultations with them on all issues relevant to the achievement of the right of self-determination of the Kashmir people," the statement said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Downtown threats

THE LEADERS of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, who are officially awaiting the issue of passports to enable them to travel to Pakistan, have to contend with yet another contradiction in their flanks. The Dukhtaran-e-Millat, the women's wing of the fundamentalist Jamat-e-Islami, which had made an unsuccessful attempt to impose a dress code on Kashmiri women a few years earlier, has yet again made an attempt to hijack the APHC agenda. At a press conference that was organised like a spy thriller in downtown Srinagar on Thursday, the Dukhtaran briefed press persons on their latest line of thinking. They took moderate APHC leader Abdul Ghani Lone to task for having suggested that foreign militants should leave the resolution of the Kashmir issue to Kashmiri leaders. This affirms that foreign militants are very much a part of the local scene. Besides, 'Lone should shut up, or else...' seems to be the message of the women's outfit.

This should give us some idea of the Dukhtaran's method of conducting a 'dialogue'. In fact, Dukhtaran leader Asiya Andrabi termed the APHC's proposal of undertaking a journey to Islamabad as a sell-out and demanded that leaders of the seven-party conglomerate 'guarantee' the state's secession before undertaking the trip. If an APHC constituent's mind is so made up, there obviously cannot be much room for dialogue. Moreover, for a women's group that has been urging its male loyalists to go in for polygamous alliances so that their numbers can multiply faster, nothing should be surprising.

However, the latest outpourings of this outfit reflect the current thinking of the Jamat-e-Islami and its leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani — who, apparently, is not quite pleased with the recent turn of events. Geelani, who headed the APHC until last summer, must have reason to regret that he is out of the top slot at a time when things had really begun to move in Kashmir. This perhaps explains why he has been sulking, and has not even applied for the papers to travel to Pakistan. A day before the Dukhtaran went to town with their diktats, Mr Geelani had dropped a minor bomb-shell by affirming that the struggle in Kashmir was not political but a religious one. The move may be a tactical manoeuvre intended to push the other Hurriyat leaders out of the centre-stage in the Valley, but it is a dangerous doctrine that the APHC needs to think through.

Historian in his labyrinth

TALKING TO *The Hindustan Times* in Kolkata this week, Irfan Habib, specialist in Mughal agrarian history, countered what he calls the Sangh parivar's 'Taliban-type' agenda to rewrite ancient Indian history. He recalled how historian R.C. Mazumdar, known for his hardline anti-Muslim stance, was enraged when the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* once insisted that it was Man Singh, not Shah Jehan, who built the Taj Mahal. In an equally enraged rebuttal, B.R. Grover, Chairman, ICHR, told this paper that the 'secular-liberal' camp has been branding him 'communal' simply because Murli Manohar Joshi appointed him for the top job. Amid this muckraking, what is lost is the idea of history. Lost also is Habib's argument that historians like Mazumdar would never allow their beliefs to interfere in their historical documentation; they would rely only on evidence and logic.

The bitterness has spilled over into the public domain. Certainly, the platform of the Indian History Congress can stimulate a higher quality of debate instead of becoming an MAC — Mutual Accusations Club. Why is it that the differences are not resolved through an intelligent debate which pushes the argument to its threshold and within the bounds of decency? And even if it is not resolved, should it stoop to a level which leaves everyone completely perplexed?

However, the saffron camp's current obsession to rewrite history is neither a fad nor a figment of imagination. They are serious about giving certain twists to Indian history and mythology which, indeed, might appear as pure hallucination to a rigorous historian. For instance, the theory that Aryans were the original inhabitants of India, or that the *Ramayana* was not an epical/mythical tale but a reality, or that there was originally a Ram temple where the Babri masjid at Ayodhya once stood, have all proved to be without any historical or archaeological basis. Besides, the accusation that most academic centres, including the ICHR, have been filled with Sangh loyalists is also not off the mark. In this context, historians should take a lesson from a Supreme Court judgment in July last year. "Somebody has a bee in his bonnet, hence this petition," said Justices S.P. Bharucha and Ruma Pal dismissing a PIL by a 'historian' who sought to 'rewrite' the history of the Taj Mahal. The message is short and sweet: Don't mess with history. Preserve it. So that the past is not a victim of the prejudices of the present.

