

# Powers devolved to Ladakh council

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Dec. 29. — Taking a step towards meeting regional aspirations. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed today announced devolution of powers to Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) and said Kargil too would have a similar body by June next year.

The LAHDC chief executive councillor will enjoy the status of a Cabinet minister and executive councillors will have the status of deputy ministers in Leh district, the chief minister said at a press conference.

Coming as a New Year bonanza, the empowerment of LAHDC materialised in less than two months of the formation of the new government in the state. The chief minister described it as fulfilment of yet another pledge in the common minimum programme.

He said the empowerment of the council, which came into being in 1995 and witnessed elections twice since then, had been a long standing demand of the people of Leh. "We took the first opportunity after forming the government to fulfil the pledge and assured the people of talks to sort out this issue." A state government team, headed by finance minister Mr Muzaffar Hus-

sain Beig, held a series of meetings with the representatives of Leh, including the chief executive councillor.

The Mufti said the council would have the powers to accord administrative approval to projects worth up to Rs 5 crore without obtaining techno-economic feasibility from the government. Under Section 42(2) of the LAHDC Act 1997, executive powers shall be delegated to the council for allotment, occupation and efficient use and management of land. Various sub-sections of the Act will be amended to make the council more effective.

These include vesting of powers of general superintendence and control over the employees of the council in the executive councillors. But, the superintending engineer and district development commissioner will not come within the purview

of the amendments.

By amending Section 4(2) that deals with nomination of four members, two members will be nominated by the government from religious minorities and women and two by the chief executive councillor. The Mufti said the chief executive councillor would draw salary and enjoy perks equivalent to that of a Cabinet minister. Executive councillors will draw salary equivalent to that of an MLA and councillors will draw a consolidated salary of Rs 6,000.

**The empowerment of  
Ladakh Autonomous Council  
has come in less than  
two months of  
the formation of  
the new government  
in the state**

3 0 DEC 2002

THE STATESMAN

## MUFTI PROMISES SIMILAR BODY FOR KARGIL BY JUNE

# J&K Govt. gives more powers to Ladakh Hill Development Council

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, DEC. 29.** The coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir today announced devolution of powers to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) of Leh district and said that Kargil would also get a similar council by June.

The decisions to grant powers and to make changes in the LAHDC Act, 1997 were taken at a Cabinet meeting here on Saturday. They were announced by the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, at a press conference, where the Deputy Chief Minister, Mangat Ram Sharma, the LAHDC Chairman, Thupstan Chhewang, the Panther's Party chief, Bhim Singh, the People's Democratic Forum (PDF) leader, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, and two Ministers from Leh and Kargil were present.

The announcement, a New Year gift to the people of Ladakh region, comes in less than two months of the formation of the PDP-led Government in the State.

The Mufti said that yet another pledge in the common minimum programme had been fulfilled. He said that the LAHDC Chief Executive Councillor would enjoy the status and the perks and salary of a Cabinet Minister and the Executive Councillors of Deputy Ministers within the Leh district for protocol purposes. The Executive Councillors would be given salary equivalent to that of an MLA, while the Councillors would get a salary of Rs. 6,000 per month. The changes in the Act followed discussions between the LAHDC members and the Finance Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Beig.

The people of Leh have been demanding the empowerment of the Council, which came into being in 1995, for long. The Chief Minister termed it "a major step in satiating the regional aspirations within the State".

The LAHDC would have the power to accord administrative approval without obtaining techno-economic feasibility from the Government for works up to Rs. 5 crore. Under Section 42 (2) of the LAHDC Act,

1997, executive powers would be delegated to the Council for allotment, occupation and efficient use and management of land. Sub-sections of the Act would be amended to make the functioning of the Council more effective. Section 33 would be amended to vest the powers of general superintendence and control over the employees of the Council in the Executive Councillors. However, the Superintending Engineer and the District Development Commissioner would be exceptions to such amendment.

Thanking Mr. Sayeed on behalf of the people of Leh, Mr. Chhewang promised that Ladakh would soon become a model for the whole State. "It is a historical decision, which will go a long way in giving new directions to the State in development and prosperity, and similar measures for other regions would help solve the Kashmir problem." He said that almost all demands put forth by the LAHDC had been met and that "it is a good beginning".

**Parties welcome move: Page 11**

3 0 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

# Recent killings a lesson for Mufti

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

Dec. 29. — The recent killings in J&K may not be an indicator to any tactical or strategic change in the policies of Pakistan-backed militancy, except gradual increase in brutal acts, but it certainly has made the chief minister realise that winning over the Kashmir components is a hard nut to crack.

Even after the polls, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, a former Union home minister, tried to pursue his "goli se nahi boli se" slogan, urging militants to shun violence and come forward for talks. He extended the invitation to the separatists too.

But, neither the militant groups nor the separatists have so far taken any interest to peace talks. So far there has been no response even after Deputy Prime Minister recently iterated the Centre's assurance on talks.

Dismissing speculative reports that the chief minister will push the Centre to have a direct dialogue with Hurriyat leaders, officials said the Mufti would never hold a formal dialogue with the conglomerate unless it proved its "representative character" and stopped seeking guidance from Paki-



Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Mehbooba Mufti talk to a militancy victim in Jammu on Sunday. The woman lost her husband, brother-in-law and father-in-law in a militant attack in Badgam district last week. — PTI

stan. The chief minister, officials said, is not against informal talks with the Hurriyat on the lines of Track II diplomacy.

Government strategists feel the CM in his policy of

"healing touch" had not shown any softness towards militancy. Therefore to say that he is pursuing a "soft" policy is wrong. The free and fair polls and people-oriented policies of the PDP-led

government has undoubtedly side-lined the militants. Strategists point out a gradual rise in brutalities by the militants. Last night, three male members of a family were gunned down by mili-

tants at a village in Badgam. The militants used to visit the family quite often for food. Last night, they were refused. As a consequence the militants killed the male members of the family.

# Mufti welcomes offer of talks

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, DEC. 28.** Welcoming the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani's offer of talks, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said the State Government would be a party to the talks. Other elected representatives and other sections too would be involved.

Speaking to *The Hindu* here, the Mufti, in his first reaction to Mr. Advani's announcement, said: "The modalities for such talks will be worked out soon as we have to engage all the people, including those who are elected and also those who do not believe in the State's accession to the Union." But it would take some time to concretise the process.

On the role of the State Government, he said: "Our role is well-defined. The State Government will be a party to the talks

as we represent the people. It has its own *locus standi*." His Government would also work as a facilitator — to get together those interested in the talks.

The Mufti said the announcement was in tune with the Jammu and Kashmir coalition Government's common minimum programme, which, in fact, started with a clause requesting the Centre to initiate a dialogue process. He praised the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's initiatives on Kashmir and said he had kept his promise made from the ramparts of the Red Fort. "The (Jammu and Kashmir) elections were free and fair and the dialogue process is being initiated."

Mr. Vajpayee took some good initiatives in the past but there was no reciprocity and "now we are here to work in that direction to make the atmosphere conducive for that".



On the agenda for talks, the Mufti said "it will be discussed once the process is formally set in motion".

On involving the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, which has set the condition of permission for itself to visit Pakistan, the Chief Minister said "if any polit-

ical leadership is given the opportunity to talk, I do not think they should spurn it."

The Government was open to a dialogue and was ready to talk to anyone who came forward to do so.

Denying that there was escalation in violence in the State compared to the same period last year, he said there was violence against soft targets such as children and women but, at the same time, people increasingly resented terrorists.

He, however, said that vested interests were playing a role in continuing violence. "And they want to derail the peace process we have initiated," he said referring to the militants and separatists.

"The bullet is no answer and democracy is a battle of ideas. Their approach is to go ahead with this but ours is different," the Mufti said.

**Mirwaiz's views: Page 9**



# Panel to monitor J&K govt working

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 28. — A nine-member coordination committee to monitor the functioning of the PDP-Congress coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir was constituted today. Congress leader Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad is the committee chairman.

AICC general secretary Mr Oscar Fernandes today announced the formation of the coordination committee. Earlier in the day, J&K PCC chief Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad told reporters at Baribrahmana near Jammu that a coordination committee would be formed in the next 48 hours to screen the functioning of the J&K government.

In a press release, Mr Fernandes said Mrs Sonia Gandhi has constituted the

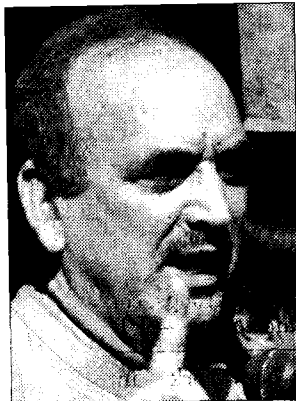
coordination committee comprising all state parties.

J&K deputy chief minister Mr Mangat Ram Sharma and Rajya Sabha MP Mr Saifuddin Soz are also in the committee. Ms Mehbooba Mufti and Rajya Sabha MP Mr Trilok Singh represent the PDP in the committee.

The committee also includes members such as Mr Bhim Singh of the Panthers Party and Mohd. Yousuf Tarigami, leader of the People's Democratic Party.

The committee comprises members from all the three regions. Besides giving representation to Jammu and Valley areas in the committee, it has Rigzin Zora, representing the Leh-UT Front and Haji Nisar Ali, an Independent from Kargil.

The committee was a major bone of contention



Ghulam Nabi Azad

as there were several aspirants. The decision-makers have tried to accommodate people in such a manner that all political parties and regions are covered.

In Jammu, Mr Azad said the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) would include new issues besides

the existing ones as the coalition allies felt more relevant issues needed to be incorporated. Currently, the CMP has 30 points on which the partners have broad agreement. He denied reports that a tiff between the Congress and the PDP was the reason behind the delay in Cabinet expansion in the state.

Four militants killed in J-K encounters

**Militants killed:** Foreign militants, including two of Lashker-e-Taiyaba were today killed in separate encounters with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir, officials said. Two militants were killed in a gunbattle with the Army and policemen at Beerwah in Badgam district. At Haiderbeig in Baramulla district, two Lashkar militants were killed.

29 DEC 2002

# J&K talks a distant dream

ST  
29/12

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 28. — With the Centre and the Hurriyat Conference sticking to their stands on the nature of dialogue to resolve the Kashmir issue, formal talks between the two parties appears to be a distant dream.

The Deputy Prime Minister said in Jammu on Friday that the Centre would hold a dialogue with "elected representatives and others" to resolve the J&K problem. The statement is a reiteration of what the Prime Minister said from the ramparts of the Red Fort on 15 August.

There are no additions or deletions in the road map chalked by the Centre. The government's stand is crystal clear. It has kept its promise by holding free and fair elections in the state. It has said it will interact with democratically elected representatives. It is not averse to talk to others either.

But it is also firm that unless the Hurriyat mends its ways and stops seeking guidance, in various forms, from Pakistan,

the Centre will not hold a formal dialogue with it. The Hurriyat, on its part, displayed its intransigence by asserting today that it is ready for a dialogue with New Delhi if Pakistan too was involved.

Mr LK Advani's remarks at a CRPF function today ruled out that possibility. He warned the international community on the shifting of the epicentre of the Taliban from Afghanistan to Pakistan. He said Intelligence agencies had briefed him that terror camps have started functioning again across the border and infiltration has increased.

The Centre has been holding informal interactions with individual Hurriyat leaders when they visit Delhi. But that is no indication that the Centre is taking a softer line. The "others" (besides the elected representatives) the Prime Minister or Deputy Prime Minister are referring to are those who are ready to work on a middle path and do not take an extreme stand.

■ See HURRIYAT: page 10

## HURRIYAT:

(Continued from page 1)

The government extended a golden opportunity to the Hurriyat to prove its representative character in the September-October Assembly elections. But the Hurriyat has always been of the view that participating in elections is indicative of their acceptance of the Indian Constitution.

But, with the PDP, a regional party, assuming power, a shaky Hurriyat is looking for political space. It not only feels sidelined but is worried that a popular government can endanger its existence. Under such circumstances, the Hurriyat is left with no other option but to continue seeking Pakistan's involvement.

### Advani welcomes screening committee

Mr Advani today welcomed the setting up of a committee to screen the release of jailed militants, PTI adds. "Before the polls, several parties had promised of giving general amnesty to those arrested for militant activities. But, the Centre made it clear that such a process should be vetted by a review committee," he told journalists at the CRPF Raising Day programme.

The notification of the committee was issued by the state government on Thursday. The panel is headed by the chief secretary with the DGP and ADG (CID) as its member. The Centre's nominee on the panel is the head of the Intelligence Bureau in the state.

29 DEC 2002

## ADVANI REVIEWS SECURITY SITUATION

# 'Talks soon with elected representatives, others in J&K'

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, DEC. 27.** The two-month old People's Democratic Party-led coalition received a shot in the arm when the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, today announced that the Centre would soon hold a dialogue with the "elected representatives and others" to resolve the crisis in Jammu and Kashmir.

Though the restoration of peace would depend on Pakistan's attitude towards militancy, interaction between the Centre and the State Government was necessary to deal with the security situation, Mr. Advani told presspersons at the end of his one-day visit to Jammu.

After reviewing the security situation at the Unified Headquarters here, along with the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, Mr. Advani said that from the third week of November militancy had escalated and that the militants "have resorted to more demonstrative and focussed actions."

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who was present at the press conference, was visibly happy when Mr. Advani said the Centre would soon start a dialogue with the "elected representatives and others." Talks would also be held simultaneously with those who did not participate in the Assembly elections or had not been elected. "Those who have not participated in the elections, if they want to discuss with us the issues concerning the State... they are welcome" he said.

At the review meeting, all the issues had been discussed during the presentation by Mr. Sayeed, the Army, the para-military forces, and intelligence agencies. Mr. Advani acknowledged Mr. Sayeed's view that the people of Kashmir had voted for peace in the Assembly elections, giving "a new opportunity to restore peace."

"But as far as the restoration of peace is concerned it does not entirely depend on the Centre or the State Governments but also on the intentions and attitude of Pakistan." Without directly referring to the differences between the Centre and the State Government on the release of militants, Mr. Advani called for a close coordination among various agencies and said that "in all matters impinging on security, there has been a constant interaction between the State and the Central Governments and the secu-



The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, at a press conference in Jammu on Friday. The Defence Minister, George Fernandes (left), and the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, look on. — AFP

city forces stationed here." (Sources said that during the meeting, Mr. Advani expressed satisfaction over the State Government's decision to set up a screening committee for the release of prisoners and said he had gone through the notification. But he stressed on the need to take the Army into confidence at various levels).

Accusing Pakistan of continuing to support militants, Mr. Advani said that infiltration had increased from across the Line of Control. The number of foreign militants coming over to this side had also increased. "They now constitute three-fourths of the number of militants," he said adding that the training camps across the border which had been closed down due to international pressure had been revived.

On resuming a dialogue with Pakistan, Mr. Advani said the situation needed to be dealt with on its own. "Dialogue is of no use as we made earnest and sincere attempts two years ago at the level of the Prime Minister and nothing came out of them."

However, "it is our country's resolve to see that as we extracted peace in previous wars, we are able to extricate peace from

this proxy war also." The elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly had been appreciated the world over as the people reposed faith in the Indian democratic system in spite of "instigation" from across the border not to participate in the elections.

The review meeting was attended by the Deputy Chief Minister, Mangat Ram Sharma, Commanders of the 15 and 16 Corps of Army, Lt. Gen. V. G. Patankar and Lt. Gen. T. P. S. Brar, the State Chief Secretary, Sudhir Beloeria, the Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, Ashok Bhandari, the Director-General of Police, A. K. Suri, and heads of the para-military forces and intelligence agencies. Earlier, Mr. Advani had a one-to-one meeting with Mr. Sayeed at his residence and was later joined by the Governor, G. C. Saxena, and Mr. Fernandes.

**Luv Puri reports:**

Earlier in the day, Mr. Advani dedicated to the nation the new terminal building complex at the Civil Enclave, Jammu Airport. Mr. Sayeed, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Shah Nawaz Hussain, the Minister of State for Defence, Shantanu Lal Gupta, and Mr. Sharma were present.

HD-1  
28/12

# Militants gun down three children in J&K

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, DEC. 22.** In yet another gruesome act, militants killed three children at a village in Poonch district and in an encounter that followed, two of the assailants were gunned down.

Heavily armed militants barged into the house of Munshi Khan in Samoot village of Surankot in Poonch district last night and opened fire, killing his sons, four-year-old Irfan Husian, Asim Mohammed, aged six, and 12-year-old Nazarat.

Mr. Khan and another woman were injured in the firing. The militants also entered the house of another resident, Haji Abdullah, in the locality, but no loss of life was reported.

Police sources said the same group had first attacked the Surankot police station with grenades and rockets last night and after police engaged them in a gun battle for hours, they escaped under the cover of darkness and moved towards Samoot village, where they targeted the family of Munshi Khan.

The Jammu IGP, P.L. Gupta, said the security forces had launched a search operation

and in a fierce battle between the security forces and the militants at Malhan area, five of them were killed. Police said preliminary investigation revealed that the slain men belonged to the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

This is the third incident of innocent civilians being targeted by militants during the last three days. On Thursday, three girls were killed in Rajouri, and on Friday night, four of a family

were killed in a village near Sopore.

PTI reports: A powerful blast brought down a microwave tower and damaged a telephone exchange building in Baramulla district in north Kashmir late last night. Militants had planted an IED under the microwave tower at Wagoora village and the explosion caused extensive damage to the tower and the building.

## Another Hurriyat leader released

By Our Special Correspondent

**JAMMU, DEC. 22.** After a break, due to criticism over the release of political detenus, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has resumed the process and released the senior leader of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and general secretary of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Bashir Ahmed Bhat, today. The Hurriyat spokesman, Abdur Rashid Sheikh, also under detention is likely to be released in a couple of days.

Confirming the release, a Hurriyat spokesman said Mr. Bhat was arrested by the authorities on January 13 this year under the Public Safety Act (PSA) and released from the Joint Interrogation Centre (JIC) in Srinagar. He had spent most of his detention period in the Kot-Balwal jail in Jammu from where he, along with Mr. Sheikh, was released on November 13, following court orders, after expiry of their term under the PSA. But, both were arrested again and lodged in the Talab Tilloo police station here. Mr. Bhat's release follows the freeing of the JKLF chairman, Yaseen Malik, and others.

## Bulk of troop withdrawal over

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 22.** Most of the million Indian and Pakistani troops have gone back to their peace stations exactly a year after they were mobilised in an eyeball-to-eyeball posture for 10 months, said senior Army officers here.

But several thousand men have stayed back to painstakingly locate and neutralise the tens of thousands of mines planted by both sides to halt the advance of the other side's armour in the event of a war. These left-behind troops, say officers, are likely to stay in their positions till early summer.

At least 70 to 80 per cent of the soldiers have already been withdrawn from the international border, confirm officers. Heavier equipment, including tanks and artillery guns, were the first to be hauled back to peace-time locations.

The three Indian strike corps as well as formations culled from the eastern theatre began moving back soon after "re-deployment" was announced. Pakistan had started the process of

sending its soldiers on annual leave much earlier. Two of the strike corps — Army Reserve North and Army Reserve South — which had moved from their bases in Mangla/Kharian and Multan areas, ostensibly for exercises soon after September 11, began returning in "penny packets" even before New Delhi announced the withdrawal. The declaration hastened the process with the Rawalpindi-based strike corps also joining in the withdrawal. The Indian infantry has also withdrawn by "reverse leapfrogging".

However, at least one company, which was guarding positions behind minefields, is now busy clearing mines. The odds are stacked against the soldiers as they go about digging mines. Techniques are primitive, many mines may have moved after remaining underground for several months and markers have vanished because of vegetation. However, the soldiers, usually engineers attached to battalions, are generally the ones who laid them. They have maintained detailed maps with coordinates of the mines.

23 DEC 2002

# PDP MLA shot dead

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, DEC. 20.** The one-and-a-half-month-old coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir suffered a setback today when militants shot dead the People's Democratic Party Member of the Legislative Assembly, Abdul Aziz Mir, in Pam-pore town of south Kashmir.

Police sources said that unknown militants fired upon the 50-year-old Mir around 2.45 p.m. when he was coming out of a mosque in his native village of Konibal. "The militants used a silencer-fitted pistol and shot him from behind and the bullet pierced his heart," said a senior police officer. The Mir's two personal security officers opened retaliatory fire but the militants escaped. The Mir was rushed to the Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital in Srinagar, where the doctors declared him brought dead. He leaves four daughters and three sons besides the wife. The Save Kashmir Movement, a lesser-known militant outfit, has claimed responsibility for the killing. Its spokesman, Sheikh Tajamul, rang up a local news agency, CNS, in Srinagar and said: "All those who safeguard Indian interests in Kashmir shall have to meet the same fate."

Elected to the Assembly for the first time, the Mir was a prominent social worker in the area and had been associated with the National Conference for a long time. However, when the party denied him the ticket in the last Assembly elections, he joined the PDP and successfully contested.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who left for New Delhi today expressed shock and said it was part of militant attempts to derail the peace process. "It has become clear how challenging the situation is turning in the State," he told *The Hindu*, reiterating his Government's resolve to restore peace and normality in the



The body of the PDP MLA, Abdul Aziz Mir, who was shot dead by militants on Friday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

State. The CPI(M) MLA and leader of the People's Democratic Forum, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, has also condemned the killing of the Mir.

## Three girls killed

By Luv Puri

**JAMMU, DEC. 20.** In a terrorist act, an unidentified group of militants shot dead three girl students in Rajouri district of Jammu region late on Thursday night. Police denied an agency report that the killings were linked to the alleged campaign by militants to enforce the veil (burqa) for Muslim women.