TIGHTROPE WALK AHEAD FOR ABDUL BHAT

Hurriyat wants passports for full delegation

NEW DELHI, JAN. 3. Caught in a cleft stick over the choice of an All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) team to visit Pakistan, its chairman, Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, today said the Centre should give passports to all seven executive council members to make the dream of peace initiatives between India and Pakistan a reality.

"We trust the Government will issue passports to all seven members of the executive council to help the process to move forward," Prof. Bhat told PTI over phone from Srinagar. With consensus elusive, he has been authorised to nominate the team to hold talks with militant leaders and Pakistani officials.

Insiders said Prof. Bhat would have to do a tightrope walk as it would be difficult for him to choose a team in the wake of statements by the pro-Pakistan Hizb-ul-Mujahideen asking them to include the fire-brand Jamaat-e-Islamia leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani. Prof. Bhat would be waiting for a "goodwill gesture" from Mr. Geelani like the one from Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, who said he would opt out if it was required for consensus.

When it was pointed out to the Hurriyat Chairman that Mr. Geelani and another senior Hurriyat leader, Sheikh Abdul Aziz, had not applied either in writing or verbally for passports, he said, "Probably it should be taken in the larger interest as a request for the issuance of the passports" to them too. However, the Centre, which is understood to have okayed the issuance of travel documents to Prof. Bhat, Mr. Lone, the Shia leader, Maulvi Abbas Ansari, and the JKLF leader, Mr. Yaseen Malik, had not cleared passports for Mr. Geelani and Mr. Aziz.

Locus standi questioned

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 3 Days before the APHC delegation is to visit Islamabad, some Pakistan-based militant organisations have begun to question its locus standi in discussing the future of Kashmir.

The Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) openly questioned the credentials of the APHC to talk on the behalf of the people of Kashmir, and said their visit to Islamabad to talk with the Pakistan Government and other militant organisations had no meaning.

This assumes significance in the wake of the division within the APHC on the role of the militant organisations in the so-called 'freedom struggle'. While moderates such as Mr. Lone are of the view that militant organisations should not dictate the agenda to the APHC, extremists in the Hurriyat favour a bigger role for them.

At a news conference in Muzaffarabad on Tuesday, the HUM commander, Mr. Sajjad Shahid, said his organisation had no confidence in the APHC leadership. Meaningful progress on the Kashmir conflict could be made only if militant organisations were included in the negotiations between India and Pakistan, adding that their 'jihad' in Kashmir would continue despite the visit.

The international wire agency, Associated Press, quoted the Harkat-ul-Ansari chief, Farooq Kashmir, as saying, "We won't reduce our attacks against the Indian Army nor will we allow New Delhi to use meaningless talks as a delaying tactic."

Questioning the APHC claim to talk on behalf of Kashmiris, he said the Hurriyat leaders did not even bother to express sympathies with the families of the affected in Kashmir, leave alone visiting them.

PTI reports:

The impending visit was discussed at a meeting between the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Abdul Sattar, and the PoK Prime Minister, Mr. Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry.

Mr. Sattar and Mr. Chaudhry discussed arrangements for a "warm welcome" to the Hurriyat leaders in Islamabad and Muzaffarabad, an official statement said.

THE HINDU

4 JAN 2001

Consensus eludes Hurriyat meet on team to Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 2

THE Hurriyat Conference today failed to reach a consensus to finalise its team for the proposed January 15 visit to Pakistan and authorised chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat to select the team.

After a six-hour long meeting of the Hurriyat executive council, its spokesman told newsmen that since the Centre had not yet released travel documents to most of the Hurriyat leaders, the chairman "has been authorised to select the delegation so that he can nominate the members of the delegation in the event of an emergency."

The meeting at the Hurriyat headquarters was held under tight security in view of the Dec 17 violent clashes between pro-Pakistan and pro-independence supporters of Hurriyat leaders at the similar meeting at the same venue.

The spokesman said that the coming panchayat elections in Jammu and Kashmir was also discussed at the meeting which asked

the people to boycott the exercise as it was felt that the polls "are being held to sabotage the restoration of peace and everlasting solution of Kashmir issue." "While on the one hand talk of creating conducive atmosphere to resolve the Kashmir issue is being claimed, on the other hand an undemocratic and drama of Panchayat polls is being enacted against the will of the people," the statement said.

Imam raps LeT, JeM for anti-Muslim role

■ NEW DELHI: SHAHI Imam of Jama Masjid on Tuesday said the activities of Lashker-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad were helping communal elements to create anti-Muslim atmosphere in India. "Activities of these organisations, established in Pakistan, would not only increase communal hatred in India but also would affect adversely the peace process in Kashmir," Maulana Syed Ahmed Bukhari said in a press statement.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

3 JAN 2011

Hurriyat still undecided over Pak delegation

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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NEW DELHI, Jan. 2. — The All Parties Hurriyat Conference failed to reach a consensus to finalise its team for the proposed 15 January Pakistan visit, even after a four-and-a-half hours executive council meeting in Srinagar today.

After the meeting, APHC leaders said they had authorised the chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Bhatt, to select the team to visit Pakistan, as they have not received their passports yet.

When asked whether Mr Abdul Gani Lone, who has declined to visit Islamabad, would be part of the delegation, they said that if Mr Bhatt recommends his name, then Mr Lone would have no other choice but to abide by the chairman's decision.

It may be recalled that Mr Lone, who also heads the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' Conference, had recently declined to visit Islamabad as part of the Hurriyat delegation to hold talks as he felt that he was being insulted by the hardliners and that they had tainted his image. Mr Lone had criticised the hardliners in the separatist conglomerate for launching a "campaign" against him.

The Centre has reportedly released the travel documents of three persons including Mr Bhatt, Mr Malik and Mr Ansari. Mr Lone's passport is valid till 14 February. Mr Geelani, who represents the Jamaat-e-Islami in the Hurriyat, has contested the Centre's claim that it has not received any application from him. Pro-Pakistan constituents of the Hurriyat have been pressing for Mr Geelani's inclusion in the team to Pakistan. The Hizbul Mujahideen has also asserted that the visit by Hurriyat delegation would be fruitless without the inclusion of Mr Geelani.

The leaders in today's meeting also gave a call to boycott the Panchayat elections because they feel that the present situation was not conducive enough to hold elections in the region. Besides, they also alleged that elections in the region were never held in a fair manner. "Since there is no credibility in the system, the APHC has given the boycott call," they said.

Today's meeting was attended by Mr Bhat, Mr Lone, Mr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Mr Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mr Yasin Malik, Mr Maulana Abass Ansari and Mr Sheikh Abdul Aziz amidst tight security at the Hurriyat headquarters in Srinagar.

On 17 December, a similar meeting at the same venue had witnessed violent clashes between supporters of pro-Pakistan and pro-independence factions of the amalgam in which 12 people were injured.

THE STATESMAN

3 JAN 2001

Fog still hangs over Hurriyat passports

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

DELHI/SRINAGAR, Jan. 1. — The matter of passports to Hurriyat leaders continues to be confusing.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani of the Jamaat-e Islami today said his application for passport had been pending with the government for two years. He was referring to reports that he was not being given travel documents as he had not applied for them.

"I had applied for the passport in Srinagar two years back along with Mr Abdul Ghani Lone," he said.

Syed Geelani claimed his passport had been impounded in 1981 and the passport department was delaying issuing his document saying it was a political matter and would be decided accordingly.

On the constitution of the team that will travel to Pakistan on 15 January, the former Hurriyat chairman said: "Let the government first issue documents to all the seven executive council members. We will then decide the team."

Meanwhile, the issue of granting travel documents to the Hurriyat leaders to allow them to visit Pakistan for discussions with militant organisations, remains unclear.

Home ministry officials are "tight-lipped", but sources said "it is the MEA which will take the final decision on issuing passports or any other travel documents to the Hurriyat leaders."