The Senior Superintendent of Police, Prithvi Raj Minhas, told *The Hindu* that militants swooped on the house of Mohammad Sadiq in Hasyote village of Thannamandi area and shot dead his daughter, Noreen Kousar. Then they barged into the house of Khalil Ahmad in the same village and kidnapped her daughter Tahir Parveen (18), a 12th Class student, and later beheaded her. Continuing their killing spree, they entered the house of Mohammad Rafiq and shot dead his daughter, Shehnaz Akhtar.

Police said the killings were apparently due to the suspicion among the militants that the three girls were police informants.

On Monday, police had seized some posters signed in Urdu by a little known group — Lashkar Jabbar — pasted on the walls of two senior secondary schools in Rajouri town and neighbouring villages threatening girls to wear "burqa" or face the consequences.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said the entire civilised society would condemn such inhuman acts.

MUFTI BOWS TO CONGRESS, CENTRE

# Ultras to be freed after screening

517 612 / J&K  
Kavita Suri in Jammu

Dec. 5. — Under pressure from coalition partner Congress and the Centre, the PDP-led Jammu and Kashmir government has agreed to release militants only after a screening committee examines the cases first. The five-member committee — including a Central nominee — will reportedly be headed by Mr SD Singh, finance commissioner, home, J&K. The Central nominee is likely to be a senior Intelligence Bureau official.

The other three screening committee members are likely to be J&K DGP Mr AK Suri, additional DG, state CID, Mr Kuldeep Khoda and ADG (prisons) Mr SS Ali, sources said. Formal orders for the constitution of the panel are expected after the Id holidays.

The decision to set up the committee was taken after the PDP and the Congress were criticised by the BJP and the Centre had a spat with the Congress.

Mr LK Advani had categorically said the Centre was not taken into confidence on the release of militants and the state hadn't even considered the suggestion to set up a screening committee. The Congress had publicly taken issue with the home ministry but it had privately told the PDP that "caution" must be exercised.

Though the screening committee would be constituted, it will not be an impediment in the release of a number of detainees whose prison terms under the Public Safety Act (PSA) are to expire shortly, officials said. But no "major" or high-profile releases are likely till polling day in Gujarat (12 December) where the BJP has exploited the issue in its campaign.

A senior official said the release of militants would begin after the polls and a list of detainees to be released, to be cleared by the committee, has been prepared.

The first batches of militants released became a controversial issue with an upsurge in militancy in the state, especially the attack on the Raghunath temple.

Mufti Mohammed Sayeed has said his government would not renege on the promise of releasing political prisoners despite the decision to set up a screening committee.

State Congress chief Ghulam Nabi Azad had said the state should free militants only after clearance by a screening committee so that the BJP cannot level "soft on terror" allegations against his party.

## Ex-minister's brother shot dead

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Dec. 5. — Ghulam Mohiuddin Lone, brother of slain J&K law minister Mush-taq Ahmed Lone, was today shot dead by militants in Kupwara district, even as the house of the lone woman minister in the NC government, Ms Sakina Itoo came under terrorist attack for the sixth time since the election process had started in the state in early September.

Unidentified militants barged into Ghulam Lone's house in Lolab at 4.30 p.m., and sprayed bullets, killing him on the spot, police said. A contractor by profession, Mohiuddin was a top militant in the district in the early 1990s and had surrendered to the authorities. No militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the killing.

Terrorists lobbed a grenade on Ms Itoo house on Wednesday evening — the second attack in four days. She was not inside then. A CRPF jawan was injured.

Nine persons, including a CRPF jawan, were injured when militants hurled a grenade at a busy market in Pulwama this afternoon.

# Mufti's policy boomerangs

Corrective action is necessary and imperative

Amidst the din of accusations and attribution of motives between the Mufti government in J&K and the Central government on the one hand and the Mufti and his partner the Congress party in the coalition government in Srinagar on the other, over the reckless release of dreaded terrorists from custody, the casualty is the public interest. The Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, LK Advani is quite right when he takes the position that any informal chats that may have been taken with Central government officials stationed in the state capital do not and cannot amount to consulting the Union government. Government to government consultations have a set format and cannot be substituted for any informal discussions. Therefore what the individual officials may or may not have told Mufti's government is irrelevant and does not help. The Mufti is after nothing less than to usurp the ground occupied by the Hurriyat, he is free to try but then he cannot blame anyone else, including Central intelligence officers if things do not turn out as he had planned. He certainly cannot plead that his government had consulted the Union Home Minister before proceeding to create an impression of a soft approach, as an instrument of policy and which has boomeranged so badly.

The Congress party are on the horns of a dilemma but it is entirely of their own making. Their spokesman relies on the common programme decided upon when they agreed to make Mufti the chief minister. If the programme provides for the indiscriminate release of known terrorists then they must lie on the bed that they have made for themselves and cannot take refuge in spurious consultations with unknown officers who happen to be stationed in Srinagar. All else is posturing and an attempt to blame the Central government in a desperate bid to escape the consequences of their ill-considered alliance. They should have read the Mufti better. And they should have remembered all the fuss he had made when his elder daughter Rubaina was kidnapped by militants and how to placate him, the country had released dreaded terrorists. This is not to withhold sympathy from a father's worries over the safety of his daughter, but it is certainly to suggest that the Mufti can be pressurized and this is a dangerous quality in someone who presumes to lead the government of a troubled state.

The Mufti is nothing if not ambitious. But ambition should be made of sterner stuff; obduracy and greed are no substitute for statesmanship. At the risk of repetition, the Congress party must exert themselves from within the coalition to bring the Mufti back to an upright position from his ill-disguised posture of placating militants in the hope, the vain hope, that they will hail him as a saviour and desert the Hurriyat in droves. His experience with Yasin Malik should have taught him to be more realistic; however it is doubtful if it has had any effect except to convince him that he was right all along — against the evidence.

Having left the Congress party to stew in its own juice, the Union government must not look the other way while the Mufti and Sonia Gandhi place party interests above the country's security needs. The Constitution gives the Union government a role vis-à-vis the state government when the security of the country is threatened. They must play that role.

## RELEASE OF PRISONERS

# Total understanding with Centre: Mufti

By Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU, NOV. 27.** Despite repeated provocation from the BJP members in the Assembly, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today avoided a confrontation with the Central Government on the issue of prisoners' release and said "we have complete understanding on how to deal with the situation".

He announced that a House Committee would be formed to negotiate with the Centre on resolving the crisis in the State.

Winding up the debate on the Governor's address, Mr. Sayeed in his 75-minute speech detailed his Government's road-map and without referring to the release of prisoners said: "The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister realise the ground situation and we have complete understanding on how to deal with the situation".

(Later when contacted by *The Hindu*, he refused to make a direct comment on the prisoners' issue.)

The Mufti said that in the past the Centre had sent its Home Secretary to talk to militants and the Prime Minister had announced a unilateral ceasefire and appointed K.C. Pant as emissary to talk to the separatists. These were good gestures but now when "we are taking some steps there is criticism".

Citing examples, he said the All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders, Syed Ali Geelani, the late Abdul Gani Lone and Sheikh Aziz were released in the past and when Yasin Malik was arrested under POTA the court granted him bail.

The Mufti made it clear that the Assembly had a representative character and it could not be ignored. The Centre should first talk to the elected representatives of the people. "The House should be taken into confidence first."

Reacting to the queries of National Conference members

why the issue of autonomy did not find a mention in the Governor's address, he asserted that the Centre should first initiate a result-oriented dialogue and "we should not take the bull by the horns".

However, he suggested that a House Committee be formed to talk to the Centre on all the issues pertaining to political problems in the State.

"We will persuade the GOI (Government of India) to initiate talks and the appeal will go from here (Assembly)".

"When Sheikh Abdullah entered into an accord with Indira Gandhi, did he talk about autonomy or the issues you have raised" he asked the NC member.

The Mufti said the Centre should not indulge in double standards — talk to the NSCN but not to the militants here. "We are here to make the atmosphere conducive," he declared.

Reiterating his Government's Common Minimum Programme, the Chief Minister said: "We cannot negate the verdict of the people and resto-

ration of peace with dignity is our pledge... It is an act of faith. We are aware of our responsibilities and are concerned about the security situation."

At the same time, the killing of people by militants was a matter of concern. Militants wanted to derail the peace process but "we will not allow that and I have given a specific direction to the security forces to deal with the militants but at the same time human rights violations against innocents will not be tolerated. I once again ask those holding the gun to drop it as violence is not going to solve any problem.

The Mufti said he was aware of these challenges and "we can overcome them only when we go together".

He lauded the Congress, the Panther's Party, the CPI(M) and the Independents for their contribution to the formulation of the CMP. His Government was committed to the policy of giving a healing touch as without this "we cannot win the hearts and minds of the people".

**Will the blame game  
end?: Page 11**



**The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, during the discussion on the Governor's address in the Assembly on Wednesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad**

28 NOV 2002



SENIOR IB OFFICERS WERE CONSULTED: CONGRESS

# 'J&K Govt. was cautioned against release of militants'

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 26.** The Congress and the BJP continued to swipe at each other on the issue of release of detenus in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Congress once again asserted today that the State Government had consulted the Central intelligence agencies before releasing the detainees. But the BJP maintained that it had not done so.

Addressing a BJP parliamentary meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, said the Jammu and Kashmir Government had not sought any advice from the Centre on its decision to release the militants.

"There was no consultation with the Central Government and we had no knowledge about the release of the militants. There is no truth in it that any kind of clearance was taken from the Centre," Mr. Advani said.

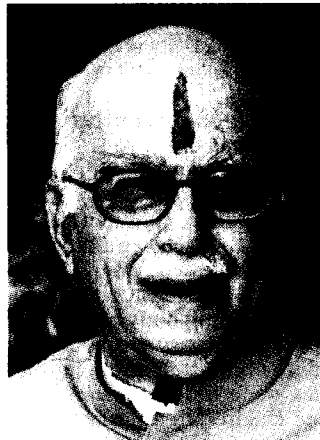
Refuting the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi's claim that J&K Government had obtained clearance from the Central intelligence agencies before freeing the jailed militants in the State, Mr. Advani termed it as "baseless" and maintained that the Centre was not consulted.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, the party spokesman, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said that Mr. Advani told the members that an official letter by the Union Home Secretary to the J&K Government had "cautioned" against the release of dreaded militants. He said the Home Secretary's letter about a week ago had advised the State Government "not to hurry" with such a crucial decision.

Mr. Malhotra said the Deputy Prime Minister had even publicly offered a suggestion of setting up a screening committee to look into the cases before deciding upon the release of the jailed militants but the State Government went ahead with it. He said Mr. Advani had told the members that any kind of communication between the Government and the Intelligence agency should not be made public.

"It seems that the Congress-People's Democratic Party alliance has made some election promises and appears to be in a hurry to fulfil them. It would only lead to heightened tension. It is time the State Government took steps to curb terrorism," he said.

Mr. Malhotra said that some of the members demanded tougher action against Pakistan to crush cross-border terrorism.



He also objected to the Congress president's reported comments in Jammu on Monday wherein she had rebuffed those who suggested that the Congress was going soft on tackling terrorism. "Her remarks show a sign of immaturity," he added.

The Congress spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, today said the J&K Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, had met the Special Director, Intelligence Bureau, K. M. Singh, on November 7 regarding the release of the militants.

Conscious of the BJP's attempts to cash in on the issue in the coming Gujarat elections, the Congress revealed details of the interaction with the Central agencies. "Senior IB officers, in-

cluding members of the Unified Command, were consulted," Mr. Reddy told newsmen.

The restraint shown by both the sides during Monday's debate on the Raghunath temple killings appeared to have dissipated today as both sides went for the jugular. The Congress labelled the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, L.K. Advani, "an incorrigible communal propagandist" who was more interested in scoring points in the context of the Gujarat polls.

Defending the State Government's decision, Mr. Reddy said that none of the released persons was involved in any overt terrorist activity. Yasin Malik had, in fact, been released six times, and the BJP Government had in the past facilitated the release of Abdul Gani Bhat and others.

PTI reports:

The Congress was considering moving a privilege motion against Mr. Advani in the Lok Sabha for "misleading the House on release of militants" as the verbal war between the main opposition and the ruling party today reached a new high.

"We are examining the possibility of moving a privilege motion against Mr. Advani for attempting to mislead the House," Mr. Reddy said.

# Advani misled Parliament: Azad

By Luv Puri

**JAMMU, NOV. 26.** The J&K Pradesh Congress chief, Ghulam Nabi Azad, today accused the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, of 'misleading' Parliament when he said that the Central Government had written to the Jammu and Kashmir Government against "acting in haste" while releasing the militants.

In an impromptu debate in Parliament on Monday, Mr. Advani, also the Union Home Minister, said the State Government had not consulted the Centre before releasing the militants and called it a State Government decision. Also, the Centre had written to the State Government cautioning it against 'acting in haste' and that it would be better if the Centre was consulted on such issues.

Talking to *The Hindu* here today, Mr. Azad said Mr. Advani had "totally misled" Parliament and also the entire country by claiming that his department had written to the State Government. "I would like to ask the Deputy Prime Minister when he sent the letter and to whom," he asked.



Asking the Centre not to make the fight against terror a mere issue of political blame game, Mr. Azad said the fight against terror could succeed only if the State as well as the Centre coordinated efforts and avoided uttering words which went against national interests.

He said the statements of BJP functionaries criticising the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, on the terrorist attack in Jammu was most unfortunate.

"I am sorry that such a hu-

man tragedy is being seen with a political motive and hope these things will be avoided in the future."

The Congress wanted political unity as far as the fight against terror was concerned and it believed that every political setup should get together on thwarting such terrorists attacks.

Blaming Pakistan for trying to create disaffection among communities, Mr. Azad praised the people of Jammu for maintaining communal harmony.

They had suffered a lot in the last one decade and yet were never provoked by such heinous crimes.

The Congress leader said the police force should not be discouraged.

"We should not try to blame the police for what has happened. They are working in a hostile environment and we have to understand that we are helpless vis-à-vis 'fidayeen' (suicide) attacks as every country in the world is. But the Congress-PDP State Government had taken the attack seriously and initiated adequate preventive steps."

See also Page 12

## Probe into charges against 3 judges

By Our Legal Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 26.** The Chief Justice of India, G.B. Pattanaik, has appointed a three-member committee of senior judges to probe the alleged involvement of three judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in the Punjab Service Commission scam. The committee, comprising the Chief Justice of the Andhra Pradesh High Court, A.R. Lakshmanan, the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Subhashan Reddy, and Justice Jha of the Allahabad High Court, has been asked to expedite the inquiry. Mr. Justice Pattanaik's response to appoint a committee is a sequel to the anguish expressed by him soon after he took over as the CJI over corruption in certain quarters of the judiciary. The committee has been asked to study the report submitted by the former Chief Justice of the High Court, Saharya, submitted to the then Chief Justice, B.N. Kirpal, to find out the veracity or otherwise of the allegations against the three judges — Justice Amarbir Singh, Justice M.L. Singhal and Justice Mehtab Singh Gill.

Details on Page 11

27 NOV 2002

# Leaders condemn

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 25.** There has been widespread condemnation of the terrorist attack on the Raghunath Mandir and the Shiv Mandir in Jammu. But questions have also been raised about a possible lapse in security leading to the attack.

The former Prime Minister, H. D. Deve Gowda, while condemning the attacks said in a statement "How militants could gain entry into the temple without detection at any stage should be looked into. Such heinous militant attacks are to be expected till the over-all situation improves. The State and Central governments should take more effective and vigilant measures to prevent such sneaking militant attacks."

The Samajwadi Janata Party (Rashtriya) said in its statement that the attack on the temples "demonstrates that the State police and intelligence are not adequately equipped" and that

it expected the new State Government to take strong action "against those terrorists coming from the border".

The CPI (M) politburo, echoing the Deputy Prime Minister's statement in Parliament said that the attacks "are clearly meant to heighten communal tensions and provoke reactions and disrupt peace." The CPI said that the attack showed the desperation of the militants, after the successful elections. While it supported efforts for a dialogue it held that "the healing process should not mean lowering of vigilance or cessation of activity by the security forces against the extremists active at the behest of the neighbouring country."

The Rajya Sabha MP, Karan Singh, expressed shock that "despite the earlier attack the security arrangements at the temple were not strengthened to prevent another one." He called it "a failure of the administration and law and order

# attack on temples

machinery."

**Blackwill meets Advani**  
The U.S. ambassador, Robert Blackwill, met the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani to express his indignation at the attack. Following the meeting Mr. Blackwill said that he had told Mr. Advani "it was hard to think of human beings who would plan and think of attacks like this, knowing that the victims would be innocent women and children."

The All-India Muslim Majlis-e-Mushawarat, said it was a "deliberate strategy to incite communal violence and disrupt the healing process in the State.

The National Minorities Commission specially convened a meeting, chaired by Justice Mohammed Shamim, to condemn the attack. It appealed to "all to maintain peace at this critical stage".

The Kashmir Committee in a statement condemning the attacks said that all three rounds of its talks with separatist lead-

ers in Kashmir had ended with joint statements which stressed the commitment to finding a solution through peaceful means and denouncing violence. Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios, Chairman of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India expressed anguish at attacks "at sacred places where people come out to pray".

## Crush terrorism, says Kanchi seer

By Our Staff Reporter

**KUMBAKONAM NOV. 25.** The Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam, Jayendra Saraswathi Swami, today condemned the terrorist attack on the Raghunath temple in Jammu.

He told presspersons that "we are very much concerned about the continuous attack on temples. The Centre must crush terrorism with iron hand".

LIFE INDEX

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 2002

## SUBVERSIVE DESIGNS

9.8x 18x 10-10

THE FIDAYEEN MILITANT attacks on two places of worship on Sunday in Jammu — the famed Raghunath temple, which had suffered a similar assault earlier this year, and another shrine nearby — condemnable as they are in the strongest of terms, for their barbarism and heinousness, are clearly a part of the foreign-backed subversive elements' sinister design to damage the credibility of the new Mufti Mohammed Sayeed-headed coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir. In fact, their 'campaign' in the form of escalated violence had started a few days earlier — to be precise, on the day after the first sitting of the new Assembly — when suspected Lashkar-e-Taiba cadres broke into a CRPF camp in Srinagar, and there has been no let up since then. What marks out the latest Jammu episodes from the other major attacks — and therefore makes them all the more reprehensible — is that their chosen targets are temples and the devotees visiting them, not security personnel or other symbols of governmental authority. But then, picking on places of worship, which by their very nature qualify as 'soft targets', has been a preferred strategy particularly of the jihadi terrorist groups in recent times because of its potential to trigger a communal backlash and thereby serve their diabolical ends, and this trend would seem to have been reinforced by the sort of aggressive majoritarian thrust (typified by the Muslims-targeted post-Godhra pogrom in Gujarat) that contributed to the vitiation of the communal milieu in general.

Disturbing as the recent spurt in militant activity certainly is, it is imperative that the Government should spare no effort in heightening the vigil and beefing up the security system, both its operational and intelligence gathering components. In this, the State administration undoubtedly needs unstinting cooperation and critical support from the Centre in every respect. On the wider political and administrative planes, the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed regime has, in a manner truly reflective of its sensitivity to the innate feelings of Kashmiris, come up with some commendable initiatives in the few weeks it has been in office. For instance, the

release of political prisoners who had been in prolonged detention for no valid reason, the decision to 'assimilate' the discredited Special Operations Group into the regular police force and the move to rehabilitate the families of the victims of militancy, not to speak of the Bill seeking to set up an institutional mechanism to ensure the "accountability" of public functionaries from the Chief Minister downwards. Add to these, the new Government's democratic legitimacy acquired through an universally acclaimed and transparent electoral process and also its commitment to strive for an inclusive 'dialogue' aimed at finding a political solution to the Kashmir imbroglio, the 'compulsions' of the terrorist elements to frustrate its purposeful endeavour and undermine its credibility should be apparent.

At the operational level, the coalition regime has taken a conscious decision not to invoke the inherently oppressive POTA and it is perfectly in keeping with the Government's declared core policy line of healing the "physical, psychological and emotional wounds inflicted (on the people of Jammu and Kashmir) by 14 years of militancy". However, the ruling political establishment's detractors, especially the BJP and its ally (and erstwhile ruling party of the State), the National Conference, have always been highly critical of such a course, contending that not using POTA and setting free the detained secessionist leaders and militants will together constitute an open invitation to heightened insurgency. Given this context, these political parties may well be tempted to see the spurt in militant attacks as a vindication of their position and adopt an 'I-told-you-so' attitude — this is indeed discernible in the way some of the leaders have reacted to the Raghunath temple episode. But any formulation that seeks, in the name of facing the challenge of militancy more effectively, to reverse the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Government's wholesome initiatives on the human rights front will be short-sighted, the ultimate objective of ending the pervasive alienation of the Kashmiris getting lost. Above all, it will also amount to playing into the hands of the subversive elements.

THE HINDU

26 NOV 2002

# Second attack in two days 9 killed in J&K blast

SFI 29/11

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Nov. 23. — Nine persons, including five Armymen, were killed and 25 injured when militants blasted an Improvised Explosive Device on Srinagar-Jammu highway near Lower Munda, 75 km from Srinagar, this morning. Among the dead were two women and two children.

Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami and Jamiatul Mujahideen have owned the attack. A person identifying himself as JuM spokesman told a news agency that the attack was a reply to the chief minister's claim that militancy in the state was about to end.

Militants also tried to blow up a BSF HQ at Karan Nagar in Srinagar. They fired four grenades, which exploded in the compound but did not cause any damage to life or property.

Yesterday, Lashkar ultras had attacked a security camp at a Srinagar hotel and killed six CRPF jawans. Both assailants were killed in encounter.