The Hurriyat leaders are still maintaining that "they have not

received any information either from the home ministry or the external affairs ministry on the restoration or issuance of their passports".

On 28 December, the home ministry cleared issuing passports and other travel documents to the Hurriyat leaders after considering their requests.

The ministry restored the impounded passports of the Hurriyat Conference chairman, Mr Abdul Gani Bhatti, Shia leader Maulana Abbas Ansari and Mr Abdul Ghani Lone.

It also directed issuance of a fresh passport to JKLF chief, Mr Yasin Malik, who had applied for it in September last year.

A decision on the issue is expected to be announced by the external affairs ministry, a day before their scheduled visit to Pakistan.



Hurriyat executive members in session at Mirwaiz Maulvi Umer Farooq's residence at Nageen on the outskirts of Srinagar. (A file photograph)

Peace at any cost, says Farooq

JAMMU, Jan. 1. — There is no going back on the peace process initiated in Jammu and Kashmir, the chief minister, Dr Farooq Abdullah, said here. "We are ready for any sacrifice in pursuit of peace," he said.

In an exclusive interview to Door-darshan Kendra, Jammu, Dr Abdullah expressed concern over the increased civilian killings in the state despite the Prime Minister's unilateral suspension of combat operations. He said that some forces are still alive in the state which thrive on bloodshed. "There are some people

who decorate their houses with the blood of innocents and celebrate their killings," he said. "We are aware of such elements, which have become more active after suspension of operations. This has made us more cautious and there would no lowering of security grid. We will have to face the enemy," he added.

The chief minister said that it is equally significant that the JKLF leader, Hashim Qureshi, who masterminded the hijacking of Srinagar-Jammu Indian Airlines flight at the behest of Pakistan in 1971, has voluntarily surrendered and confessed his crime. After

he said, "This would serve as an eye opener for those playing into Pakistan's ploy, he said."

George makes a point on 5353

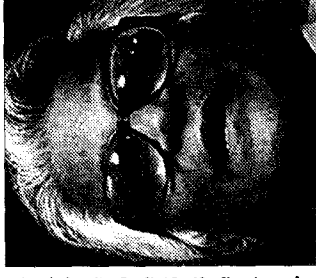
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 1. — Mr George Fernandes cut short his visit to Kargil and returned here early this morning.

The defence minister was supposed to have stayed in Kargil after finishing his engagements but came back immediately after meeting troops there and visiting Kil, Sendo and Dras, the headquarters of the 56 Brigade that was involved in the fighting with Pakistan in 1999.

Despite the bitter cold, Mr Fernandes also visited Point 5353, defence ministry sources said, and got himself photographed there to end the controversy about the peak being in Pakistani hands. "This should end the unfortunate controversy about the peak once and for all," he said.

The defence minister, who wore an olive-green parka during his meetings with troops, spoke of the decrease in tensions along the LoC, calling it an encouraging sign. On the recent anti-Indian riots in Nepal, sparked after some remarks



Mr George Fernandes

credited to Hritikh Roshan, though he didn't make them, Mr Fernandes said anti-Indian feelings were spread in a calculated manner. He added that rumour mongering and destruction of property belonging to Indians in Nepal were part of a plot against India.

Mr Fernandes said India was willing to speak to Pakistan but not before there was a climate for meaningful dialogue.

He said while the Pakistan army had pulled back a division (about 10,000 troops) from the border, it was still one division from a very long border and therefore, it wasn't an "adequate" gesture.

He said Pakistan should rein in ISI and stop cross-border terrorism. India, he said, had already taken a number of steps to improve the climate.

Mr Fernandes denied that the Army was against the ceasefire in J&K and said it was extended to 26 January after consultations with the Army chief, General S Padmanabhan.

He asked the media to "create a climate of confidence amongst people instead of weakening it."

Lashkar militant admits killing Chittisinghpura Sikhs in March

NEW YORK: A Pakistani militant, arrested in connection with the March massacre of 35 Sikhs in Chittisinghpura in Jammu and Kashmir, has admitted to his being a member of the attackers' team and his affiliation to Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit, a media report said here on Sunday.

Suhail Malik of Sialkot, interviewed by a *New York Times* correspondent in an Indian prison, has said he had no regrets for participating in the massacre, which coincided with US President Bill Clinton's five-day India visit in March 2000.

Malik said he had opened fire on the Sikhs, just because he had been ordered to do so by his LeT commanders and that he knew nothing about the plot to kill the Sikhs until got the orders as he stood in an orchard where the 35 people were killed.

"I used my weapons when com-

manded... We are told what to do and not why. Afterwards we were told not to talk about it," 18-year-old Malik said.

"The Koran teaches us not to kill innocents. (but) if Lashkar-e-Toiba told us to kill those people (Sikhs), then it was right to do it. I have no regrets," he added.

He said in the interview, "When I was sent here from Pakistan, I was told the Indian army kills Muslims. It treats them badly and burns their mosques and refuses to let them pray. They must be freed from these clutches".

Malik said LeT had tutored him in marksmanship and mountain climbing. He sneaked into India in October, 1999, with an equivalent of \$ 200 in expense money. He took part only in two attacks before Chittisinghpura — one on an army outpost and the other on a bus carrying soldiers.

In Sialkot, his father insisted that he did not know to which

group Malik belonged even though a glossy decal of Lashkar was on one of the walls of the room in which the correspondent interviewed him, the paper wrote.

And his "favourite" uncle declined to answer any question but lashed out at Christians and Jews.

Malik agreed that he is likely to spend the rest of his life in an Indian prison. Terming this as "a dreary prospect," he said he would have preferred the "glory of martyrdom". Malik said he had attended a government school through fifth grade but like many boys in Pakistan, had switched over to a madrassa, a Muslim religious academy. He said he heard the speeches of the Toiba's leaders while studying in Lahore and trusted their vision of the world and trusted still.

The article says Malik showed no signs of abuse but the torture of someone in his situation would not be unusual. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 JAN 2001

The Hindustan Times

Return of the prodigal

HASHIM QURESHI has apparently come a long way since his role as a principal actor in the 1971 hijacking of an Indian Airlines plane to Lahore. His return to India on Friday traces some of the tortuous course that the Kashmir issue has been through in the past three decades. In Holland, where he has lived since he left Pakistan after completing a reduced jail sentence in the Eighties, he has been arguing in favour of freezing the Kashmir issue for the next 20 years, while granting maximum autonomy to people living on either side of the Line of Control. But that is not the only reason why he is anathema to the Pakistani establishment. His references to the relative prosperity and exercise of democratic freedom by people in Indian Kashmir — as against those under Pakistani control — has turned him into a hate figure in Islamabad. His support to the state's composite and secular character has made it even worse.

Irrespective of the merits of Qureshi's proposal, his presence itself is bound to generate anxieties in the Hurriyat camp. In the past, he has questioned their representative character and criticised them for 'loyally' articulating the Pakistani viewpoint. He has also charged some of them of pocketing the cash they had received from Pakistan for rehabilitating those who suffered during the Charar-e-Sharif episode. Pakistan's own attitude to the JKLF has always been ambivalent. They first feted the 1971 hijackers and then put them in jail. Though Qureshi had parted company with Amanullah Khan way back in the Eighties, the latter's experience had been no different. (Amanullah Khan was played up by Pakistan as a Kashmiri hero when it came to Indian Kashmir, but was incarcerated whenever he raised the issue of the rights of the people of his native Gilgit.)

More particularly, Qureshi's return is bound to cause considerable embarrassment to the present Srinagar-based leadership of the JKLF of which he has been a co-founder. The JKLF leaders, who were originally supposed to speak up for the people of the whole state, have practically modified their position while hitching onto the Hurriyat bandwagon, which is dominated by constituents favouring Pakistan. Qureshi, however, has been insisting that the conditions of people living in Pakistan-held Kashmir — including those in Gilgit, where even basic rights remain a distant dream — should be part of the Kashmir agenda. Thus, even though differences between the JKLF and the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen do occasionally spill over into the open — as they did recently — Qureshi's arrival may make it difficult to continue to keep them under wraps.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

1987-2001

Leave Pak team line-up to us: APHC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Dec. 31. — Hurriyat leader Mr Mirwaiz Umar Farooq today said the Centre should issue passports to all the seven executive council members of the conglomerate. The government should leave the composition of the team, to visit Pakistan for talks with the militant leadership, to Hurriyat, he said.