Today's blast took place when a convoy, carrying Armymen and their family members, was on its way from Srinagar to Jammu. When it reached Lower Munda, six km from Jawahar Tunnel, at 11.15 a.m. the militants trig-

gered the blast in front of one of the vehicles.

The impact was such that the vehicle was blown to pieces and the bodies were scattered on the road. The remnants of the vehicle were thrown up in the air before they rolled down into a gorge, 300 metres deep.

Armymen in other vehicles came down and fired some warning shots. Rescue teams recovered the bodies and flew the injured to the military hospital in Srinagar.

IED explosions have been fairly common on the highway. Every morning, Armymen scan the 300-km road for explosives. It was done this morning too, but the IED couldn't be detected. Early this month, seven CRPF men were killed in an IED blast near Ramsu.

Today's incidents and yesterday's attack on the security camp mark a surge in violence in the state since the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed government took over. The chief minister, who has been on a "terrorist-releasing spree", had vowed to end militancy by holding talks with the militants and reforming the security forces.

■ Photograph and other reports on page 10

# JKLF parts ways with Hurriyat

HT Correspondent  
Srinagar, November 22

THE Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front has distanced itself from the All-Parties' Hurriyat Conference, and has begun functioning outside the separatist amalgam.

The JKLF on Friday stayed away from the talks that the Hurriyat leadership held with Ram Jethmalnai's Kashmir Committee, and, instead, held a public rally in the southern township of Kulgam.

The talks with the Kashmir Committee are stated to be the main cause of differences between the JKLF and the Hurriyat. Mohammad Yasin Malik, soon after his release, flayed Jethmalnai for his "double-speak". He said Jethmalnai had told him that he supported the idea of an "independent Valley, but restricted it to Hurriyat's participation in the election".

Hitting back at Malik, Jeth-

## Governor's Address 'dull', says NC

THE NC on Friday criticised the Governor's speech to the J&K Legislature on Thursday, where Governor GC Saxena had mentioned the positive aspects of the PDP-led Government's common minimum programme in his Address.

Leader of the Opposition Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah described the Governor's Address as a "dull piece of paper, where wishes have been made horses which can never run". He said

important issues, like Kargil, autonomy, border tensions and efforts of "our Government" in restoring democracy in the past six years were not touched. "The NC has laid the foundations of democracy; it was in 1996 that we restored it when the trouble-torn State was in a shambles - with no schools, no bridges and no jobs. There's no mention of our efforts," he complained.

HTC, Jammu

malani today said Malik does not know what he says. "Maybe tomorrow he may know," he said. "His ideas have got polluted in the jail. He would be okay after some time." The committee members arrived here to hold

another round of talks with the Hurriyat and other separatist outfits. The committee and separatist leaders of the State held two rounds of talks earlier, of which JKLF was a part.

Soon after its arrival in Srina-

gar, the Kashmir Committee members drove to the residence of Shabir Shah, chief of the Democratic Freedom Party, and held talks with him for over an hour. Shabir Shah later said the meeting was inconclusive and would continue tomorrow. He said a joint statement would be issued after tomorrow's meeting.

The committee members later went to the Nagin home of former Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Omer Farooq to attend an *iftaar* party. Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat and other executive members also attended the party.

The committee and the Hurriyat leaders are holding a formal meeting some time on Saturday.

The Hurriyat chairman reportedly tried to meet Yasin Malik on Thursday, but the latter refused to grant him an interview. The Hurriyat summoned a meeting of its executive council on Friday to discuss the issue.

POTA-SOFT MUFTI SILENT

# Lashkar attack leaves 6 CRPF jawans dead

571  
Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Nov. 22. — *Fidayeen* have struck again in J&K, for the first time since the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed government took over, killing six CRPF jawans and injuring 10. The two militants involved were killed in the encounter that took place early this morning.

The attack, a day after the ninth Assembly opened, broke the recent lull in violence in the valley. Only yesterday, the Governor had urged the Centre to start unconditional talks with separatists.

Two Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants attacked a security camp at Hatel Pamposh in Regal Chowk, Srinagar, around 6.15 a.m., when most people were busy offering morning prayers after taking the *sehri* (pre-dawn meal). Sources said the ultras entered into the complex after scaling a wall on the Municipal Street side. Firing indiscriminately, they entered into an officers' mess and fired at the securitymen, who were taking breakfast then.

After some time, one of the militants ran towards the complex's main gate, firing at the securitymen there. Two CRPF jawans fell to his bullets. But a third caught hold of him, when the militant exploded a grenade killing himself as well as the jawan.

The other militant was still in the mess, engaging securitymen in an encounter that lasted 50 minutes. BSF and police teams rushed to the

J&K 28/11  
spot. The militant was finally killed by the BSF jawans.

Three securitymen were killed on the spot and the rest died in hospitals. The militants were carrying fake identity cards showing them as residents of Uttar Pradesh.

The Lashkar chief spokesman, Abu Huzaifa, called two news agencies in Srinagar and said both militants were members of his outfit. He identified them as Riyaz Ahmad Khan, a local militant, and Abu Younis, a "*mehman mujahid*".

He, however, claimed that four militants were involved in the attack and that two of them had returned to their hideouts with weapons looted from the camp. The attack, he said, was codenamed Operation Bader.

Security forces had cordoned off Regal Chowk, a business hub, till the injured were taken to hospitals.

The chief minister, who has released scores of militants, remained silent over the attack. Ignoring journalists' queries, he walked into the Assembly without betraying his emotions.

His deputy, Mr Mangat Ram Sharma, condemned the attack and said it was organised by Pakistan. "We're determined to deal firmly with them."

**BJP appeal:** The BJP today called for action against J&K militants and asked the PDP-Congress government to reconsider its policy of releasing jailed militants and not using Pota, SNS adds from Delhi.

Another report on page 5

23 NOV 2002

# Call for unconditional Kashmir talks

**MUKHTAR AHMAD**

**Srinagar, Nov. 21:** Jammu and Kashmir Governor G.C. Saxena yesterday urged the Centre to initiate a serious, result-oriented and unconditional dialogue with the state's elected representatives and others for durable peace.

The Governor's address, which is basically a policy statement of the new government, speaks of the healing touch but emphasises "there would be no compromise on security concerns".

Saxena, while addressing the joint session of the state legislature, listed the "coalition government's roadmap for the future".

"Historic opportunity is knocking at our doors and we don't want to miss as it is des-

tined to usher a peaceful and prosperous future for the coming generations," he said, adding that the "environment of despair would be turned into a prospect of hope".

To achieve this goal, "it is essential to make a beginning by giving a healing touch to the situation and by reaching out to those who feel alienated," Saxena said.

"Due to unfortunate happenings of (the) last 13 years, people are living in a constant state of insecurity," he added.

"All sections of society, particularly the youth and the children have grown in the shadow of fear and their psyches scarred and emotionally damaged. Our people feel dehumanised and brutalised. This tragic phenomenon creates an environment conducive to the growth of disillu-

sionment, anger, frustration and violence. This environment has to be changed."

Elaborating on the new government's strategy to deal with the situation, Saxena said that the "government would review the cases of all such detainees, held on non-specific charges, not charged with serious offences or held on charges the possible sentence for which is less than the period they have already spent in jail. They shall be released."

"All such laws would be reviewed that deprive the people of their basic right to life and liberty, guaranteed under the constitution," the Governor added.

"Whenever necessary to retain some special powers, the government will ensure that such laws are used sparingly and those entrusted with implement-

ing them are held accountable for any misuse. This will be done by instituting careful and transparent pre-screening and monitoring procedures."

Saxena reaffirmed that there was no need to resort to the Prevention of Terrorism Act because "the existing laws are adequate to deal with militancy".

"The government would provide a healing touch to the situation of despair. But it is alive to the legitimate security concerns of the state. The government will stand firm and steadfast in discharging its obligations under the Constitution," the Governor said.

"All possible measures would be taken to protect the people from violence and militancy, whether originating from within or outside the state."



**GC Saxena**



# Farooq foists Governor's rule

SEEMAGUHA

Srinagar, Oct. 17: Jammu and Kashmir was brought under Governor's rule at midnight, seven days after the results of the first free and fair elections in decades kindled hopes of a new chapter in the state.

Brushing aside appeals over the phone by both Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, their unpredictable ally Farooq Abdullah refused to be caretaker chief minister and forced Governor G.C. Saxena to activate a constitutional takeover that the Centre wanted to avoid at any cost.

Officials close to Saxena and political parties racing against time to cobble together a coalition in the hung Assembly insisted that Governor's rule was a temporary phase that would end as soon as any group was ready to form a government.

Mirroring Delhi's eagerness to instal a popular government in the state, the Governor had yesterday extended to Monday afternoon the deadline for staking claim to form a government. The Vajpayee government was keen to ensure that domestic political squabbling did not pitter away the gains of the elections before the international community.

Even if Governor's rule lasts only for a brief while, the Centre is now vulnerable to potshots from across the border that the state had to be ruled by a former intelligence official — Saxena is an ex-chief of RAW — despite free and fair elections.

With the tenure of the current Assembly expiring

tonight and Abdullah refusing to relent, the Governor had little option, the officials said.

But political circles were intrigued why Saxena did not invite either the Congress or the People's Democratic Party — the principal contenders to power — to form a government and ask them to prove majority later.

Farooq, whose party and son fared miserably at the hustings, seized the moral high ground this morning, saying he had "forfeited" the right to continue as a caretaker.

The National Conference leader, however, said he could not take a final decision until the Governor responded. The Governor did so and requested Abdullah to continue as caretaker chief minister. But Abdullah, whose relationship with the BJP had worsened as the polls approached, said he would decide after discussions with his party.

As the state lurched towards a constitutional crisis, Abdullah managed to squeeze in an inauguration of a golf tournament, which was originally supposed to be opened by the Governor. Abdullah's passion for the game and the good life has in no small measure contributed to crystallising his image as a political playboy.

Around 7 pm, Abdullah met his colleagues. The decision to stick to his resolve was made public only around 9 pm, but it was not known when the Governor was informed.

Abdullah also tried to fish in troubled waters by saying earlier he was not averse to supporting from the outside a group of "Independents" who floated a front to form a government.

## QUOTE

### A step in the right direction

PAKISTAN  
on the Indian troop pullback



Farooq Abdullah inaugurates a golf tournament in Srinagar on Thursday. Asked about the future of his party, he said: "Ask me something about golf." (AFP)

PRANAY SHARMA AND  
IDREES BAKHTIAR

New Delhi/Islamabad, Oct. 17: The troops on both sides of the border have left the field clear for high diplomacy to move in.

As Pervez Musharraf reciprocated India's troop pullback gesture, Delhi indicated that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee might attend a Saarc summit in Islamabad early next year.

But the Indian foreign policy establishment was quick to add that if Musharraf remained indifferent to Delhi's concerns on cross-border terrorism, it would be difficult for Vajpayee to travel to Pakistan in January.

The pace of diplomacy quickened after Pakistan said today it would withdraw its troops from the border to peace-time locations.

India had yesterday announced a partial troop withdrawal from the international border, but both sides said the pullbacks did not apply to Kashmir.

Speculation on whether the Prime Minister would visit Pakistan so soon after the gravest standoff since the 1971 war reached boiling point as conflicting comments spiralled out of South Block.

Junior foreign minister Digvijay Singh told a television channel earlier in the day that the Prime Minister would attend the Saarc summit in Islamabad.

Within hours, however, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha tried to play down the significance of the comment and cast a cloud on the fate of the regional bloc's meeting itself.

"If the Saarc summit is held, the Prime Minister will definitely attend it. But the summit should have an objective and it should not be just to see each other's faces," Sinha said. He added that a decision would be taken at "an appropriate time".

If Vajpayee visits Islamabad next year, it would be the first trip by a leader of either country to his neighbour since Mushar-

raf came to India for the failed Agra summit in 2001. The two did shake hands briefly in Nepal in January at this year's Saarc summit, but held no formal talks.

Both Sinha and his deputy were at pains today to stress that the visit, if it went ahead, would focus on Saarc and not on Kashmir.

The primary reason behind Delhi's reluctance in committing itself to a visit is the fear of more pressure from the US to use the opportunity to resume talks with Islamabad.

Indications are that if India is not satisfied with the Pakistani response on ending cross-border terrorism and dismantling the terror apparatus, it will try to ensure that the summit does not take place.

India is likely to urge some Saarc members to plead inability to attend the meeting. A summit cannot take place unless all the seven members agree on the dates.

■ See Page 6

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2002

HO-10  
13/11  
**IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION** gsk, sk

LESS THAN TWO weeks in office, the PDP-Congress coalition Government headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed in Jammu and Kashmir has in right earnest set about addressing itself to the task of reviewing cases of prolonged detention without trial — mostly political detenus — and the latest to be freed (on parole) is the senior Hurriyat leader and JKLF chief, Mohammad Yasin Malik. Originally held under POTA, Mr. Malik was upon being granted bail by a court re-arrested last May under the Public Safety Act. Indications are that another Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who is among the over 20 such political detenus the Government is reported to have identified for release, will also be set free soon. The release of political prisoners, which is a part of the policy formulation that the ruling coalition has outlined in its Common Minimum Programme for healing the “physical, psychological and emotional wounds inflicted by 14 years of militancy”, has been received, not surprisingly, with some scepticism in certain quarters, particularly the National Conference and the BJP. These sections are inclined to see this development and the new Government’s decision not to invoke POTA in the State as a recipe for heightened insurgency, with some even darkly hinting at a ‘deal’ between the PDP and the secessionist forces.

What needs to be realised is that the rationale for these positive moves is rooted in the imperative of reaching out to the people, especially the alienated sections, by initiating a credible process of dialogue with a view to finding a political solution to the Kashmir imbroglio. After all, this precisely is what the popular mandate thrown up by the recent Assembly polls is all about. To be meaningful, such a dialogue has necessarily to be as broad-based and as inclusive as possible, not just confined to those elected to the new legislature. Without in any way detracting from the credibility of the recently concluded democratic exercise, which stood out for its fairness and transparency, or belittling

the representative character of the new Assembly, one must say that it would be unrealistic and unwise to rubbish all the groups that boycotted the polls as having no *locus standi* or being irrelevant merely because of their non-participation. In fact, if the few initiatives of the ‘Track II’ variety — some of them presumably with the blessings of New Delhi — aimed at getting the separatist groups to join the democratic mainstream had floundered, it was largely because of the Centre’s ambivalence and tentativeness in its approach to the negotiation process, dictated more by its narrow partisan impulses, with the Farooq Abdullah regime playing its own political game and contributing in its own way to the scuttling of all such effort.

As for the Hurriyat itself, there has been a distinct and remarkably positive shift from its hard pro-Pakistani line in the wake of the global anti-terror campaign post-September 11, 2001, with most of the influential groups in the umbrella outfit coming out openly in favour of a political solution and against terrorist ways, and this attitudinal change appeared further reinforced after the assassination of Abdul Gani Lone. Given this and the ground reality that the Hurriyat is seen at least by a sizable segment of the Kashmiris as a group of honest and dependable interlocutors, it does make a lot of political sense that its leaders detained on poll eve should be set free as a necessary step for creating conditions conducive for a purposeful interaction. All this however is not to overlook or underrate the formidability of the hurdles that are bound to arise even before the first moves are made towards starting a dialogue. Not particularly known for its cohesiveness, the Hurriyat leadership is more than likely to find itself rather sharply divided in the new context of the PDP’s rise to power. It is for the new Government to move forward skilfully and come up with imaginative measures essential for setting a dialogue in motion, and the Centre, for its part, needs to extend its full and unreserved cooperation to such endeavours.

13 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

RELEASE OF MORE POLITICAL DETAINEES LIKELY

9.8  
23K  
SIT

# Mufti frees Malik

12/4

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Nov. 11. — Nine days after taking over as chief minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed took a big leap towards wooing J&K's separatist elements, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) in particular, with the government formally ordering the release of Hurriyat leader and JKLF chairman Md Yasin Malik and several other jailed prisoners.

Sources said Malik, suffering from a heart ailment, was released from Kot Bhalwal jail here today and flown to Srinagar on a Jet Airways flight with police escort. He has been released on parole initially for a period of one month. Malik was granted bail on a Pota charge in July after the court was told of his deteriorating health. He was then de-

## 7 CRPF men dead

JAMMU, Nov. 11. — Seven CRPF men were killed and seven injured when militants triggered an IED near Ramsu on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway today. Police said the explosion took place when a bus carrying the jawans from Srinagar to Jammu was passing through Banihal. SC stays J&K Act: The Supreme Court admitted a petition challenging the J&K Migrants Resettlement Act and ordered a stay on the operation of the law. — PTI

(Details on page 5)

tained under the Public Safety Act.

But confusion prevailed in Srinagar today as JKLF and Hurriyat activists

who had arrived at the airport to receive him did not find him there. "We were told by his fellow passengers that he was on board the aircraft and was escorted to a Gypsy car the moment he landed," Mr Tahir Mir, JKLF spokesman, said. Hundreds of his supporters later held protests against his reported "re-arrest".

Police said Malik was taken to the Counter-Insurgency HQ and released at 5 p.m. after completing "certain formalities". The DIG (Prisons) said Malik had been released because he had been granted bail under Pota and charges against him under the Public Safety Act were withdrawn. Malik told newsmen that he was released "unconditionally", adding he would elaborate at a press conference tomorrow. Sources said a few more political detainees are likely to be released in a day or two.

THE STATESMAN

12 NOV 2002

GEELANI TO BE FREED SOON

# Yasin Malik released

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, NOV. 11.** A senior All-Party Hurriyat Conference leader and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman, Mohammad Yasin Malik, was released today after eight months' detention.

He had been arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and subsequently rearrested under the Public Safety Act.

Released from the Kot Bhalwal jail in Jammu this morning, Mr. Malik was flown to Srinagar. As soon as he arrived at the airport, he was taken away by police for completing the



formalities for his release.

He was set free in the evening and he received a warm reception at his Maisuma house which is also the headquarters of the JKLF. A large number of his supporters thronged his house to greet him.

Mr. Malik refused to talk but said his release was unconditional. "I will reply to all your questions at a press conference tomorrow," a visibly exhausted Mr. Malik told *The Hindu*.

Official sources said he had been released on a month's parole, which was likely to be extended.

One of the seven executive members of the Hurriyat, Mr. Malik was arrested on March 25 last while addressing a press conference. He was arrested under POTA, following police claims that a young man and a woman who were travelling from Jammu to Srinagar were carrying \$1 lakh, which had come from across the border, for him.

Both had been arrested and later released. In May, Mr. Malik was granted bail by a local court but was re-arrested under the Public Safety Act.

Mr. Malik's release comes close on the heels of the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's announcement that all the political prisoners are being released — a commitment made in the Congress-PDP ruling coalition's Common Minimum Programme.

A former JKLF commander, Showkat Bakhshi, and his two associates, Nazir Ahmed Sheikh and Mushtaq Ahmed Khan, were released last week. The senior Hurriyat leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and Sheikh Aziz will also be released shortly.

Earlier in the day, Showkat Bakhshi told a news conference that the Kashmir problem was basically a political one but had become a humanitarian issue. None of the agreements of the past could stop bloodshed in Kashmir and the parties concerned should come forward to resolve the issue.

## Blast kills six CRPF men

Militants detonated a powerful landmine near Ramsu on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway when a CRPF convoy was passing through the area.

It hit one of the vehicles killing four CRPF personnel — Mohammad Ishaq, Mandhir Mandal, Pradeep Singh, and Gautam Kumar — on the spot. Two of the seriously injured jawans died of injuries on way to hospital. Seven of the injured were admitted to hospital.

Militants also shot dead a National Conference leader and secretary of the Srinagar Municipality, Ghulam Nabi Chintsaaz, in Mujahid Manzil area here this morning.

The former Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, and the National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, have condemned the killing.

## Advani won't comment

Our New Delhi Special Correspondent reports:

The Centre today declined to comment on the release of Mr. Malik. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, responding to questions from journalists said, "I would not like to comment on the issue".

The Kashmir Committee, which is in dialogue with the Hurriyat Conference, is believed to have appealed to Mr. Advani for Mr. Malik's release prior to the Assembly elections in the State.

1 2 NOV 2002

# Unilateral ceasefire has no meaning

Arun Joshi  
Jammu

**MUFTI MOHAMMAD SAYEED** describes the beginning of his innings as J&K Chief Minister as a "turning point" in the history of the State. He sees an opportunity in the days to come to prove that good governance matters, and is confident his Government will last out its full term. In an interview with Hindustan Times, he dismisses talk that he is soft on militants. Excerpts:

**Q: How do you feel after being in the Chief Minister's chair for almost a week now?**  
A: It is a big challenge and opportunity. I see it as a turning point in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. I want to make a difference with good governance and that is my primary aim.

**Q: It is said that becoming CM was your life's ambition...**  
A: It is not correct. I have never bothered about the chair. I have seen high office (as Union Home Minister). There were many occasions in the past when I could have become CM. There were days of conflict between GM Sadiq and Mir Qasim. I was a minister in the Rajiv Gandhi Government. I was the chairman

of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board. These things have not bothered me. Indiraji once asked me why I opposed Sheikh Abdullah. I told her when I am in Opposition, my job is to oppose and criticise. My job in the Opposition is not to knock at doors and seek favours but to raise issues of the people. Tell me if there is any one who has stood his ground like me in J&K. Becoming CM was not my dream.

**Q: Then what exactly have you achieved?**

A: I have provided an alternative. I had no ill-will against Sheikh Abdullah. As far as Farooq Abdullah is concerned, I have met him. He is a pleasing personality. But then, there are differences of policies and programmes.