"It is our headache who will go and who will not go," Mr Mirwaiz told a foreign radio network, adding that "nobody has a right to decide on our behalf."

The Hurriyat Conference, comprising 23 separatist outfits, has sought the Centre's permission to visit Pakistan for talks with the militant leadership and the establishment there as a follow-up to the Centre's unilateral ceasefire.

The Hizbul Mujahideen too has said that all seven Hurriyat leaders should travel to Pakistan, or it would be an "exercise in futility".

"If some are allowed and some are barred (from travelling to Pakistan), it will create doubts about the Hurriyat. Rather, it can create an impression that the alliance is divided into moderates and extremists people," Hizbul supreme commander, Syed Salahuddin, told Dawn.

Hurriyat leaders "must show farsightedness and diplomatic efficiency to give the impression that Delhi, and not they themselves, are constituting the delegation."

"I advise the Hurriyat leaders to avoid travelling to Pakistan unless all of them are allowed to travel...they should first evolve an agenda in consensus

for the tour," he said.

Mr Mirwaiz said "deliberate leaks" to the media about the selection of its executive council members were aimed at "creating division" within the conglomerate.

"The reports (of issuing passports to selective members) is aimed at engineering defection in our ranks by raking up the issue of so-called hardliners and so-called moderates," he said.

Mr Abdul Ghani Lone said the proposed visit of Hurriyat leaders was aimed at convincing militants and authorities to respond positively to the ceasefire.

"Militants should give a positive response to the ceasefire to prevent Delhi from putting the condition of ending cross-border terrorism for talks," he said.

Mr Lone said the Centre had tried to open channels with the Hurriyat leadership, immediately after their leaders' release from jail. He said the visit to Pakistan was the Hurriyat's own decision and did not have the Centre's "advance approval".

PoK arrangements: PoK leaders have made elaborate arrangements for the Hurriyat leaders' visit to Pakistan and occupied areas, adds UNI from Islamabad.

The APHC leaders would be taken round the various cities of occupied areas to show the developments there in the past 50 years, PoK Prime Minister said in Rawalpindi today.

'Pak claim false'

Mr Farooq Abdullah has said Pakistan's "lied" about withdrawing its troops from the LoC. The claim has been found to be incorrect, he said.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

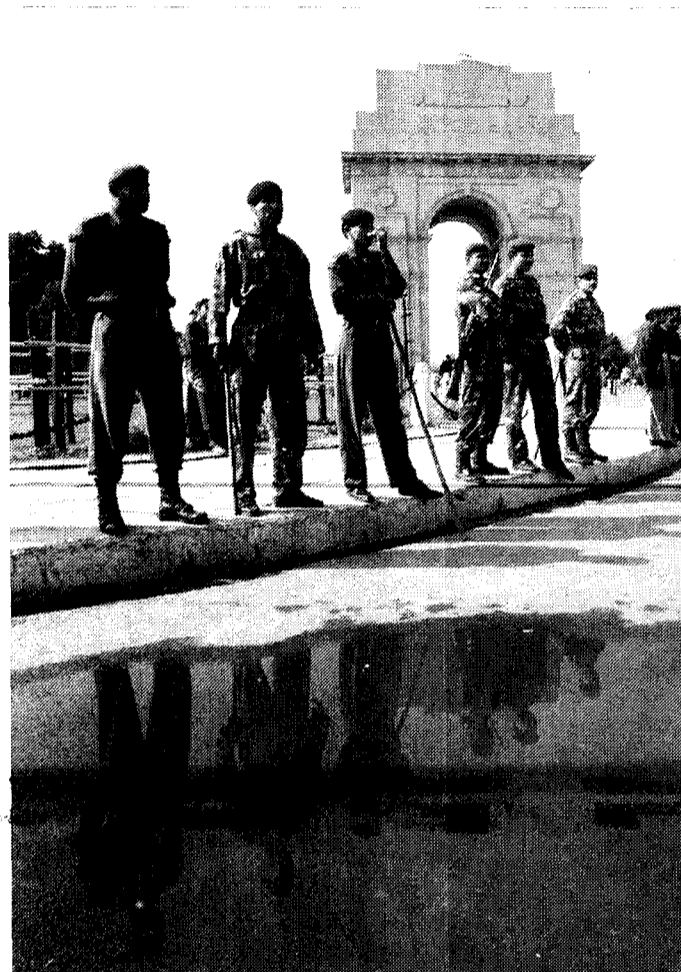
NEW DELHI, Dec. 31. — The militants' response to the Indian government's ceasefire call has been mixed with the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and the newly formed Jaish-e-Mohammed actually intensifying operations while other groups like the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and the Hizbul Mujahideen have been quieter.

There is still uncertainty about why the Lashkar and the Jaish are continuing their operations in the valley and even in Delhi as the Pakistan government appears to be keen on easing the pressure. Firing along the LoC has stopped and there is only small-arms firing in the Siachen Glacier. It is possible that Pakistan is keeping them active as a warning that militancy could increase very easily. Or, that some elements have got out of hand.

The Lashkar is considered more independent-minded and less under the ISI's control, because it is financed by sources in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. At major Lashkar meetings, members of the group have demanded donations, saying that the cost of a bullet to kill an Indian soldier is Rs 30.

The armed group of the Marcus Dawa and based in Muridke, 20 miles from Lahore, the Lashkar is 600-800 strong. Headed by Prof Hafeez Sayeed, the outfit has cadres mainly

Lashkar backlash nags truce effort



Police stand guard near the India Gate in New Delhi on Sunday. Security has been tightened at key places keeping in mind a recent terrorist attack at Red Fort. — AP/PTI

from Punjab, Sind and PoK with a sprinkling of Afghans and Kashmiris.

The levels of indoctrination of this "army of the pure" are very high.

Another major threat in recent times comes from the Jaish-e-Mohammed led by Maulana Masood Azhar, a fiery speaker, released from an Indian jail with two other militant leaders exactly a year ago in exchange for the passengers and crew of the hijacked IC-814.

His speeches, especially those against the USA, have embarrassed the Pakistan government and he has been "interned" at Bhawalpur. Of his hard-core followers, estimated to be 500, about 150 are in the valley. Some of them have come from other militant groups.

The ISI-funded and Peshawar-based Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, led by Faizal Rehman and comprising mostly people from the area and Afghans, and the Hizbul Mujahideen, made up of Kashmiri recruits, have taken part in fewer actions and mostly against government sympathisers.

An interesting sign is the presence of educated militants — it is a sign of heavy commitment and the genuine appeal of the 'jihad' cry. Most of the militants are still from poor families, educated in madrasas and paid a lot of money to fight.

In recent times, the Army has taken casualties mostly because it is now "reactive", but units are continuing to patrol and "dominate" the areas under their purview.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN
THE HINDU

1 JAN 2001

Qureshi remand extended

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. The Delhi High Court today extended the stay till January 2 on the lower court order granting transit remand of Mr. Hashim Qureshi, the 1971 accused hijacker of an Indian Airlines plane, to Jammu and Kashmir police.

A special division Bench, comprising Mr. Justice Cyriac Joseph and Mr. Justice S.N. Kapoor, posted the case for further hearing till Tuesday when the Union Government, the Jammu and Kashmir police, the Delhi Police and Mr. Qureshi's counsel would make their submissions.

At today's hearing, lasting nearly four hours, neither the Government counsel nor Mr. Qureshi's counsel could place the exact legal position before the Court on the issue of handing Mr. Qureshi to Srinagar Police.