**Q: How are you going to facilitate the dialogue process?**

A: We have already taken measures to create an atmosphere for that. Pota is not going to be used. The role of the Special Operations Group of the State police is going to be changed. A multi-pronged strategy has to be adopted to fight militancy. We are going to take care of the victims of militancy. We have to take care of their education and socio-economic problems.



**Let the Hurriyat leaders talk to the Centre. I would be a facilitator. Let the Government also talk to the elected representatives and other sections of people. We have already taken measures as I have listed those before**

**Q: Will you be asking for a unilateral ceasefire during Ramzan?**

A: Why should I?

**Q: You were reported in the media as saying so.**

A: That was put out of context. What I said was that unilateral ceasefire has no meaning unless it is reciprocated and respected. It cannot be a one-way traffic.

**Q: You said the Hurriyat is yet to prove its representative character.**

A: Yes, I said so because they did not prove it. They had an opportunity in the elections. They did not avail (of) it.

mitted mistakes in Kashmir in the past? Didn't Union Home Secretary travel to Srinagar to hold talks with Hizb-ul-Mujahideen in August 2000 after the Hizb-ul announced ceasefire? Didn't Prime Minister announce a unilateral Ramzan ceasefire two years ago? Didn't he appoint KC Pant to hold talks with the people and separatists in Kashmir. If I am saying the same thing, what is wrong with it?

There was a policy of sticks for 14 years and rarely carrots were offered. Now there will be a change and a consensus. My effort is to evolve a consensus not only in J&K but also at the national level. Farooq Abdullah could have done that. But he didn't do that. Now I am going to do it.

**Q: On the face of it, your words sound promising but the numbers are fragile.**

A: This is going to be the most stable Government in J&K. It is not the game of numbers. It is the verdict of the people that matters and that gives stability to the government.

**Q: There are fears there will be a witch-hunt of your political rivals.**

A: Let me assure you that there will be no victimisation. There will be no witch-hunt. I am not

going to dig into the past and start hounding people. But we will not allow anyone to tamper with the system. Even if someone sitting on my right hand side is found guilty of doing anything wrong, he will face the consequences. There is going to be authority with accountability.

**Q: There are apprehensions that you would undertake a massive administrative and police reshuffle.**

A: Have I done that? There is the same set of people. We have to take work from them in a proper fashion. I have already said that there would be no witch-hunt or victimisation.

**Q: Why is your Common Minimum Programme silent on autonomy?**

A: You cannot put the cart before the horse. Once the negotiations start, let's see what emerges. If autonomy is the only thing in the kitty, why should it be said that autonomy is there to be offered? Let there be talks first.

**Q: How are you going to politically manage the coalition partners?**

A: (Through the) Common Minimum Programme. We are going to implement it in letter and spirit. All coalition partners are in agreement and there is no deviation from the CMP.

## Police tried to sabotage J&K polls: CEC

9/8/04 TIMES NEWS NETWORK (TNN)

**New Delhi:** In a sensational disclosure, Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh revealed on Thursday that an attempt to sabotage free and fair elections in Jammu and Kashmir had been made by "a few people, basically in the police" in order to help erstwhile chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

The CEC disclosed that prior to the third segment of the four-phase statewide polls in October, the Election Commission had discovered—and scotched—a plan to release surrendered militants "who would have infiltrated the electorate to influence the results". The idea was obviously to intimidate people from coming out to vote. The EC also stopped a plan to "divert" the attention of the army by deploying soldiers in road clearance and checking operations.

Mr Lyngdoh was participating in the 'Court Martial' programme on SAB TV anchored by Karan Thapar, in which questions were put to him by *The Times*

*of India* editor Dileep Padgaonkar and Seema Mustafa of *The Asian Age*. National Conference head Omar Abdullah and the director general of police, J&K, were not available for comment.

The third phase—in which Anantnag and Pulwama districts went to the polls—saw the People's Democratic Party do especially well. Asked whether Mr Abdullah had been in on these plans to sabotage the polls, the CEC said, "I would not know." But he also said that the concerned police officials "were doing things which could have helped him". Had these plans not been detected, Mr Lyngdoh said, the election results would not have been "normal". Asked whether there was help from separatist groups to many candidates in the polls, he said he would not like to get into it. "It was a very complex situation. There were lots of people from inside who did it."

Asked by TNN for her reaction to Mr Lyngdoh's disclosure, PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti said her party had suspected that such a plan to sabotage the third phase was afoot and had petitioned the EC at the time.

9 NOV 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## 'REVIVE SPIRIT OF RAMADAN CEASEFIRE'

# Mufti wants dialogue with all J&K groups

By Luv Puri

JAMMU, NOV. 5. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today asked the Centre to start a dialogue with the State's elected representatives and those who did not participate in the elections as also the militants, provided they reciprocated the gesture.

Addressing a press conference after the ceremonial guard of honour here, the Chief Minister, flanked by all his Ministers,

urged the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to revive the spirit of the Ramadan ceasefire which he announced two years ago. He hoped that the militants would respond positively this time.

(PTI quoted the Mufti as saying that the "Centre has announced such a ceasefire in the past as a good gesture and they can do it again." Asked whether he would ask the Centre to announce the ceasefire, he said: "I had not given it a thought.")

Stressing the need for initia-

ting a dialogue process on the political front, he said: "We have been elected by the people and let there be a dialogue with us." But, at the same time, there should also be a dialogue with parties, such as the Hurriyat."

The Mufti said the anti-Pakistan rhetoric and war cries resorted to by the former Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, were no solution to the Kashmir issue. He said he had detailed talks with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and had been assured of all possible cooperation. Sometimes he felt scared whether he would be able to meet the expectations of the people. People's faith in democracy had been restored by the ballot and this "glorious opportunity" should not be missed by any party for partisan interests.

On the issue of release of political prisoners, the Chief Minister said that even the previous regimes had released Hurriyat leaders. "We do not want to keep anyone unnecessarily in jail without any substantial charge as this will breed more alienation." Asked whether he would give an assurance that he would not be a stumbling block to the peace process with any group, he said: "No, not at all. On the other hand, he will try to be a facilitator of the process."

**BJP chief's caution: Page 11**

## Governor meets Advani

By Anjali Mody

NEW DELHI, NOV. 5. The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, G.C. Saxena, met the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today to "apprise him of the developments in the State." This was Mr. Saxena's first meeting with Mr. Advani since the completion of the elections to the Assembly. He briefed the Deputy Prime Minister on the conduct of the elections and the process of government formation.

Asked about the State Government's plan to disband the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police, Mr. Saxena said this was part of the new Government's programme, and the impact of it would only be known after the implementation stage.

Speaking to journalists after a 45-minute meeting with Mr. Advani, he said the new Government was led by "very experienced people who can be expected to act with responsibility." On the issue of the release of political prisoners, Mr. Saxena said the elected Government had the powers to take such a decision. He said "the Chief Minister is after all the Chief Minister. He is the executive head of the Government. He also heads the unified command, he will be the person to take such decisions."

THE HINDU

6 NOV 2002

# Mufti gets taste of terror on oath day

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Nov. 2. — A terrorist bid on Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and demonstrations overshadowed the return of J&K to democracy after a brief spell of Governor's rule.

Mr Sayeed was sworn in as chief minister by Governor Mr Girish Chandra Saxena in Srinagar today. Nine ministers, including seven of Cabinet rank, too took the oath of office, as announced earlier.

Mr Sayeed, who heads the PDP-Congress-Panthers Party coalition, is the sixth chief minister of J&K and the first from outside the Congress or National Conference. The People's Democratic Forum of Independents and CPI-M legislators are extending support to the government from outside. The swearing-in ceremony was held amid tight security at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Convention Complex off Dal Lake at 1.15 p.m.

A few hours before the ceremony, militants threw two grenades on Mr Sayeed's Nowgam house on the outskirts of Srinagar. He was present in the house at the time. One of the grenades fell just outside the house while the other exploded in the air. But no one was injured, Srinagar DIG Mr Farooq Khan said. The attack, however, created panic among the large crowd of PDP supporters present there.

Congress chief Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Manmohan Singh and NC president Mr Omar Abdullah were among the leaders present at the swearing-in. Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad and AICC general secretary Ms

Ambika Soni too were present.

All three regions of the state — the valley, Jammu and Ladakh — have been represented in the ministers' council. Senior Congress leader Mr Mangat Ram Sharma took oath as deputy chief minister.

The Cabinet ministers include PDP vice-president Mr Muzaffar H Baig, Congress leader Mr Peerzada Md Sayeed, Mr Moola Ram, close confidant of Mr Azad, and PDP's Mr Ghulam Hassan Mir, who defeated Dr Farooq Abdullah's brother from Gulmarg. Mr HD Singh (PP) too was sworn in as a Cabinet minister. Two Independents, Mr Nawang Rigzin from Leh and Haji Nissar Ali from Kargil, were made ministers of state.

PDP leaders said Mr Sayeed would expand his ministry on 25 November. The state's civil secretariat, which has shifted to Jammu for the winter, would start functioning from Tuesday.

Mrs Gandhi promised adequate representation for all parties in the coalition government. But the first priority of the new government is to provide stability, she said.

**Students protest:** The Jammu Joint Students' Front — a Jammu-based umbrella organisation of students

demanding statehood for Jammu and Union territory status for Ladakh — held protest meetings in the city today and burnt effigies of Mrs Gandhi and Mr Sayeed alleging "betrayal of the people" by the ruling coalition.

**Democracy returned to J&K today with the first non-Congress, non-NC govt taking office. But just hours before the chief minister was sworn in, ultras swung into action and threw grenades in front of his house**

■ More reports on page 10



MANGAT RAM SHARMA OF CONG. IS DEPUTY CM

# Mufti sworn in J&K CM

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, NOV. 2. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, was today sworn in as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir and the senior Congress leader, Mangat Ram Sharma, as his Deputy. Five others from the PDP, the Congress and the Panthers Party and two Independent MLAs were inducted as Ministers. This put an end to Governor's rule imposed on October 17.

The swearing-in ceremony followed an unsuccessful attack by militants on the residence of Mr. Sayeed.

Wearing a cream coloured 'bandh gala' suit, Mr. Sayeed (66) was administered the oath of office and secrecy by the Governor, Girish Chandra Saxena, at the highly-guarded Sher-e-Kashmir International Conference Centre. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, the National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, the Union Minister of State for Defence, Chaman Lal Gupta, the Pradesh Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, his wife, Shameem Azad, the senior Congress leaders, Ambika Soni, Saifuddin Soz and Wasim Ahmed, the Chairman of the State Legislative Council, Abdur Rasheed Dar, and the former NC Ministers, Mohiuddin Shah and Abdul Qayoom, attended the ceremony.

The Congress members, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed and Moola Ram, the PDP mem-



Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the State party chief, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and the People's Democratic Party vice-chairperson, Mehbooba Mufti, at the swearing-in ceremony of the Mufti in Srinagar on Saturday as the National Anthem is played. — AFP

bers, Muzaffar Hussain Beig and Ghulam Hassan Mir, and the Panthers Party leader, Harsh Dev Singh, were sworn-in as Cabinet Ministers, while Rigzin Jora of the Ladakh Union Territory Front and Haji Nissar Ali from Kargil were inducted as Ministers of State. All the nine, including the Mufti, took their oath in English and not in Urdu, the official language of the State.

The 15-day Governor's rule imposed in the wake of the uncertainty over government for-

mation has come to an end. Mr. Saxena had taken over charge after the former Chief Minister and NC leader, Farooq Abdullah, refused to continue as the caretaker Chief Minister. The NC, with 28 seats, had emerged as the single largest party in the Assembly, consisting of 87 members.

Representation has been given to all the three regions and communities, except Pandits and Sikhs, in the Council of Ministers, which is likely to be expanded in two weeks. The

Cabinet will meet here tomorrow and fly out to Jammu on Monday, where the offices are re-opening on November 5 as part of the annual "darbar move" practice. The portfolios of Ministers will be announced tomorrow.

## No softness towards militants: Sonia

Talking to presspersons, Ms. Gandhi said she was satisfied with the composition of the Ministry and the representation given to her party. "It is a beginning and the Cabinet will be expanded later. Mufti Saheb is a very seasoned and responsible person." She also dismissed apprehension that the coalition Government would be "soft" towards militants, terming as "incorrect" concerns expressed in certain quarters. The steps taken by the Government regarding the merging of the SOG with the local police and the release of political prisoners would by no means affect the situation, Ms. Gandhi said.

Talking to *The Hindu*, the Mufti said, "This day is historical for me as also the State. We have a big challenge ahead and have to deliver and everybody in the Government have this realisation. We will have to work jointly to face this challenge." He later visited the Hazratbal shrine.

Joy in Jammu: Page 9

## Grenade attack on Mufti's house

By Our Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR, NOV. 2. Even as the Government headed by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was being sworn-in, militants stepped up their activities, killing a Congress leader and attacking the residence of the Mufti. A militant outfit has announced a reward for targeting the new Government.

Around 10 a.m. when Mr. Sayeed was preparing for the oath-taking ceremony, militants fired two rifle grenades towards his residence at Nowgam, on the outskirts of the city. The grenades landed outside the house, injuring a constable, Mohammad Yaqoob. There was panic as many people wishing to congratulate the Mufti were at the residence. Police and other security personnel cordoned off the house.

Al-Nasreen, a hitherto unknown militant group, has claimed responsibility for the attack. It also announced a reward for those who car-

ried it out and fixed Rs. 40 lakhs for the head of the PDP vice-president, Muzaffar Hussain Beig, and Rs. 20 lakhs for other Ministers. "For us Farooq Abdullah, Mufti Sayeed and Ghulam Nabi Azad make no difference," a spokesman of the outfit told the local news agency, CNS.

In the afternoon, militants fired at the vehicle of a Congress leader, Sikandar Khan, in Batmaloo area here killing him and his two guards. Mr. Khan, who was defeated in the recent Assembly elections from Karnah, was returning after attending the swearing-in ceremony of the Cabinet. Al-Madinah, a militant outfit, owned responsibility for the killing.

A head-constable, Abdul Khaliq, was shot dead by militants in the Budshah Chowk area of the city while militants attacked a BSF camp in Baghi Ali Mardan Khan. Two persons, Bilal Ahmed and Mohammad Yusuf, were abducted and later killed by militants in Pattan.

# PDP-Cong invited to form govt

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Oct. 30. — The PDP-Congress combine today met J&K Governor Mr Girish Chander Saxena and staked claim to form a coalition government. The coalition, they claimed had support from 52 MLAs.

PDP chief Mufti Md Sayeed, accompanied by state Congress chief Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, Panthers Party chief Mr Bhim Singh and CPI (M) leader Md Yusuf Tarigami, submitted a list of supporting MLAs to stake his claim.

The Governor invited the Mufti Sayeed-led coalition to form the government.

"We have support of 52 legislators", Azad said. Even the governor confirmed that the coalition is enjoying the support of "over 50 legislators", he said.

Mr Saxena said the coalition is enjoying a "comfortable majority". "All the letters (of support) were given to me. They are enjoying a comfortable majority and I am inviting them to form the government", he said adding that the swearing-in ceremony would take place on 2 November.

The chief minister-designate, Mufti Sayeed, said: "We would make

## Setback for Mufti

JAMMU, Oct. 30. — Mufti Md Sayeed, who has been advocating an "unconditional dialogue" with militants in J&K, today received a setback when the Hizbul Mujahideen termed his decisions to repeal Pota a heart warming move but not "a final solution to the dispute". — SNS

efforts to live up to the expectations of the people. It is good to have a coalition government as there is no hegemony and people from all the three regions would get a feel of a sense of participation", he said.

Brushing aside the question regarding distribution of portfolios, Mr Azad said that it was Mufti Sayeed's prerogative to distribute the portfolios. "This is no problem and we would support him to the hilt", Mr Azad said.

Mufti Sayeed, on his part, said they have discussed the "nitty gritty" of the government formation. "The discussions have taken place and would continue. But we are not facing any problem on this count", he said.

THE STATESMAN

3 OCT 2002

# Conversion Bill introduced in T.N. Assembly

By Our Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI, OCT. 30.** Amid stiff objections from the Opposition parties barring the BJP, the controversial Bill banning "forcible" religious conversions in Tamil Nadu was introduced by the Finance Minister, C. Ponnaiyan, in the State Assembly today.

The Bill retains all the contentious provisions of the recently promulgated ordinance, which was greeted with fierce protest from leaders of minority organisations and Opposition parties. The ordinance had slapped a penalty of a maximum of four years imprisonment and Rs. 1 lakh fine for converting SC\ST, women and minors and one-year imprisonment for priests who fail to inform the district magistrates about each conversion they have performed.

The Opposition Congress, the DMK, the Left parties and the PMK, which have already given notice for a motion disapproving the ordinance, opposed the Bill at the introductory stage itself.

When the BJP MLA, H. Raja, spoke in support of the ordinance, his ally, the DMK, joined the Congress in shouting him down.

The Speaker, K. Kalimuthu said the discussion on the Bill and the motion disapproving the ordinance would be taken up for discussion in the Assembly tomorrow.

## Bill against ritual

In the wake of the shocking ritual of burying a child alive and retrieving it to propitiate deities in Peraiyur village in Madurai district on August 21, which drew protest from rights activists, the State Government has come up with a Bill banning such rituals.

The Bill states: "no person shall bury a person alive, allow himself to be buried alive" and no person "shall officiate or offer to officiate or perform or offer to perform or service, assist, or participate" in a ritual in which a person is buried alive and retrieved. And, such rituals should not be held in any place of worship or its precincts or in places under its control. Violation of the provisions would attract a maximum of three-year imprisonment or fine up to Rs. five thousand or both.

According to the explanatory statement on the Bill, "the Government considers that such ritual and practice cannot be allowed to continue as it will endanger the life and personal safety of children". The PMK alone raised objections when the Law Minister, D. Jayakumar, introduced the Bill.

9.87  
140-13  
30/10

# New Kashmir

5/8  
29/10  
Congress has an important job 29/10

The Congress took an awfully long time to do the right thing in Kashmir. But the uncertainty thus created is nothing compared to what would have happened had Sonia Gandhi ignored the People's Democratic Party's argument that Jammu and Kashmir's new government must be seen to represent Kashmir's concerns. A government of Congress plus rag tag Independents, possibly including breakaway PDP MLAs, would have lost popular credibility at the moment of swearing in, and its continuance would have been in serious question. A PDP-led coalition for the first three years of J&K's six-year assembly term, on the other hand, makes the necessary concessions to both Kashmiri aspirations as well as to Congress' political ambitions. Cynics would add that there is a further advantage. Three years is a long time in Kashmiri politics and before long the National Conference would have been itching to recoup lost ground. By allowing PDP first crack at heading the new government, the question of a national party-led state government in J&K may have been rendered academic. One sincerely hopes this would not be the case, however. This government needs six years at the least to start making a difference.

A beginning, the Congress and PDP will claim, has been made via the common minimum programme. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed spoke of a "healing touch". That Kashmir needs to heal is beyond argument. That the touch could be misapplied is not. PDP and the Congress have decided to remove POTA from J&K's statute book and hold "unconditional talks" with all groups ready for it. Not applying the anti-terrorism act in a state that has by no means seen the last of senseless violence may tie the administration's hands. In fact, POTA, in many ways a misconceived legislation, has justification only in the context of maintaining law and order in J&K. The Congress-PDP alliance probably would have done better by deciding that they will look at applying the act only rarely. That would have been enough to signal a change.

As for unconditional talks, the alliance is right to offer a clean slate to all groups in the state. Hurriyat should be welcome if it wants to talk, but not if it keeps on insisting that Pakistan must be a party. Here the Congress will be expected to keep PDP, which has made noises similar to Hurriyat's, in line with the national consensus on ignoring Islamabad as long as Islamabad ignores New Delhi's concerns on sponsored terrorism. There's in fact something the Congress can usefully point out to Hurriyat — the Sri Lanka example. The Tamil Tigers, bullet for bullet and body for body, have been as violent as Kashmiri *jehadis*. Yet after years of bloody insurrection the Tigers are at the negotiating table, having left behind the demand of a Tamil homeland. If Kashmiri groups, however violent and shady their past, can drop their demand for an *azad* or Pakistani Kashmir, they will find from in both Srinagar and New Delhi, in both the Congress and the BJP, plenty of receptive ears and lots of negotiation room.

# An agenda for a new Kashmir

HD-10 28/10 By Amitabh Mattoo

*Let there be a glasnost for the Kashmiri people, but care must be taken that this freedom is not used by external forces that are seeking to once again victimise the Kashmiris.*

JAMMU AND Kashmir rarely opens up to new opportunities. In the last 13 years, the window has opened only twice. After the 1996 election, the National Conference Government could have, had it acted with greater wisdom and maturity, translated the electoral verdict into sustainable political peace and economic stability on the ground. And yet, as we know, the NC squandered that popular expectation because of its cavalier attitude. The 2002 Assembly election has pushed the window almost fully open. The new People's Democratic Party-Congress coalition Government has a real chance to channelise the people's vote for peace and prosperity into the construction of a "naya" Kashmir. And yet, as we know from past experience, the window could quite as easily shut back and it may take years before a new opening can be made.

The unfortunate political differences between the PDP and the Congress over the creation of a coalition Government for the first 15 days after the declaration of results had begun to scar the popular psyche. And yet, this scar will vanish if the new Government addresses the real hurts and hopes of the people of the State. Indeed, if the delay has resulted in a firmer commitment to a common minimum programme and in the determination to make a real difference, the loss of a fortnight may begin to be recognised, in retrospect, as a blessing in disguise.