The special Bench of the High Court is hearing the petition of Mr. Qureshi, challenging his

detention by the Delhi Police after he arrived here from Copenhagen and remanding him to the custody of Jammu and Kashmir police. The Bench instructed that all relevant laws and Supreme Court judgments referred to by the counsel from both sides should be placed before it by tomorrow evening.

The senior counsel Mr. K.T.S. Tulsi, appearing for Mr. Qureshi, challenged his client's detention and custody to Jammu and Kashmir police on the grounds that he had already been convicted for the offence by a Pakistani court and served nine years of prison term there. The Delhi Police and the Jammu and Kashmir Government counsel said that Mr. Qureshi was only tried for the offence of "wrongful confinement" of passengers in Pakistan and not for hijacking, kidnapping and robbery, mentioned in the FIR.

JUM threatens Qureshi

PTI, UNI report:

The radical militant outfit, Jamiat-ul-Muja-

hideen has termed the surrender of Hashim Qureshi, who had hijacked an Indian Airlines flight to Lahore in 1971, as "an act of treason" and threatened to "take him to task".

"Qureshi's humiliating surrender to Indian authorities amounts to treason and the Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen will take him to task when he returns to Kashmir," a press statement released by the pro-Pakistan outfit to local newspapers said.

"Qureshi's statements that Pakistan was exploiting the sentiments of the people of Kashmir has been taken note of. Pakistan is our sympathiser and militants in Kashmir will fight till last to make Kashmir part of Pakistan," the statement said.

While living in Holland, Qureshi indulged in propaganda against the "Jehad" in Kashmir at the behest of India, it said, adding that was the reason for the Indian authorities providing him visa.

THE HINDU

Differences surface between Hurriyat and Hizb

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ISLAMABAD, DEC. 31. Difference surfaced between the conglomerate of separate outfits in Jammu and Kashmir and the Hizb-ul Mujahideen on the issue of responding positively to India's ceasefire even as pressure mounted on India to issue passports to all seven Hurriyat Conference Executive Council members for travelling to Pakistan for talks.

The Hurriyat leader, Mr. Abdul Gani Lone, said in Srinagar that the proposed visit of Hurriyat leaders to Pakistan was aimed at convincing militant groups and powers that influence them to respond positively to the ceasefire. "Militants should give a positive response to the ceasefire to prevent New Delhi from putting the condition of ending cross-border terrorism for talks," he said.

But the Hizb chief, Syed Salahuddin, told *The Dawn* newspaper that "we believe the Hurriyat cannot suggest the Mujahideen to respect the so-called ceasefire because it does not have any mandate for that".

Mr. Salahuddin not only reject-

ed the ceasefire as pre-requisite for talks but threatened to intensify their strikes. "The ceasefire was worthless unless India made a categorical declaration that 'Kashmir is a disputed territory and it is ready to resolve it through meaningful tripartite talks. Till that happens, the operations of the Mujahideen would continue. Rather we would intensify and stretch them," he said.

He said truce was not a prerequisite for resolution of the issue and cited the examples of Afghanistan, northern Ireland and Vietnam where, according to him, talks and the militancy ran simultaneously. — PTI

Lashkar says it has Chinese anti-aircraft guns

NEW DELHI, DEC. 31. The Pakistani mercenary group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has claimed to have acquired Chinese anti-aircraft guns and 60mm heavy mortars for use in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Our cadre have procured latest Chinese-made guns which can be used against fighter aircraft

and to destroy bridges and buildings," according to the Lashkar mouthpiece *Jihad Times*.

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The paper said Lashkar cadre had also been equipped with 60mm heavy mortars with an accurate range of 2.5 km, adding these sophisticated arms had been pushed into Jammu and Kashmir. The paper also said the Lashkar and other mercenary groups had begun using mobile phones for communication with commanders based in Pakistan.

According to Army sources here, in recent operations security forces had captured two sophisticated mobile phone sets manufactured by the American company Ericsson, linked to mobile phone companies operating in border towns in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

For security reasons, the State Government has banned use of mobile phones in the State and according to Army officials, mercenary groups have begun to use smuggled mobile phones, particularly in Poonch and Rajouri areas from October this year.

THE HINDU

1 JAN 2007