The common minimum programme is an imaginative document, but the focus of attention should be both on short-term and medium-measures that can generate and sustain a process of change. The first hundred days must be used for assuaging the hurt of the average resident of the State and in making powerful gestures and signals, but the period beyond the first few months must be employed in making a significant difference to the quality of life of everyone in Jammu and Kashmir. In the 1940s, the Na-

tional Conference, supported by the Congress, released its Naya Kashmir Manifesto: a document that electrified the State and transformed Jammu and Kashmir's politics, economics and society. There is a chance now for the new coalition Government to do the same in the first years of the 21st century.

Three short-term measures are self-evident. First, it is critical to build on the sentiment against violence and in favour of democratic processes. In Jammu and Kashmir today, there is an overwhelming sentiment against violence, irrespective of its origin or intent. Militancy may not be down and out, but it has lost its popular legitimacy. A large number of credible field surveys and opinion polls reveal that over 90 per cent of the Kashmiri people "disapprove" of violence. The elections too demonstrated that a large section of the Kashmiris is once again willing to give democracy a chance.

This widespread feeling can sustain itself only if people are empowered to more actively fight those who spread violence and terror in their name. This can only happen if there is an opening up of the political and civil space, by making the people rather than the security agencies the real bulwark against terrorism. While this may suggest a need to adopt radical measures, what is required is a gradual approach. Let there be a glasnost for the Kashmiri people, but care must be taken that this freedom is not used by external forces that are seeking to once again victimise the Kashmiris.

Second, it is vital to be as inclusive as possible and begin a dialogue with even those who may have

stayed away from the election. It is clear that the PDP has won considerable support in the Valley, and the Congress has the mandate of the people from Jammu. But there are groups and individuals who supported others, or who were unwilling to participate in the elections. The main political groups in Ladakh and

the separatists in Kashmir are just two examples. Including these groups in a dialogue is essential if the democratic process has to be carried forward, and their non-inclusion in the shaping of a new Kashmir may provide them with few incentives not to be subversive. Indeed, practical politics and political magnanimity, admittedly in rare supply these days, demand that even the NC is not excluded from such a process.

Finally, it is essential to meaningfully engage the rest of India including the Central Government. The State Government cannot hope to rebuild Kashmir in isolation; it requires a massive concerted effort of the Indian nation. It must be recognised that there is a growing sentiment within Indian civil society and powerful sections of the Central Government that partisan or sectarian agendas cannot be allowed to dictate policies towards Jammu and Kashmir. This feeling can only be tapped, however, if the State Government adopts an accommodationist rather than a confrontational agenda. The Congress has already demonstrated its willingness to be "generous" and go the extra mile. This should now reflect in its overall approach towards the State.

The medium-term agenda for the State must be focussed on that overused but still relevant cliché: provid-

ing good governance. But reaching out to the people in Jammu and Kashmir must not become an excuse for providing sops and adopting populist measures. In fact, there are four essential pre-requisites for ensuring good governance in Jammu and Kashmir. One, a strong and stable economic infrastructure that can unleash the entrepreneurial potential of the people of the State as well as generate employment. Two, an accountable, streamlined and people-sensitive administrative machinery. Three, a speedy grievance redressal system that includes an upright and effective Judiciary. Four, a revival of Kashmir's traditionally tolerant society and its expression in the form of Kashmiriyat. All four have been absent in the State for most of the last decade. Only if these are in place can we hope for an economically viable and politically and socially stable Jammu and Kashmir.

Finally, it is critical that the rest of India recognises the importance of Jammu and Kashmir and the urgent need to rebuild it. Jammu and Kashmir's uniqueness is obvious for a variety of historical reasons recognised even by the Supreme Court. More important, however, is Kashmir's singular importance to the very idea of India, which is often forgotten, that must now re-enter the consciousness of the political elite. A Muslim majority state that voluntarily acceded to India in 1947 lent tremendous strength to the construction of India as a vibrant, secular and pluralistic state. The battle, therefore, to recover the trust of the Kashmiri people is critical not just for the recovery of the ideals that inspired Indian nationhood, but also central to the war against obscurantism.

In other words, there must be a realisation that Kashmir must no longer be dealt with the kind of political ineptitude and bureaucratic inertia that has often characterised New Delhi's policies towards many other States over the last decades.

28 OCT 2002

NO POTA; SOG TO BE RELOCATED

# PDP, Cong. for talks with all segments in J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 27.** The People's Democratic Party-Congress coalition that is all set to stake its claim to form the government in Jammu and Kashmir has urged the Centre to hold unconditional talks with all segments of public opinion in the State and extended full cooperation to the national effort in fighting "cross-border militancy originating from Pakistan" while committing itself to providing the "healing touch".

This, in fact, tops the priority list of the coalition which unveiled its common minimum programme (CMP) here today in the presence of the leadership of the Congress, the PDP, the Democratic People's Forum and the Panthers Party, who have come together to provide a "viable alternative to several years of misrule by the National Conference".

According to the CMP, the goal of the coalition government is to "heal the physical, psychological and emotional wounds inflicted by 14 years of militancy", restore the rule of law in the State, complete the "revival of the political process" begun by the recent elections and "request the Government of India to initiate and hold, sincerely and seriously, wide-ranging consultations and dialogue, without conditions, with the members of the legislature and other segments of public opinion in all the three regions of the State to evolve a broad-based consensus on restoration of peace with honour in the State".

In anticipation of questions regarding the overall development of the State, given the fact that the Chief Minister-designate, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, is leader of a "Srinagar-centric" party, the Leader of the Opposi-



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, with the PDP president and Chief Minister-designate of Jammu and Kashmir, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

tion in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, said the CMP "seeks to usher in a new era of peace and normality in the State, and sustained development of all three regions".

Appreciative of the Congress for acting in the "national interest", Mr. Sayeed said the coalition government would not implement POTA, as there were enough laws to deal with militancy. As for the Special Operation Group, its personnel will be assimilated/relocated within the regular police establishment

as part of the overall effort to "humanise" the law and order machinery.

Besides reviewing all cases of detainees being held without trial for long periods, the coalition has also decided to review the operation of "all such laws that have been used in the past decade to deprive people of their basic rights to life and liberty without due legal process". However, this assurance comes with the caveat that "where the government deems that some special powers need to be re-

tained, it will ensure, by instituting careful and transparent pre-screening and monitoring procedures, that such powers are used sparingly and those entrusted with them are held accountable for any misuse".

Though the CMP was released on schedule as promised by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, on Saturday, while announcing the coalition, the finer details about the shape of the government continued to remain under wraps. However, it is clear that the posts of coordination committee chairman, Deputy Chief Minister and Speaker will go to the Congress.

While the name of the Jammu and Kashmir Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, is doing the rounds for coordination committee chairman, and that of the Jammu-based Congressman, Mangat Ram Sharma for Deputy Chief Ministership, the Congress working committee member, Arjun Singh, who, along with Manmohan Singh, has been closely involved in the negotiations with the PDP, refused to confirm it and said a decision would be taken by Ms. Gandhi. Also, he dismissed speculations of the Congress conceding the post of Chief Minister to the PDP under compulsion.

With the CMP finalised and the coalition arrangement more or less worked out, the task of government formation in J&K will shift back to the State, and Mr. Sayeed, who called on the Prime Minister this evening, is expected to stake claim in the next couple of days. As for the likely date of the swearing-in, all that the PDP vice-president, Muzaffar Hussain Baig, would say was: "We would like Ms. Gandhi to be present".

See also Page 11  
CMP excerpts on Page 13

## New Govt. will get all support: Advani

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 27.** The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today assured the Centre's support to the Congress-People's Democratic Party coalition in Jammu and Kashmir in fighting cross-border terrorism and on the developmental programmes to be carried out by the State Government.

"The two issues which would be naturally on focus in Jammu and Kashmir are cross-border terrorism and developmental programmes...", Mr. Advani told presspersons. "In both these matters, I, on behalf of the Central Government, can assure that they will get our full support and cooperation, he added. — PTI

# Mufti mellows, NC seeks way back to power

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & AGENCIES

**Srinagar:** A day ahead of a possible make-or-break meeting of People's Democratic Party chief Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Congress president Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi on Friday, speculation was rife about the future of the Jammu and Kashmir state assembly.

The PDP political affairs committee held a meeting here on Thursday morning to decide on the party's stand on government formation. The meeting was chaired by the Mufti and attended by, among others, vice presidents Mehbooba Mufti and Muzaffar Hussain Baig. Observers said that the Mufti was expected to toe the

Congress line to end the deadlock between the two parties on government formation.

The PDP president's mellowed approach was reflected at a rally at Lal Chowk here on Thursday where he said that he had a "flexible" way of working and hoped that a coalition with the Congress would fructify. "The people of J&K have voted for opposition parties and given a fractured verdict in which a coalition government becomes inevitable. I want the wishes of the people to be respected as the voice of the people is the voice of god," Mr Sayeed said.

In what is seen as yet another climbdown on his part, the PDP leader said that his party was

against the disbanding of the STF, the anti-terrorism wing of the state police, against which certain allegations have been levelled.

Earlier in the day, senior Congress leader and that party's emissary to the state Manmohan Singh said that he was optimistic of a breakthrough being effected in the two parties' talks. "One has to be optimistic while dealing with the problems of the country at large," he said.

Meanwhile, despite the initial posturing of the National Conference that it would respect the verdict of the people and play the role of a responsible opposition, the party seems to be now inclined towards a tie-up with the Congress

to form the next state government.

Sources in the party said it would, however, insist on being the "senior partner" on the basis of having won eight more seats than the Congress. Besides, the Congress would have to make the "first move".

According to the sources, the NC would "in no case" have any truck with the PDP. Mr Sayeed and his daughter Mehbooba Mufti are seen as sworn enemies of both Farooq and Omar Abdullah.

Mr Farooq Abdullah's latest statement that "no government in the state can be formed without the help of the NC" reflected the present thinking in the party, a worker said.

Sonia overrules protests  
to hand Mufti top job

# Kashmir first, crown after 3 years

**RASHEED KIDWAI**

**New Delhi, Oct. 26: Sonia Gandhi today sacrificed the aspirations of her party in the larger interests of the people, hoisting Mufti Mohammad Sayeed as chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir.**

Ending a fortnight of suspense over government formation, the Congress president conceded she had overruled several CWC members and chief ministers to decide in favour of the People's Democratic Party. Ironically, the PDP had been formed after Mufti and his daughter Mehbooba walked out of the Congress, protesting against Sonia's "indifferent attitude" towards their state.

Moved by Sonia's gesture, the PDP agreed to dilute some radical provisions in its manifesto. In the Common Minimum Programme signed by the parties, both agreed to pick a deputy chief minister from Jammu, most likely to be Mangat Ram Sharma of the Congress.

The posts of both the chief minister and his deputy will be held on a rotational basis for three years. Mufti will occupy the hot seat for the first three years after which his Congress deputy is expected to take over.

Mufti also agreed not to include the contentious issue of disbanding the Special Operations Group in the CMP. But the programme talks about respecting human rights and punishing violators.

Talks with militants will be held within the framework of the Indian Constitution. The greater autonomy issue will be sorted out in accordance with the Indira Gandhi-Sheikh Abdullah accord of 1975.

Sources close to Sonia said she settled on Mufti hoping he would be able to break the Hurriyat's hegemony and bring Kashmiris back into the mainstream. Repeatedly stressing on the "larger interests" of the people, Sonia recalled a commitment she made at a Srinagar public meeting that she would "do everything to resolve pain and suffering".

Several political and apolitical persons are believed to have played a key role in egging Sonia to rise above party considerations. Among them were former prime ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao, V.P. Singh and I.K. Gujral as well as Arjun Singh, Manmohan Singh, M.L. Fotedar, R.K. Dhawan and senior bureaucrats from the Kashmir cadre.

But not all in the Congress were happy, including chief ministerial also-ran Ghulam Nabi Azad. He is now set to get a Rajya Sabha berth and the post of general secretary in the AICC. Azad is likely to quit as legislature party leader and probably as state Congress chief as he is not on the best of terms with Mufti. His return to the AICC will kick off a power struggle among those claiming to be close to Sonia.

Sonia and Mufti said the government's first priority would be to provide a healing touch to the Kashmiris. "We have decided to give Mufti sahib a chance in the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. We are determined to see that the aspirations and hopes of the people are fulfilled," Sonia said.

A pleased Mufti said: "We have decided to unite and there is common concern among all of us. Together this is the golden opportunity provided to the state of Jammu and Kashmir."

See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

27 OCT 2002



DEAL ON COMMON MINIMUM PROGRAMME TOO

# Mufti to be CM for first 3 years

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, OCT. 26. After a fortnight-long war of nerves, the Congress today relented and agreed to have the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, as the Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir on a rotational basis of three years to begin with. Thereafter, the Chief Ministership will go to the Congress for the remaining three years.

The much-awaited decision was announced by the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, at her residence in the presence of Mr. Sayeed and the leaders of their principal allies, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, of the People's Democratic Forum and Bhim Singh of the Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party.

Together, the four parties account for 46 MLAs, two more than the required number to

stake a claim to form the government in the 87-member Assembly.

Earlier, Ms. Gandhi had an hour-long meeting with Mr. Sayeed. They were later joined by Mr. Bhim Singh — who, earlier in the day, had categorically said that he would not support a coalition led by the PDP — and Mr. Tarigami, whose support to a Congress-PDP coalition has been unconditional from the beginning.

Ms. Gandhi said the decision was taken in the "larger interest of the country and the State," and conceded that having the PDP lead the coalition did not enjoy the favour of a sizeable section of her party, including its senior leadership. On why the Congress had delayed the decision, she said: "The Congress is a large organisation and we follow a certain system. We consulted all our colleagues and Chief Ministers, many of whom

were in favour of the Congress leading the government. Finally, together with my colleagues, I came to the conclusion that in the larger interest of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, it would be the right thing to give the Chief Ministership to Mr. Sayeed."

Mr. Sayeed said that the elections had provided a "golden opportunity" and could well be a turning point. While both the leaders said the nitty-gritty of the coalition was still under discussion, Mr. Sayeed maintained that the effort would be to honour the mandate of the people and "coordinate and consolidate the secular democratic forces."

Though Ms. Gandhi had said that the details of the common minimum programme (CMP), the duration of the rotational arrangement and the issue of Deputy Chief Ministership would be announced on Sunday afternoon, the Jammu and Kashmir Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said the Chief Ministership would be with the PDP for three years, during which time the Congress would have its representative as the deputy.

Earlier, the senior Congress leaders, Arjun Singh, Ambika Soni, Mr. Azad and Ahmed Patel, met at the residence of the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, to prepare the draft CMP. It was then presented to Ms. Gandhi and after an hour-long discussion, Mr. Arjun Singh told the media that with the drafting of the CMP wrapped up, Ms. Gandhi would invite Mr. Sayeed for a discussion to work towards forging an alliance.

READY TO SORT OUT DIFFERENCES: MEHBOOBA MUFTI

# Congress-PDP talks to resume tomorrow

HD-1  
24/10

9 8x  
0 8 ✓

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 23.** A day after the Congress 'decided' to stake its claim to form the government in Jammu and Kashmir irrespective of whether or not the People's Democratic Party (PDP) joined the coalition, the PDP leadership today made a fresh overture, and talks between the two parties are expected to resume on Friday.

As of now, the PDP president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, is scheduled to reach here on Friday and hold talks with the Congress leadership to break the deadlock that has prevented the two potential allies from coming together to form a government a fortnight after the Assembly election results were declared.

The PDP's willingness to make another effort to iron out the differences came within 12

hours of the Congress indicating that it would stake claim without the PDP's support, and in the wake of the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, stating this morning that a minority government was an option that could be explored given the fragmented nature of the new Assembly.

The decision to resume talks was taken at a meeting of a few senior party leaders at 10 Janpath after the PDP vice-president, Mehbooba Mufti, telephoned the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, this morning to express her party's willingness to hold further talks.

According to the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh — who had been sent to Srinagar last weekend to break the impasse — Mehbooba Mufti told Ms. Gandhi that the PDP was ready to sort out all differences

and work towards providing a stable government.

After the telephonic conversation between Ms. Gandhi and Mehbooba Mufti, Dr. Singh called up Mr. Sayeed and invited him to Delhi for talks. Without divulging details on the issues that would be discussed, he said the proposals put forth by him during his Srinagar visit would be considered along with some fresh PDP proposals.

The Congress is learnt to have offered Mehbooba Mufti the post of Deputy Chief Minister and Mr. Sayeed the chairmanship of the Coordination Committee. Also, the Congress had suggested a rotational arrangement with representatives of both parties occupying the office of Chief Minister for three years.

For now, the Congress 'strong-arm' tactic appears to have paid off with the PDP ex-

tending the olive branch soon after the national party decided to go it alone following the 'failure' of the 'Manmohan mission'. That the PDP has made a climbdown is evident from the fact that Mehbooba Mufti's call was preceded by some tough posturing last night when the party said it would prefer to sit in the Opposition rather than give up its claim to Chief Ministership.

But, eager as "Ms. Gandhi is to consolidate the mandate to provide a viable and credible alternative to fulfil the aspirations of the people of the State," senior leaders were unwilling to reveal the party's hand for fear of 'pre-empting' the negotiations. Still, while indications are that the party would not give up its insistence on leading the government, leaders maintained that they would negotiate with an 'open mind'.

## DECISION LEFT TO SONIA GANDHI

# Manmohan mission fails to break J&K deadlock

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, OCT. 21.** The second and final round of talks between the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi's special emissary and senior party leader, Manmohan Singh, and the People's Democratic Party president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today failed to end the standoff on who should lead the coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir. The final decision has been left to Ms. Gandhi, which, Dr. Singh said, would be taken in the backdrop of Mr. Sayeed's suggestions.

Deliberations, which had remained inconclusive on Sunday, resumed at a luncheon meeting at Mr. Sayeed's residence.

Besides Dr. Singh, the Kashmir Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and senior PDP leaders, Mehbooba Mufti and Muzaffar Hussain Beig, were also present. The issue of Chief Ministership, which has emerged as the stumbling block to government formation, continued to dominate the discussions.

Sources said that a suggestion — put forth by the mediators in the past few days — that a high-power committee be constituted as a parallel to the Cabinet which could be headed by the PDP president, was also turned down by the party. "No headway was made and the

PDP remained adamant in securing the top post" sources said. After the hour-long meeting, Dr. Singh said he was going to Delhi with some suggestion made by the PDP.

Asked whether the deadlock had ended, he said "there was no deadlock and the meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere. We discussed all the issues. Mufti Sahib made some suggestions and we also put forth some suggestions. I will inform the party high command about this. It would not be appropriate for me to make any comment on the conclusion of the talks before the high command takes a decision."

Dr. Singh did not agree that the talks had failed. "I cannot

say that the talks have failed. We will like to resolve the issue as soon as possible and form a government," he said.

The PDP vice-president, Muzaffar Beig, also sought to give the impression that the talks had not failed. "Today's meeting was a courtesy call. Certain things were discussed and it is not appropriate for me to disclose them... There was never a deadlock. Talks cannot break easily and they can never fructify easily," he said.

Earlier in the day, Dr. Singh called on the Governor, G. C. Saxena, at the Raj Bhavan. He was accompanied by Mr. Azad. Dr. Singh met the Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party chief, Bhim Singh, who has ex-

tended conditional support to the Congress. The eight-member People's Democratic Forum of independents and the CPI (M) also met Dr. Singh. The forum supports Mr. Azad for Chief Ministership.

The forum has also proposed that some important Cabinet berths and the post of Deputy Chief Minister be given to the PDP — probably to Mehbooba Mufti — in lieu of Chief Ministership to the Congress.

Sources said the PDF, with the full backing of the Congress, had agreed to institutionalise the Deputy Chief Minister's post with some important powers. However, the Mufti had rejected the offer.

**Azad's stand: Page 11**

## Sonia calls meet today

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 21.** With the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, refusing to give up his claim for Chief Ministership, the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, has called a meeting of senior party leaders tomorrow to discuss government-formation in Jammu and Kashmir.

This was decided late this evening after the leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh and the J&K Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, briefed her about their latest rounds of talks with the PDP president in Srinagar. While senior party leaders refused to say whether a final decision would be taken at the meeting, indications are that the

leadership will decide whether to continue with the ongoing efforts to win over Mr. Sayeed.

The Congress has suggested a rotational arrangement with representatives of both parties occupying the office of Chief Minister for three years. Should a Congress-PDP tie-up be engineered, the two parties would have to share ministerial berths with 18 independents who have extended support to such an alliance.

In fact, according to Mr. Azad, the independents constitute a block bigger and are more regionally representative than the PDP which has only 16 MLAs — all from the Valley. Of the 18 independents in favour of a Congress-PDP tie-up, 15 are said to have extended support on the condition that the coalition is led by the Congress.

1997 INDL

77 OCT 2002

HD-1  
ANOTHER ROUND OF DELIBERATIONS TODAY

# Manmohan fails to make headway in talks with Mufti

By Shujaat Bukhari 01/10

**SRINAGAR, OCT. 20.** The talks between the senior Congress leader, Manmohan Singh, and the president of the People's Democratic Party, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, to break the stalemate over forming a popular government in Jammu and Kashmir remained inconclusive today. The meeting was preceded by a telephonic conversation between the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and Mr. Sayeed. Deliberations will resume tomorrow.

Dr. Singh, specially deputed to the Valley by the Congress high command to iron out the differences, particularly over chief ministership, held a detailed meeting with his party legislators. He later met Mr. Sayeed at his Nowgam residence on the outskirts of the city. The one-to-one meeting lasted for about 50 minutes, in which the issue of chief ministership is believed to have been the focus. Even as Dr. Singh conveyed the impressions of his MLAs, the PDP chief reiterated that the people's verdict was to



The senior Congress leader, Manmohan Singh, during a meeting with the PDP chief, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, in Srinagar on Sunday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

dislodge the National Conference and that his party represented the sentiments of the Kashmiris. Nothing was known of any "package" from the Congress president to persuade the PDP to join a coalition.

Refusing to divulge the details of the meeting, Dr. Singh

told mediapersons that "we have met and will meet again tomorrow. Everything was discussed and we have to find a solution," he said adding "there is always a hope of finding solutions." Mr. Sayeed gave the slip to presspersons while Dr. Singh was talking to them. "He has

nothing to say at the moment," said a PDP leader.

On Saturday evening, Ms. Gandhi called up Mr. Sayeed and is believed to have made a bid to persuade him to go along with the Congress stand.

On his arrival from Delhi with the Jammu and Kashmir Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, Dr. Singh drove to the hotel where the Congress MLAs have been staying for the past one week. He sought their views on the contentious issues. The MLAs reiterated their backing for Mr. Azad as Chief Minister and said they were ready to offer the post of Deputy Chief Minister to the PDP. "All the 24 MLAs (four from the Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party) are for Mr. Azad as Chief Minister" said the PCC vice-president, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed.

The Legislature Party leader of the People's Democratic Forum, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, who met Ms. Gandhi on Saturday and urged her to help end the political uncertainty in the State is still hopeful of a solution.

2 1 971 1002

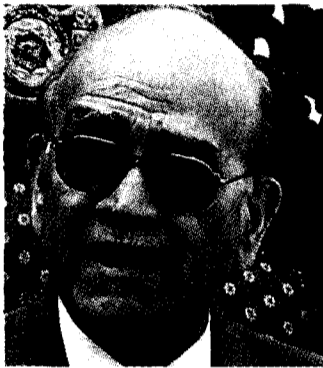
# 'No deadline for govt. formation'

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, OCT. 19. The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Girish Chandra Saxena, today said that the doors were open for the political parties to come with a "credible claim" to form the government and there was no deadline now for forming one.

Explaining the reasons for the imposition of Governor's rule in the State, Mr. Saxena said he tried all the options for having a new government in place before October 17. "Since the verdict was a fractured one, a fluid and complex situation was created," he told a news conference at the Raj Bhavan here.

"I took an initiative and wrote



The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, G.C. Saxena.

letters to the heads of three major political parties — the National Conference, the Congress

and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) — and wanted to benefit from their views," said Mr. Saxena. "After the first round of talks with them I asked these parties to come by October 21 with all the relevant documents as evidence for the support of the required number of members in the House. However, on October 17, the former Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, expressed his inability to continue as caretaker head of the government. I told him that there is no such deadline in the Constitution requiring the Chief Minister to resign in the absence of a new government and he could consider continuing in office," he explained. "But after

he refused to continue, a situation of breakdown in constitutional machinery arose and I had to initiate action and could not avoid Governor's rule".

Responding to a question, he said that it was not feasible to swear in a Chief Minister in three to four hours and since no claim was pending.

The parties were free to come with the required numbers and stake their claim even beyond October 21. "The doors are open," he said. "I cannot say how long Governor's rule will continue. It could be short and even a bit longer but my effort will be to keep it shorter."

Cong. to go it alone?: Page 8

20 Oct 2002

1998 10/19/02

FAROOQ REFUSES TO CONTINUE AS CARETAKER CM

# Governor's rule imposed in Jammu and Kashmir

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, OCT. 17. Exactly after the expiry of the six-year term of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, Governor's rule was imposed tonight for six months following the refusal of the outgoing Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, to continue as caretaker head of government.

The State Assembly, which came into existence after the recent elections, has been put under suspended animation.

The Raj Bhavan issued two notifications to the effect late in the night. The Governor, Girish Chandra Saxena, issued the notifications after consulting a battery of high-level State officials and the Union Home Ministry and after getting the concurrence of the President. However, political parties aspiring to form the government in the last seven days have been asked to come at any time to stake their claim after having the magic number of 44 in the 87-member Assembly.

Earlier in the day, there was high drama when Dr. Abdullah

called on Mr. Saxena and requested him to relieve him of his charge after midnight.

"I do not have the moral right to continue as Chief Minister since the Assembly by virtue of which my Government was in office would cease to exist tonight" he told a press conference. "I am waiting for the Governor's response. Then I will decide" he said.

However, this was followed by telephonic calls by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, who asked Dr. Abdullah to continue.

The Governor, too, wrote to him asking him to continue till October 21, the deadline set for political parties to come with the majority needed to form the government.

But late in the evening, Dr. Abdullah conferred with his party leaders and conveyed his inability to continue as caretaker Chief Minister. This led to a serious crisis in official and political circles which finally forced the Governor to take the extreme step.



**The outgoing Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, at a press conference at his residence in Srinagar on Thursday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad**

However, the Governor told the political parties that they were free to come anytime with the numbers and stake their claim.

"He told us that he can revoke the Governor's rule on his own once the parties come with

numbers", the Pradesh Congress Committee president and Congress Legislature Party leader, Ghulam Nabi Azad, told *The Hindu* late in the night. "We will continue the efforts and try to form the government as soon as possible", he said.

He was, however, surprised why Dr. Abdullah took more than 10 hours to convey the decision to the Governor.

The Legislature Party leader of the People's Democratic Forum (PDF) and CPI (M) State Secretary, Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, said "this is unfortunate and the vested interests right from Srinagar to Delhi have finally succeeded in subverting the democratic process".

The National Conference had emerged as the single largest party with 28 seats followed by the Congress with 20 and the People's Democratic Party with 16. The Congress and the PDP had started negotiations on government formation but failed to agree on the issue of Chief Ministership.

**Independents' claim: Page 11**

H0-1  
18/10

1 8 OCT 2002

INDIA

CONG., PDP YET TO FIND COMMON GROUND

# J&K Governor gives time till Oct. 21

By Shujaat Bukhari

HD-1  
19/10  
SRINAGAR, OCT. 16. Giving more time for government formation, the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Girish Chandra Saxena, today asked the National Conference, the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to come out with the numbers by October 21. The term of the State Assembly is expiring tomorrow.

However, the stalemate between the Congress and the PDP over power-sharing continued for the sixth day and the People's Democratic Forum, third group, appealed to both the parties to sink their differences in the larger interest of the people.

In separate communications to the National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, the State Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and the PDP president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Mr. Saxena said they should clarify by October 21 whether their parties had the requisite support of 44 members in the 87-member Assembly to stake claim for power. "His Excellency has, on the request of various leaders, extended the time for government formation and letters have been sent accordingly asking them to meet him along with the duly elected leaders of the Legislative Party at a mutually convenient time on any day before 5 p.m. on October 21 to clarify whether their party has the requisite support among the members of the Assembly to form a stable government," a Raj Bhavan communique said.

"Any of the leaders of these parties making such a claim would need to bring along the necessary evidence in their support, including any relevant resolutions of their party, and, or, the legislature party as well as valid letters of support from concerned parties or groups of individual

members who have given their clear agreement to join or support the government of their party or a coalition of which their party is a member."

Earlier in the day, Mr. Azad, also the CLP leader, and the PDP legislature party leader and CPI (M) State secretary, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, met Mr. Saxena and sought more time to bring about an agreement on government formation.

Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Sayeed also met the Governor. Sources said that after meeting the leaders, Mr. Saxena had a telephonic conversation with the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani.

Mr. Azad told reporters at the Raj Bhavan that he had another round of talks with Mr. Sayeed in the morning and "both of us agreed to seek further time from the Governor. I conveyed to Mufti saheb that the issue should not revolve around Chief Ministership and that we should instead keep in mind the interests and aspirations of the people... talks will continue and I am hopeful of an agreement."

Mr. Tarigami said "if the stalemate continues, Governor's rule becomes inevitable. (In accordance with the State's Constitution, the Governor should have assumed power by Thursday). So we have appealed to both the Congress and the PDP to sink their differences... the verdict is a historical opportunity and is not in favour of a particular party but for a change." He admitted that his formula, which was for a greater representation to the PDP in the Cabinet and the Chief Minister's post to the Congress, had not worked.

The Panther's Party, which has four members in the Assembly, meanwhile, urged the parties to come closer to form a government and keep the National Conference out of power. Its president, Bhim Singh, pledged his party's support to a Congress-led government.

7 OCT 2002

# NC trying its best to form govt

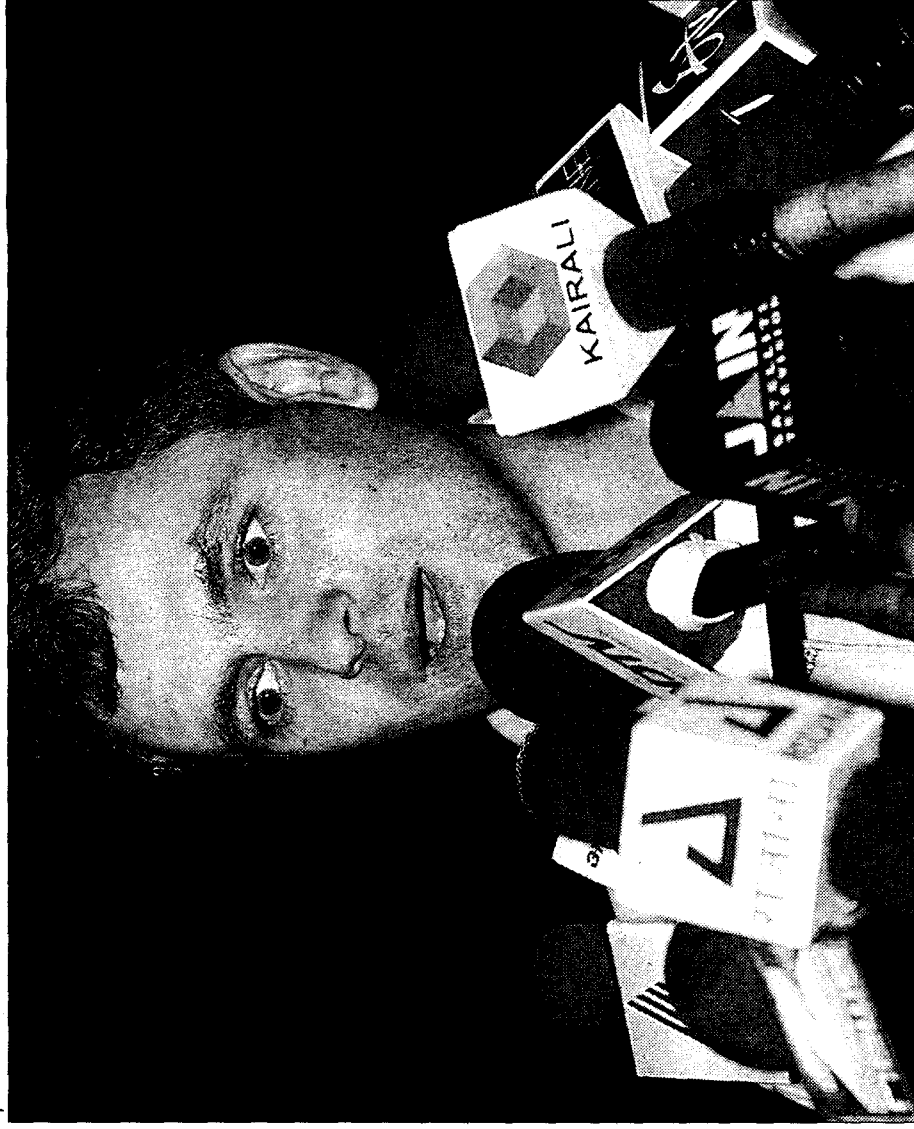
5/25 15/10

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Oct. 14. — Sensing that the Congress and the PDP were finding it tough to reach an agreement to form a coalition government in the state, the Abdullahs seem to have given in to the pressure of a section of legislators within the National Conference who believe that they should still try to form the government with the help of independents and other smaller parties.

If the first whiff of the fact that something was cooking came when PDP vice-president Mr Muzaffar Beig had a surprise two-hour meeting with Dr Farooq Abdullah at his residence followed by yesterday's meeting of National Conference working committee after which the senior party leader Mr Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah said that the NC had not closed its options to stake claim to form the government in J&K, the confirmation that NC was trying to form the government came today when the party patron met the newly elected MLA from Zadibal constituency, a party rebel, and brought him back to the party fold.

Dr Abdullah and other leaders went to the house of party rebel Mr Shahjahan Dar, the newly elected MLA from Zadibal who was denied party ticket. Rumours were also rife that Dr Abdullah was trying to bring back another five party rebels who had made it to the new Assembly. These include Mr Abdul Majid Wani (Doda), Moulvi



Mr Omar Abdullah talks to the Press after meeting the Prime Minister. In New Delhi on Monday. — AFP

Abdul Rashid (Banihal), Mr Raman (Amirakadal). However, sources said that still the prospects of National Conference forming the government with the help of

independents and other smaller parties seemed quite bleak.

Even if the National Conference manages to bring back three MLAs to its fold, the party still would make it to 32 seats.

With one seat each of BSP and BJP, two seats from CPM (NC had supported CPM MLA in the previous elections) and four seats of Panthers party, NC could hardly make it to 40, still four short of the number required to form the government.

"So, it seems very difficult as the remaining independents have already associated themselves with other groups. And the Ladakh Union Territory Front's two MLAs would never support NC as they feel that they have been discriminated against by the party in the past," said a political observer.

Meanwhile, National Conference president Mr Omar Abdullah also met Governor Mr GC Saxena today for consultations on government formation in the state in the wake of a hung verdict in the Assembly elections. The party had said yesterday that the governor was constitutionally bound to invite it first for forming the government.

## Omar quits, NC to stay with NDA

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 14. — The National Conference will remain in the NDA, though its president, Mr Omar Abdullah, resigned today from the Union council of ministers.

The Prime Minister has not taken any decision on the resignation submitted by Mr Abdullah from the post of minister of state for external affairs, PMO sources said. Mr Abdullah had earlier said that he would resign after the Prime Minister returned from his foreign tour. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee returned to Delhi late last night and Mr Abdullah too flew into the Capital to submit his resignation. However, he clarified that his party would continue to remain in the NDA.

Mr Abdullah told newsmen that he had informed the Prime Minister that he has to do a lot of work to make up for the party's poor show in the recently concluded polls. "There will be no time for me to perform a role in the Union government." He, however, maintained that NC's relations with the NDA government would remain unchanged. "We are part of the NDA and will remain so. There is no change in that," he said. On his move to resign some months back, Mr Abdullah said that at that time the "circumstances were different. I had offered to resign because of my responsibility at that time as I could not vote with the government (in Parliament over the Gujarat issue). But this time, I have handed over the resignation with a request that it be accepted." Mr Abdullah also met Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani before putting in his papers. He said there would be no retraction on his decision to resign from the post.



# A defining moment for Kashmir

10-10 11/10  
By Malini Parthasarathy

*It is unlikely that the Kashmiris whose historical imagination remains fixated on the dream of independence can be wooed back with anything less than a dramatic paradigm shift towards autonomy of a radical kind.*

IF THE credit for what has been widely acknowledged as a free and fair election in Jammu and Kashmir should go primarily to the dogged efforts of the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, to ensure the transparency and the security of the electoral process, thus producing a result that is credible as it is promising, the real heartwarmer was the fact that large numbers of Kashmiris voted, thereby signalling their willingness to renew their faith in the Indian democratic system. The defeat of the National Conference, a partner in the NDA coalition ruling at Delhi, the strong electoral showing of the Congress party and the emergence of the People's Democratic Party have yielded space for a fresh set of political interlocutors who can now commit themselves to work for a genuine resolution of Kashmir's identity crisis. With the international community, particularly the United States showing no hesitation in pronouncing the J&K elections as "credible" and "free and fair", it is for the Indian Union to seize the moment and utilise the political space that is clearly opening up for fresh initiatives from New Delhi to reach out to the embittered and weary Kashmiris.

But it must be recognised that the holding of the elections to the State Assembly cannot be seen as an end in itself and the Vajpayee administration would do well to eschew the temptation of indulging in triumphalist rhetoric and using this as another opportunity to gloat over the contrast with a more beleaguered Pakistan. More than anything, the Kashmiri electorate appears to have not only sidelined the National Conference but also has pointedly snubbed the BJP which has won only one new seat, losing all the eight it had won earlier in the 1996 Assembly elections. It is clear that the Hindutva majoritarian project which is in essence the BJP's primary political platform, despite its protestations to the contrary, and which the NC had inexplicably allowed itself to be associated with when it joined the NDA coalition, has been resoundingly rejected in all the regions of J&K. The RSS's hard-sell of the trifurcation proposal has evidently not found favour even with the non-Muslim minorities in the State. The fact that the Kashmiris did determinedly vote in this election, braving a hail of jihadi bullets and bombs, also testifies to their eagerness for a political solution which can no longer be deferred.

The Congress party which appears most likely to lead the new Government in Srinagar will have to live up to the expectations implied in the votes that were cast in these elections. The onus is now on the new leaders in Srinagar to devise fresh political strategies to address the persisting sense of the alienation of the Kashmiri people. The Congress party has had a long if complex historical association with the Kashmir problem given the troubled dynamics of the relationship that existed between the Nehru family leaders and the Abdullahs, which often erupted into full-scale conflict and bitterness between the two, leading to the Congress party's own loss of credibility as an interlocutor. Therefore it has now to regain the political confidence that it has lost. Complicating its task is the political reality that these election results are more a reflection of the unpopularity of the NC rather than the appeal of any other party.

If the Congress is to make the most of this new and historic opportunity and is serious about leading the secular and pluralist forces in this country in a principled resistance to the Hindutva majoritarian project, Kashmir is a test-case of the sincerity of its intentions and of the maturity of its political approach. It is true that under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi, the Congress has been making a spirited attempt to regain its moral authority in terms of reclaiming the high ground of India's strong secular and pluralist traditions. Shedding much of its earlier ambivalence, the Congress party has recently shown itself willing to assertively stand up for the minorities, for the idea of a nation-state based on the equality of all communities, as in its political response in Gujarat where it has shown itself ready to do battle with the confrontationalist and destructive policies of Narendra Modi.

But there is no evidence as yet that the Congress party and its leader are willing to go further and break fresh political ground in their attempt to offer a credible and appealing alternative to the BJP-led NDA. Merely

swearing allegiance to secularism and piously repeating slogans of yesteryears would not really help in rebuilding the Congress party's image as a party that means business. There is still a strong impression that the party's political approach remains timorous and lacks creativity when it comes to figuring out new responses to old problems such as Kashmir or relations with Pakistan. The Congress party has appeared to prefer to adhere to the time-worn and traditional formulations adopted on these issues. Even during the election campaign in Jammu and Kashmir, while Ms. Gandhi did promise an "unconditional" dialogue with the Kashmir people, she seemed to carefully stop short of spelling out her party's stand on the issue of the historically-mandated right of the Kashmiris to more autonomy than in other Indian States.

The Congress party is in fact well placed to pick up the dialogue process on autonomy, given that it was a Congress Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, who more than three decades ago put her signature on an agreement with Sheikh Abdullah, reaffirming the State's right to autonomy and vesting in it, the residuary powers of legislation. The 1975 pact, an updated version of the original 1952 agreement between Jawaharlal Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah, contained the core of an approach that remains as valid today. If some of the features of these accords have become obsolete or rendered irrelevant by the passage of time, it remains that the Kashmiris feel betrayed that the historical commitment of the Indian nation to the Kashmiri people that their accession to the Union would always be contingent on the condition that the State would retain control of most of its own affairs, except for defence, foreign affairs and communications, has been repudiated.

Thus given that the Kashmiris, much like the Sri Lankan Tamils, have internalised in their imagination the idea that their aspirations have been cold-shouldered and that they have been repeatedly betrayed with

unkept promises and brute repression, it would be foolhardy and reckless to presume that if the situation is left alone to "cool down", their sense of alienation will disappear. By all accounts, the strong sense of anguish in the Kashmir Valley that thousands of young lives have been sacrificed for the cause of "azadi" cannot be so easily diluted by suggestions that once the spectre of jihadi terrorism is banished, normalcy will return. There have been glib and misleading suggestions that the political aspirations of the Kashmiris can be managed without having "to give away too much". These assertions apparently bank upon winning the diplomatic support of the U.S. and the international community, and are premised on the calculation that a Valley flooded with a barrage of economic incentives from New Delhi would be more eager for integration with the Union. But it is unlikely that the Kashmiris whose historical imagination remains fixated on the dream of independence can be wooed back with anything less than a dramatic paradigm shift towards autonomy of a radical kind. Even if the new leadership in Srinagar is reluctant to pick up the old texts of 1952 or 1975, it will have to make the conceptual acknowledgment that there is a historical and Constitutionally-mandated commitment on the part of the Indian Union to the people of J&K to restore to them the autonomy that was promised to them when they acceded to India.

In a larger sense, the moment cannot be more in India's favour than it is now as it proceeds to address the one issue that has so severely tested India's political energies and diplomatic skills. All the indications are that the international community has welcomed these elections as the start of a political process that will help keep the Kashmiris within India's democratic framework. The Hurriyat has been told bluntly that the international community will not support the idea of an independent Kashmir and more importantly, Pakistan has been politely told by the U.S. that it is not a good idea to sound contentious on the election process in J&K. It is now for India to strengthen the moral authority of its rule in Kashmir by honouring its promises to its people. It would also have to embark on a creative engagement of Pakistan which will in the long run help to succeed in dissipating the challenge to India's sovereignty over Kashmir.

9.8x 2.8x PDP DEMANDS CM POST 14/10 10-1

# CLP meet convened to decide on govt. formation

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, OCT. 13.** With the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, insisting that his party should lead the government in Jammu and Kashmir, the hectic parleys within the Congress over government formation in the State proved "inconclusive" as the high command decided to first ascertain the views of the newly-elected MLAs before taking a final decision.

A meeting of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) has been convened for Monday afternoon, and three senior Congressmen — Ahmad Patel, R. K. Dhawan and Satyajit Gaekwad — have been asked to attend it as observers.

However, it was not clear whether the CLP would elect its leader at the meeting as the Congress Working Committee (CWC) member, Manmohan Singh, dodged the question. The Pradesh Congress Committee president, Ghulam Nabi Azad — who has twice postponed his return to the State over the past two days — will also attend the meeting.

Briefing mediapersons after a four-and-a-half-hour-long meeting — the last of three today — Dr. Singh said all decisions pertaining to government formation would be taken after the CLP meeting.

## Common agenda

About the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) — which PDP has been insisting upon — for the coalition government, he said "discussions

have taken place on what elements should go into the CMP," but conceded that there were some rough spots which needed to be ironed out.

The decision to ascertain the mind of the CLP was taken after a meeting between the Congress chief, Sonia Gandhi, and Mr. Sayeed late today.

It was at this meeting — during which Ms. Gandhi underlined the need for all like-minded parties in the State to work together to make the best of the "unique opportunity" given to them by the electorate — that Mr. Sayeed insisted his party should lead the government.

In the morning, Mr. Sayeed met the core group of Dr. Singh, the CWC member, Arjun Singh, Mr. Azad, and AICC general secretary, Ambika Soni — who have been advising Ms. Gandhi on the government formation — at Dr. Singh's residence. This was followed by a meeting of the core group with Ms. Gandhi at 10 Janpath.

Later, in the evening, she convened an informal meeting of the CWC, which was attended by R. K. Dhawan, Ahmad Patel, Mukul Wasnik, Oscar Fernandes, Natwar Singh, Mahavir Prasad and Motilal Vora, besides the core group.

While the CWC met for an hour-and-a-half, the core group remained closeted at 10 Janpath for another three hours before coming out to brief the media.

Even as the Congress central leadership has decided to await the decision of the CLP on government formation, time is running out fast as a new

dispensation has to be put in place by mid-week.

Add to this the decision of the National Conference to join the race; particularly given the fact that a senior PDP leader had met the outgoing Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, the day after the results were out.

If that was not enough to queer the pitch for the Congress, the party was at odds to explain the decision of Mr. Sayeed to meet the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, this morning. Though in the know of the meeting, Mr. Sayeed apparently did not take his potential allies into confidence as to what transpired in the meeting.

## Governor invites parties for consultations

By Our Special Correspondent

**SRINAGAR, OCT. 13.** The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, G.C. Saxena, has invited the chiefs of three major political parties for consultations in the run-up to the formation of the next government.

"His Excellency has invited the presidents of the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party and the State president of the Congress for consultations before October 15," Arun Kumar, Secretary to Governor, told *The Hindu*. The term of the present Assembly expires on October 17.

The PDP president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and the State Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, will meet the Governor on Tuesday. Both were in New Delhi today for consultations on government formation. The Congress Legislature Party is also meeting here tomorrow to discuss the issue.

## NC keeps options open

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, OCT. 13.** The NC spokesman, Mohiuddin Shah, today said that his party's president, Omar Abdullah, would meet the Governor on Monday in response to the invitation for a consultation.

After an extraordinary meeting of the party's working committee, the spokesman said the party was in touch with the independents. "Political beings talk to political beings," he said.

Asked whether the NC would explore the possibilities of forming the next government, Mr. Shah said, "When the Pan-

ther's Party president, Bhim Singh, can stake claim with four members, why can't we think on those lines, being the single largest party".

He said, "How can we close the doors? In politics, there are always surprises." Some of "our rebels" have won the elections and "they belong to our party", he said indicating that the channels of communication with the independents were open. He said the party would not pull out of the NDA at the Centre but Mr. Abdullah had expressed his willingness to resign as the Union Minister of State for External Affairs.

## THE HINDU

Our office will remain closed today on account of Ayudha Pooja and there will be no issue of THE HINDU dated 15th October, 2002.

JOINT MANAGING DIRECTOR

## Panthers Party chief stakes claim in J&K

HA-10  
By Our Staff Reporter  
13/10

**JAMMU, OCT. 12.** The Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party chief, Bhim Singh, today said that all the parties should support him for the post of Chief Minister.

The party has four legislators in the 87-member State Assembly, all of whom are from the Jammu region. They hold the balance of power where the prospective Congress-PDP alliance has a total of 36 members. Speaking to reporters after the party's executive meeting here today, Mr. Singh said, "our executive meeting has decided to ask each and every political party to support my claim as the Chief Minister of the State." Justifying his claim, he said, "people have rejected every other party's Chief Ministerial candidate."

Political parties, including the National Conference, could support the Panthers Party to form a government on its merits as was done when Chandra Shekhar formed the government at the Centre in 1990 even though his party had a very small number of MPs.

100

1 3 001 2002

'CHIEF MINISTERSHIP' A NON-ISSUE

# Mufti, Sonia to confer on govt. formation in J&K

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, OCT. 12. Their numbers "ensured", efforts to put together a coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir began in right earnest today with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, meeting the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, here.

However, no information was forthcoming from either party on what transpired at the meeting, which lasted for half-an-hour. Apparently, Mr. Sayeed had insisted on meeting Ms. Gandhi alone.

Prior to her meeting with Mr. Sayeed, the Congress president held discussions with the Pradesh Congress Committee president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and her political secretary, Ambika Soni, who had campaigned extensively in the State.

All that Mr. Sayeed told mediapersons about the talks on government formation, while leaving 10 Janpath was that "we discussed how to meet the challenge before us, because the people have great expectations from us".

He said they had detailed discussions on issues pertaining to Kashmir, the turnout and the verdict. "We had detailed discussions on how to form the government," he said without elaborating.

Though the Congress leader-



The PDP president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, on arrival at the Palam airport in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: Sandeep Saxena

ship was equally tight-lipped, there were indications that there could be another meeting between Ms. Gandhi and Mr. Sayeed tomorrow.

Following her meeting with Mr. Sayeed, Ms. Gandhi is said to have had further discussions with Ms. Soni and Mr. Azad, who postponed his return to Srinagar today, in the wake of

the Mufti's decision to come to the Capital.

In a related development, the Jammu and Kashmir Governor has sent a letter to Mr. Azad communicating his desire to have discussions before October 15, on the evolving political situation in the State. Also, according to Congress sources here, the Legislature party is

likely to meet on Monday to elect its leader. That the coalition will be stitched up in the Capital is now almost certain as Mr. Sayeed is not the only possible ally of the Congress to arrive here to meet Ms. Gandhi. She was also slated to meet one of the two CPI (M) MLAs, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, in the evening, as part of the exercise of speaking to all potential partners in the coalition.

Though the two key partners are not revealing their mind, elected MLAs of the Congress — which is back in the reckoning in State politics after 27 years — are said to be rather reluctant to hand over the office of Chief Minister to the PDP, which is said to be lobbying for the post on the premise that it has a stronger hold over the Valley. Till now all Chief Ministers of the strife-torn State have come from the Valley. However, upon his arrival in the Capital, Mr. Sayeed told reporters that "Chief Ministership was a non-issue."

Given the ticklish nature of the issue, there is talk of having a Chief Minister and a Deputy Chief Minister — something Mr. Azad had been advocating right through the campaign — to give due representation to the two regions of Jammu and Kashmir. But, the issue that needs to be clinched is which region the Chief Minister will be from.

Jethmalani for  
amnesty: Page 8

TOP POST A TICKLISH ISSUE

# Valley waits for its new CM

SF-1  
12/10

g-8 28K

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 11. — With the Congress having the numbers and PDP's trump card being the Valley's emotions, the ticklish issue about who will be the chief minister in the Congress-PDP coalition in Jammu and Kashmir will take time to get sorted out.

As indication of this, the Congress today remained non-committal on the issue of government formation in the state. After an hour-long meeting of the CWC, party spokesman Mr Jaipal Reddy said details were yet to be worked out. The CWC passed a resolution authorising Mrs Sonia Gandhi to take a decision on the formation of the new government.

Mr Reddy evaded a query on whether the Congress will "head" the government. He described the PDP as a "like-minded" party and said the Congress was "in touch with it for forming a post-poll alliance". He said "if

the Congress heads the government, naturally the PCC president will be the chief minister".

Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, who reached here to attend the CWC meeting, is expected to travel to the Valley tomorrow for a meeting with Mufti Mohd Sayeed. Sources do not rule out the two leaders, if they fail to work it out between themselves, thinking of a "compromise candidate". According to sources Mr Azad is striking a posture of a being a "bit reluctant" to bid for the chief ministership.

But the PDP's plus point is the sentiments of the Valley Kashmiris. The party, which has established its credentials in the Valley by eating into the vote bank of the NC, feels

that it is the Valley Kashmiris who have suffered the most in militant violence. Therefore, the highest post should be left to a Valley resident. Besides, convention holds that a Kashmiri Muslim has always been the chief minister of the state.

A confidant of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed told The Statesman from Srinagar: "Leave aside the convention, it is the Valley Kashmiris who have been suffering the most due to militancy. Kashmir is a complex issue and the Valley people have faced extreme conditions. In such circumstances if others snatch away even the right to

install a chief minister from the Valley what will be left for us (Valley) then?"

But the people of Jammu feel that since it has voted the Congress to power with a big victory margin, the chief minister's post should ultimately go to none except that party and someone from their region.

Besides, the image of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed will not help the PDP. A former Congressman, Mufti has the image of a man with "rigid" views. People also have not forgotten December 1989 when he released five militants to buy the freedom of his abducted daughter, Rubaiya.

But Mehbooba Mufti, who claimed that she was not in race for the chief minister's post, said there could be no other person who could be considered more mature than her father. "He is acceptable to all the three regions of the state", she said.

Mufti is unlikely to visit Delhi soon. Sources close to him said he would first like to take the party workers into confidence. He has called a party meeting tomorrow.

Another report on page 4

## Farooq quits

SRINAGAR, Oct. 11. — Mr Farooq Abdullah resigned as chief minister today. He submitted his resignation to the Governor, Mr GC Saxena, after a Cabinet meeting.

The PDP vice-president, Mr Muzzaffar Beig, today met Dr Abdullah at his residence. Both were closeted for over 90 minutes. Later, Dr Abdullah described the meeting as a courtesy call. — SNS & PTI

# Anti-NC wave paves way for coalition

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

Oct. 10. — The anti-National Conference wave sweeping Jammu and Kashmir blew away the Abdullah family-led party and catapulted the Congress and the relatively new People's Democratic Party to the centre stage. Both the parties have confusion in the NC ranks and the BJP's inconsistency to thank for their spectacular performance.

Mr Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's PDP, formed about six years ago, was able to make inroads in the Valley by tactically focussing its election agenda on people-oriented issues like tripartite or trilateral dialogues on Kashmir for the welfare of the Kashmiris, Pota, terror created by the STG-SOG. With the anti-NC feeling running high, people found a credible opposition only in the PDP.

The Congress gained in the Jammu region primarily because of the BJP's flip-flop policy and the party's total ignorance of the ground realities in the state. But it made its presence felt in the Valley too despite being a national party and not a regional one.

The NC was aware from the beginning that its prospects were not bright. None of the party leaders ever commented on possible victory margins but they certainly did not predict such a disastrous performance. Its commitment to hold fair elections has actually cost the party heavily.

The NC came to power in 1996 with a lot of promise which remained undelivered. Their poll plank then was autonomy which the party failed to deliver hamstrung as it was by its alliance with the NDA at the Centre. Corruption charges against the NC too proved to be its undoing. The reported father-son differences took its toll. Dr Farooq Abdullah was dis-

illusioned with the Centre after it had failed to keep its word on "rehabilitating" him in New Delhi. Had he not taken the Centre's "promises" so seriously, he could have waited for some time instead of hurriedly handing over the party reins to Mr Omar Abdullah, still considered a novice in state politics.

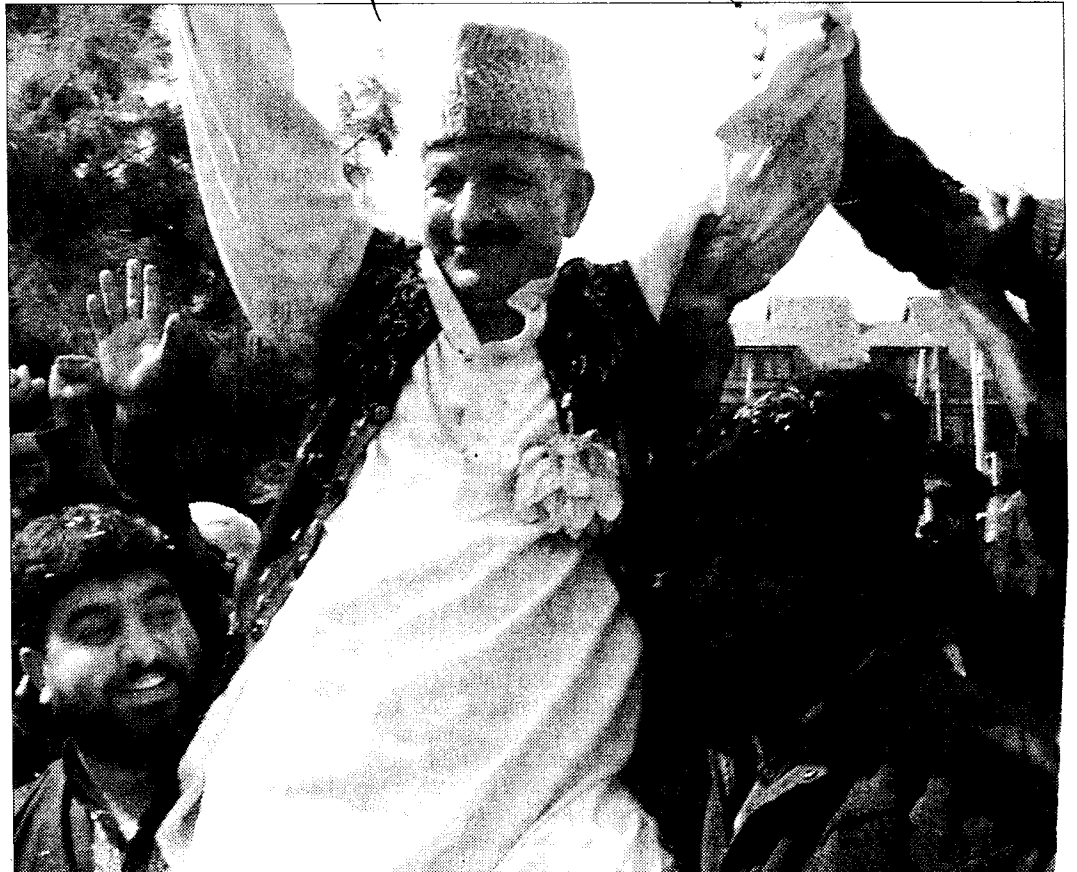
Ditched by the Centre, Dr Abdullah locked himself up and initially refused to campaign for the party. Mr Abdullah's straight talking were not acceptable to old-timers. Having realised that the anti-incumbency factor would work against the party, he started dumping the old guard and brought in new faces. But that did not work. When Dr Abdullah hit the campaign trail after the death of Mushtaq Lone in Lolab constituency, it was too late.

The junior Abdullah lost the Ganderbal seat, virtually an Abdullah family bastion for decades. Many other NC stalwarts like Assembly Speaker Mr Abdul Ahad Vakil, a close associate of Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah, education minister Mohd Shafi and information and tourism minister Mr Ajatshatru Singh, son of Dr Karan Singh, bowed out. Dr Mustafa Kamal, younger brother of Dr Abdullah, lost

to the PDP stalwart, Mr Ghulam Hassan Mir, from Gulmarg constituency.

The PDP vice-presidents — Mehbooba Mufti, prominent lawyer Mr Muzaffar Hussein and former minister Mr Mangat Ram Sharma — emerged victorious. Among the NC, finance minister Mr Abdul Rahim Rather, Shia leader Mr Iftikhar

Hussein Ansari, ministers Mr Ajay Sadhtra and Mian Altaf retained their seats. The CPI-M leader, Mohd. Yusuf Tarigar retained his seat. Former minister Mr Hakim Mohammed Yaseen, former deputy Speaker Moulvi Abdul Rashid and M Ashwini Kumar of the RSS-backed Jammu State Morcha won their seats.



GIANT KILLER: Supporters of PDP's Mr Qazi Ahmed Afzal carry him out of the Centaur Hotel counting centre in Srinagar on Thursday after he defeated Mr Omar Abdullah in the Ganderbal constituency. — AFP

1 1 2002

THE STATESMAN

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2002

9/8 9/8 ✓  
11/10 11/10 ✓  
**A STRIKING VERDICT**

IT WAS ALWAYS likely that the Jammu and Kashmir election would throw up a hung Assembly, but few people — if any — could have predicted it would be hung in such an unexpected and astonishing fashion. Above everything else, the results point towards the huge advances made by the Congress (largely at the cost of the BJP in the Jammu region) and the recently formed People's Democratic Party (almost wholly at the cost of the National Conference in the Kashmir region). The voting in these two regions exhibited markedly different patterns but when read together the split verdict clearly suggested that a strong anti-incumbency sentiment pervaded the State. A dull governance record, the failure to deliver on greater devolution and an inexplicable partnership with the BJP were at least some of the many reasons for the dismal performance of the National Conference. The most striking symbol of the near rout of this party was of course the shocking defeat of the NC president, Omar Abdullah, in Ganderbal, a pocket borough of the family from the time of his grandfather, Sheikh Abdullah. Although the NC has little to cheer about, it can take some comfort from the fact that it garnered more votes and won more seats than any other party.

The results also tell a story about the nature of the election itself. They suggest, despite some shortcomings here and some aberrations there, that the elections were by and large free and fair and that the allegations of extensive rigging and coercion were false and misleading. They also indicate that the elections might have thrown up even more surprising results had the participation been wider and had the polls not been boycotted by the parties which make up the Hurriyat Conference.

Nevertheless, the manner in which the poll was conducted, the courageous participation of the electorate in the face of jihadi threats

and the shape of the results have together signalled a commitment to democracy, a desire for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem, and possibly a stinging rebuke to the terrorism of the jihadi forces.

Viewed against the State's political history — where, barring intermittent spells of President's Rule, the National Conference has ruled continuously since 1975 — this election has ushered in an extraordinary change. In all likelihood, Jammu and Kashmir seems set to be run by a coalition headed by the Congress and the fledgling PDP. Not surprisingly, there is speculation about the exact nature of the new arrangement, but at the end of the day the questions of immediate political detail (such as who will be Chief Minister) are less important than the more enduring questions of policy (such as the initiatives to be taken to address core issues of the Kashmir imbroglio). Unlike most other States in India, the issues in Jammu and Kashmir go beyond governance and day-to-day administration. They involve taking creative steps towards acknowledging the fundamental sense of alienation in the Kashmir Valley, towards persuading all sections (including those represented by the Hurriyat) to participate in the political process and towards finding a way to vest more decision-making power in the hands of the people. Needless to say, the Centre is a vital player in this exercise. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose Kashmir policy has been faltering and indecisive, has promised he will talk unconditionally to elected representatives and others once the elections are over. The successful completion of the elections and the swearing in of a new Government represent the first steps towards addressing the larger problems including aspirations for more autonomy in Jammu and Kashmir. The real strides will be taken only when the core issues that afflict this troubled State are addressed.



OMAR LOSES; NC GETS 28 SEATS, CONG. 20, PDP 16

H9-1  
11/10

# NC swept out of power

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, OCT. 10.** The ruling National Conference (NC) in Jammu and Kashmir was swept out of power today with the party bagging only 28 out of the 87 Assembly seats for which elections were held in four phases, counting of which was taken up today.

The Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), headed by the former Union Home Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, emerged as potential forces to stake claim to form a government with the help of some other parties.

However, the NC has emerged as the single largest party. The worst setback for it was the defeat of its president and Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, at the prestigious Ganderbal constituency. He lost to the



Omar Abdullah... What went wrong?



Qazi Mohammad Afzal of the PDP... Giant killer

PDP's Qazi Mohammad Afzal by 2808 votes.

For the first time after the NC patriarch, the late Sheikh Abdullah, entered into an agreement with New Delhi in 1975, the party is facing such a defeat. The NC is followed by the Congress with 20 seats and the PDP with 16. While the independents have got 15 seats, the Panther's Party has improved its tally taking four seats, followed by the CPI(M), which has retained the Kulgam seat with the re-election of Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami. It has wrested the Wachi seat from the NC. The BJP also has suffered a severe jolt, winning only one seat (Nagrota) as against six in 1996. The Bahujan Samaj Party has also lost three seats and won only one. However, the NC has wrested Sonwari and Kalakote

from the Awami League and the Congress respectively. In 1996, it had a landslide victory with 58 seats in its bag.

The Congress put up an impressive show in the Jammu division, which contributed 15 of the 20 seats in its kitty. The Division with a total of 37 seats, gave a major blow to the National Conference whose tally was down from 14 to nine.

## Many Ministers lose

Apart from Omar Abdullah, the NC stalwarts who have lost the elections include the Ministers, Mohammad Shafi, Sheikh Mustafa Kamal, Chowdary Mohammad Ramzan, Peerzada Ahmed Shah, Surjit Singh Salathia, Harbans Singh, Khalid Suhrawardy, Sakina Ittoo, Bashir Ahmed Nengroo and Ajat Shatru Singh. The Speaker of

the Assembly, Abdul Ahad Vakil, also lost. However, Abdur Rahim Rather, Ali Mohammad Sagar, Mian Altaf Ahmed, Iftikhar Ansari and Ajay Sadhotra, all of them Ministers, have retained their seats with a thin margin.

In the Opposition camp, the winners include the PDP vice-presidents, Muzaffar Beig and Mehbooba Mufti, and senior leaders Ghulam Hassan Mir, Abdul Aziz Zargar, Javed Mustafa Mir and Ghulam Nabi Lone.

In the Congress, the State party chief, Ghulam Nabi Azad's kin, Mohammad Sharief Niaz, wrested the Baderwah seat from the BSP State chief, Sheikh Abdur Rehman.

In the Kashmir valley, the party sprang a surprise by winning four seats — Taj Mohiuddin (Uri), Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed (Kokernag), Abdur Rasheed (Sopore) and Mohammad Shafi Bhat (Amirakadal).

## Independents bag 15 seats

The major share, however, was taken by the Independents, who won 15 seats. Out of three People's Conference rebels, only one, Mohiuddin Sofi, won the Handwara seat by defeating the NC's senior Minister, Chowdary

**Cong. upbeat; BJP rout complete: Page 11**

sahib, the former Minister, Hakeem Yaseen, an NC rebel, won the seat whereas the Awami League wrested the Bandipore seat from the NC with its candidate, Usman Majid, winning by a margin of 284 seats.

In Kupwara, the result was unexpected with the former Minister, Ghulam Qadir Mir, losing to the NC's sitting MLA, Saifullah, with a thin margin.

The Doda seat was also wrested by an Independent candidate, Majid Wani, from the NC by defeating the Minister of State for Home, Khalid Najib Suhrawardy. The NC lost the Kargil seat where an Independent, Haji Nissar Ali, has defeated the Minister of State, Qamar Ali Akhoun. However, it retained Zanskar where Mohammad Abbas has been re-elected.

In Leh and Nobra, two Independents, Pintoo Narboo and Rigzin Jora, were declared elected unopposed with the support of the Ladakh Union Territory Front.



Mehbooba Mufti... in the ascendant

## A vote for India's unity: PM

By Amit Baruah

**COPENHAGEN, OCT. 10.** The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said today that the vote in Jammu and Kashmir was for India's unity, Kashmiriyat and against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and Islamabad's anti-India propaganda.

In a statement here, he said: "Before the start of the electoral process, we had pledged that the elections would be free and fair. This promise, too, has been fulfilled."

"I would also like to assure that the Centre would work in close cooperation with the elected representatives in Srinagar to fulfil the aspirations of the people."

"The people of Jammu and Kashmir have giv-

en their verdict. And the winner, clearly, is India's democracy," Mr. Vajpayee said while extending his "heartfelt congratulations" to the "courageous and patriotic" people of all the three regions of the State.

"Both before and during the course of the elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, I had stated that irrespective of which candidate or party won, the vote would be for India's unity, integrity and democracy, it would be a vote against Pak.-sponsored terrorism and Pakistan's anti-India propaganda."

"Braving the reign of terror unleashed by Pakistan-backed terrorist outfits and disregarding the call for the boycott of the polls, the people of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh participated in the elections in large numbers," Mr. Vajpayee said.



# EU, India agree to disagree on J&K

Nilova Roy Chaudhury  
in Copenhagen

Blackwill

Oct. 10. — Sharp differences on the Jammu and Kashmir issue threatened to derail the India-European Union summit today.

Ultimately, the two sides agreed, not very politely, to disagree but no mention of political differences in South Asia was made in the joint press statement issued at the end of the meeting between Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and his Danish counterpart, Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen, with the EU high representative, Mr Javier Solana, sitting in.

The EU stuck to its stand that India should "de-escalate" and resume talks while the Indian team said no talks were possible till there was cross-border terrorism. This resulted in acrimonious exchanges with both sides agreeing at the end to make no mention of the issue.

Officials were seething at what they said was "a complete lack of awareness or sensitivity" to India's position. "Small countries need to flex their muscles to assert their authority when they assume positions of power," officials said, confirming that Mr Vajpayee, Mr Yashwant Sinha and National Security Adviser Mr Brajesh Mishra "gave them a earful" on Pakistan targeting the J&K Assembly polls and how

HYDERABAD, Oct. 10. — US Ambassador Mr Robert Blackwill said elections in J&K alone are not sufficient to solve Indo-Pakistan problems and said America will continue to strive for a dialogue between both countries to ensure peace and stability in the region.

"We continue to note that Kashmir elections can't solve Indo-Pak problems. We are hoping polls will open diplomatic dialogue between India and Pakistan. With Kashmir and Pakistan elections behind us, we hope we can make an assessment to engage with both sides." — SNS

there was no question of talks till terrorism ended.

At a joint interaction with the media later, Mr Rasmussen said: "We urge India to de-escalate tensions" and urge "a dialogue" on the nuclear issue and "a dialogue among all stake holders in J&K".

According to Mr Chris Patten, the Gujarat issue was "touched upon", but Indian officials said the reference was to the terrorist attack at Akshardham.

Mr Sinha (who called a separate briefing for the Indian media after the joint session) said there was no logic in the stand adopted by the EU team.

1 1 001 2002

■ HUNG ASSEMBLY IN J&K ■ ABDULLAH FAMILY VANQUISHED IN ANTI-NC WAVE ■ CONG, PDP GAINERS

# Democracy delivers body blow to NC

9/22/02 89 18K 5F1 11/10



WHERE TO FROM HERE?: Qmar Abdullah in Srinagar on Thursday. — AFP  
emerging as the third force in state politics. Among smaller parties, the CPI-M has won two seats, up one from last time, and the J&K Panthers

**Statesman News Service**  
JAMMU, Oct. 10. — The 2002 Assembly election in Jammu and Kashmir has produced a real turn up for the books. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) — and despite its emergence as the single largest party, it is precisely that — in perhaps the most credible electoral exercise the troubled state has witnessed over the past two decades, was symbolised by party president Mr Omar Abdullah's loss of the Ganderbal Assembly seat. It was the final, very visible, culmination of the people's anger at what has widely been perceived as six years of National Conference (NC) misrule.

Conceding defeat, Mr Abdullah said today that his party would not stake a claim to form a government even as though it was the single-largest. His pique at the drubbing the NC had received evident, Mr Abdullah claimed that a Congress-PDP coalition would not last long and predicted that the fight for the post of chief minister between the two parties had already begun. "I've always held that the problems of the state would worsen with a *kitchdi* government," he added, rather

peevishly. Mr Abdullah emphasised that he would resign from the Vaipayee government, but added that the continuance of his party in the National Democratic Alliance was an 'open question'. Thursday's major electoral setback for the NC, Kashmir's

## EU unimpressed?

COPENHAGEN, Oct. 10. — The European Union today chose to emphasise its 'problem' with India's stand on the Jammu and Kashmir issue, with the successful conduct of a free and fair polls in the state barely meriting a mention. Sharp differences threatened to derail the India-EU summit. Ultimately, the two sides agreed, not very politely, to disagree but no mention of political differences in South Asia was made in the joint press statement issued by Mr AB Vaipayee and his Danish counterpart, Mr Anders Fogh Rasmussen. — SNS

## Details on page 4

grand old party, has paved the way for a coalition government that, all indications are, will have the Congress Party, led in the state by Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, and the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) of Congress-man-turned-regional-satrap Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, at its heart.

**Statesman News Service**  
NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, Oct. 10. — On the debris of the National Conference's political fortunes and with support from the People's Democratic Party, the Congress is hopeful of forming in J&K what'll be the its 15th government. But till late tonight, there seemed to be no firm word on who'll bag the chief ministerial prize — the Congress or PDP?

The Congress is projecting the PCC chief, Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad, as the chief ministerial candidate, partly because not many of the party's central leaders him to come back victorious to the AICC. The PDP is more guarded. Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and not his daughter Mehbooba Sayeed, seemed to be the party's choice for the chief ministerial seat. Mr Sayeed and Mr Azad will meet Mrs Sonia Gandhi in Delhi tomorrow. A leader said that irrespective of the outcome, "it's unlikely that the Congress-PDP alliance will split over the issue of chief ministership". But what if it does? The mathematical translation of this is: will the NC forge an alliance with the Congress (their numbers, 28+20, add up to a majority). But mathematics has

Party	Position	2002
NC		28
Congress		20
PDP		16
BJP		01
CPM		02
Others		20
<b>1996</b>		<b>87</b>
<b>(Total seats: 87)</b>		

always lost to politics, at least in the Indian parliamentary set-up. A leader said that neither the Congress nor the PDP would want to "invalidate the anti-NC mandate". The Congress and PDP have 36 seats. Four Panther's Party MLAs have pledged support to the alliance — that makes it 40. Congress leaders in Delhi and J&K are sure some Independents will back the alliance. The CPI-M and Awami League too are likely to support the coalition.

Congress leaders said the chief minister's post should go to their party for:  
■ Congress has won more seats than the PDP  
■ Compared to the PDP, "more Independents will support the Congress"  
■ Being a national party, it's in a better position to negotiate with the NDA government

## Who'll get the top post?

Turn to page 4

44% VOTED IN 4-PHASE J&K POLLS

# Doda rises to call of ballots

571 9/10 . 9.87 73K

Special News Service

JAMMU/NEW DELHI, Oct. 8. — Belying fears of militant attacks and a consequent low voter turnout, the overall poll percentage in the four phases of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir is expected to be around 45 per cent.

In the fourth phase today, 52 per cent polls were cast in Doda — the highest among all the four phases. Lolab, where elections were countermanded after the death of the National Conference candidate, touched 44 per cent.

At a press conference in Srinagar, J&K chief electoral officer Mr Pramod Jain said Inderwal constituency in Doda recorded the highest percentage of polling — 61 per cent. Militant-infested Banihal constituency recorded 41 per cent polling. The figures were tentative and details would pour in shortly, he said.

State chief secretary Mr IS Malhi complimented the people for turning up to vote braving militant threats. He congratulated the Election Commission for ensuring free, fair and transparent polls despite adversities. The Centre and the Election Commission are satisfied with the

overall poll percentage and the voter turnout. Holding “free and fair” elections in the state has been a tough challenge amid militant threats. According to Kashmir watchers, the electorate was convinced that elections would be “free and fair” and not a repeat of the “rigged-1996”, and they willingly turned up to vote.

## Poll percentage

First phase:	47
Second phase:	41
Third phase:	42
Fourth phase:	52

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi, Deputy Election Commissioner Mr Sayan Chatterjee said: “Given the circumstances and the militants’ threat dissuading people from participating in the elections, a straight average of 44 per cent is

very satisfactory.” The first phase recorded 47 per cent of polling, second phase 41 per cent, third phase 42 per cent and in the fourth phase, Doda recorded 52 per cent and Lolab constituency 44 per cent. He said the overall poll percentage of the elections would be between 44 and 45 per cent.

Trends are expected to emerge early this time as EVMs were used. Detailed instructions have been issued for the counting process. Returning Officers have been asked not to declare results before they are approved by observers, Mr Chatterjee said.

More reports, photograph on page 4

9 OCT 2002

# NC upbeat, Opposition hopes for hung House

Arun Joshi  
Jammu, October 6

WITH CAMPAIGNING over for the last phase of polling in Jammu & Kashmir, the rival camps today made conflicting claims. The National Conference exuded confidence that it would win at least 50 seats and form a Government of its own, while the Opposition pinned its hopes on a hung Assembly to cobble together an alternative Government.

Mocking the NC's optimism, the Opposition, particularly the BJP, claimed the verdict would be spilt and the NC was in for a shock. "The NC, which ruled with a two-thirds majority, will be reduced to an Opposition party," Minister of State for Defence Chaman Lal Gupta said.

He predicted a hung House, raising hopes in the Congress and the PDP, which are banking on Independents to take them to the magic number of 44 in a House of 87.

Informed sources said the Congress had already "sought the support" of the separatist People's Conference, a Hurriyat Conference constituent, to form an alternative Government. The

## Encounter deaths

FIVE MILITANTS and two Army jawans were killed and seven soldiers injured in two incidents in Rajouri and Doda on Sunday. Ultras fired on two vehicles carrying a patrol party of Rashtriya Rifles in Pangai, killing two jawans and injuring seven others. The jawans retaliated and two militants were killed.

Three more militants were killed at Dessa-Ghai of Doda in an encounter with Rashtriya Rifles troops.

**PTI, Jammu**

two undeclared allies are hoping to poll enough votes to form a Government and push the NC to the Opposition Benches.

NC president Omar Abdullah who pegged his party's campaign on the issues of stability, new opportunities for the youth and development of the State's remote and backward areas, said the "people have once again trusted the National Conference". "They have voted for the NC in the first three phases and

they will vote for us in the fourth phase on Tuesday", he told *Hindustan Times* today.

The NC has 59 members in the outgoing Assembly. But this time it has had to contend with a spirited counter-campaign by a resurgent Congress, which has alternatively played the roles of a friendly and rival group since the 1977 elections. The NC has also had to defend its alliance with the BJP, a party with which it had no ideological compatibility. The Congress has accused it of "political opportunism".

The NC has another rival in Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's People's Democratic Party.

The Opposition has focused its attack on corruption and 'non-governance' under the NC's dispensation. It has also harped on the Government's failure to end terrorism in the State, blaming the NC for creating conditions that have allowed the growth of terrorism.

While the BJP and Congress have charged Farooq Abdullah's party with lack of will, the PDP has accused it of using the security forces against innocents, and creating militants out of peace-loving citizens.

✓ DSP DIES IN 12-HOUR ENCOUNTER

140-1  
9/10

# J&K bus attackers killed in gunbattle

By Luv Puri

**HIRANAGAR (KATHUA DT.), OCT. 3.**

Two terrorists, who mowed down eight civilians here on Tuesday, were killed after a 12 hour-long combing operation by the Army and police today.

In the encounter, the DSP, Jagtar Singh, lost his life and two constables suffered bullet wounds.

The injured were rushed to the Government Medical College, Jammu, where they were declared out of danger.

Police sources told *The Hindu* that last night a radio conversation between the militants and their mentors from across the International Border was intercepted.

During the conversation, the latter gave details of the route to be followed by the militants while returning to Shakargarh tehsil of Pakistan. On the basis of this information, a police team, headed by Mr. Singh, rushed to the Jandi Nala area of Hiranagar, 3 km from the Jammu-Pathankot National Highway. As the search was on, the militants, hiding under a bridge opened fire.

In the exchange of fire, a terrorist was killed even as his accomplice engaged the troops till this morning. The second terrorist was finally killed around 10 a.m.

Talking to presspersons, the DIG (Jammu), Dilbagh Singh, said, "The terrorists were Pakistani nationals and have been



**Securitymen near the body of one of the terrorists killed after an encounter in Hiranagar on Thursday. — PTI**

identified as Abu Talla and Abu Sama." An assault rifle, a wireless set and dry fruits were recovered from the terrorists, who were wearing police uniforms.

A huge quantity of explosives was also recovered.

Mr. Singh said that a search was on for another terrorist. The entire stretch from Londi to Sherpur, close to the Interna-

tional Border, had been cordoned off by police.

In another incident in the Jammu division, Army personnel gunned down seven militants when they were trying to cross the border near the Lanyote forward post in Balakot sector.

The operation was led by Captain Dilip Jha, who was

killed in the operation. Captain Jha, who hailed from Bihar, was described as a brave officer by his colleagues.

On Wednesday, the Army had foiled an infiltration bid in the Mandi area of Poonch district by gunning down four Hizb-e-Islami militants.

**Infiltration continuing, says DGP: Page 13**

1 OCT 2002

THE HINDU

# Two die in Jammu bus explosion

By Luv Puri and Shujaat Bukhari

**JAMMU/SRINAGAR, OCT. 2.** Terrorists today exploded a bomb on a Katra-bound bus from Jammu killing two persons, while in another major incident, five Border Security Force men were killed when an Improvised Explosive Device went off in the Tral area of Pulwana district. On Tuesday, militants had killed seven BSF personnel in a landmine blast at Avantipore.

Eyewitnesses told *The Hindu* that the bus which started around 6.05 a.m. from the Jammu bus stand exploded just 1 k.m. away from an area which is usually thronged by morning walkers on the outskirts of the city. The passengers, mainly outsiders, were pilgrims to the Vaishno Devi shrine. Minutes after the incident, young people in the area rushed into the burning bus risking their lives and rescued the trapped passengers.

Keshav Sharma, a resident of Nepal and Ritu Kumari from Batala, Punjab, died in the explosion. Medical relief was slow in coming.

Twenty-one persons have been injured and three of them are said to be in a serious condition.

At the accident spot, a big crowd gathered and raised anti-Government slogans for its failure to provide security to the people.

The Director-General of Po-

lice told reporters in Jammu that the Pakistan-backed Jaish-e-Mohammad or the Lashkar-e-Taiba were responsible for the bus blast, and called it "an act of desperation" after the successful completion of three phases of polling in the State.

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman, Amanullah Khan, condemned the incident and called it a heinous crime against the people of the State.

In the Tral area, militants laid a booby trap on the BSF party from the 120 and the 4th battalions engaged in sanitising the Tral-Wagad road. Around 8.30 a.m., the securitymen were examining the road when the militants triggered the IED through a remote control. Four BSF jawans were killed instantly while three were seriously injured. One of them died on way to hospital. The road was being sanitised for the return of the election officials from remote areas.

In Kupwara district, hundreds of people took out a procession at Haihama village protesting the killing of three National Conference workers. Residents said the three had been summoned by the local Army unit and when they came out they were allegedly gunned down by the troops. "Unko army ne mar dala," said a resident. However, police said that militants were behind the killings and the Army too denied the allegation.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2002

## A PROBLEMATIC PHASE

g. or 23/10  
10-10

APPREHENSIONS OF THE third phase of the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls proving to be the most difficult from the standpoint of warding off the terrorist threat have indeed come true. Marked as it was by well over 20 poll-specific attacks that left at least 16 persons dead, the process gone through on October 1 in 27 constituencies across four districts can hardly be said to answer the parameters of a peaceful and violence-free exercise in the way the earlier two phases did. In fact, the fair degree of credibility achieved in the first two rounds of the poll is what turned the jihadi elements even more desperate in their attempt to scuttle the process in the remaining phases. Incidentally, the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen is reported to have claimed 'credit' for most of the terrorist attacks. To some extent, the subversive groups would seem to have succeeded in unleashing terror and preventing prospective voters from stepping out of their homes in areas that already had a 'history' of heightened militancy, by targeting polling booths and election officials, besides of course the security personnel. And this is reflected in the strikingly abnormal divergence in the voter turnout between one district and another as also at the inter-segment level and, in some cases, even within a constituency.

As far as statistics go, the overall average turnout, placed provisionally at 41 per cent, is only marginally lower than what was recorded in the second phase (September 24). True to the perceived pattern, the Jammu region has registered a significantly higher percentage of polling than the Valley, with Udhampur district posting a tally of 56 and Kathua 59, as against Anantnag's 25 and Pulwama's 28. What makes Kathua's performance — a more than respectable turnout which also happened to be the highest for the October 1 round — truly commendable is that it came against the scary backdrop of a major Kaluchak-type terrorist attack

on bus passengers carried out just an hour or two before the polling was due to commence, and it is a measure of the average Kathua voter's willpower and courage of conviction in democracy. The view that a distinctive urban-rural divide characterises voter participation, with the cities and towns tending to be more apathetic or wary for various reasons — fear of the militant's gun, clout of the separatist groups and so on — seems to stand reinforced by the voting pattern in the latest phase.

With three of the four phases of elections to the 87-member Assembly over and only Doda district (6 seats) remaining to go to the polls in the final phase on October 8, the voter turnout this time around does not compare favourably with the State average in 1996, put officially at 53.92 per cent. But the 1996 tally has to be seen in the unedifying context of serious allegations of large-scale rigging and coercion, which had the inevitable effect of eroding the very credibility of the whole exercise. A redeeming feature of the ongoing process is that it has been far less vulnerable to such accusations, thanks to the Government of India's open commitment to ensuring a 'free and fair' poll and the Election Commission's several initiatives at the organisational and procedural levels to realise that objective, not to speak of the pressure associated with the international scrutiny that the event has attracted. The alacrity with which the poll panel responded to genuine complaints of the Congress and the People's Democratic Party against the deployment of State police personnel for sensitive election-related duties is illustrative of the Commission's acute consciousness about its role as referee. There have, of course, been some allegations of coercion by security personnel, heard particularly during the first phase, but they have largely been in the nature of aberrations, not so pervasive or grave as to discredit the exercise itself.

HINDU

3 OCT 2002

11-12

# Terror Trail

2/10/2  
9-8/24

At the end of the third and penultimate phase of polling in Kashmir, the issue is no longer just how many Kashmiris turned out to cast their vote. That issue has been more or less settled by the first two rounds. All credible, bipartisan assessments, including those emanating from foreign observers, seem to concur on this. That, despite the blanket poll boycott announced by the Hurriyat Conference, there is substantial support among ordinary Kashmiris for the democratic option. Second, the Election Commission, notwithstanding the odds and its own adverse record in the past, has managed to bring a measure of credibility to the polls. Admittedly, there have been incidents of voter intimidation by overeager security forces, but these are in the nature of exceptions. Finally, popular participation in the process might have been significantly higher, if a way had been found to tackle the extreme terror tactics employed by the militants. That this was a big 'if' was evident to all in the run-up to Tuesday's polling. Even by the standards of Kashmir, the level of violence seen during the third phase was unprecedented.

It's a truism that there can be no fool-proof security in the world against the threat of terror. This is truer still for Kashmir because the threat is increasingly backed by a determination that borders on the fanatical. The 'success' of the first two rounds has only added to the desperation of the militants. Not that this is surprising. As elsewhere in the world, there is nothing more 'life-threatening' for terrorists and their cause than the prospect of legitimate democratic politics. In the specific context of Kashmir, there is an added dimension. A peaceful poll with a reasonably high voter turnout would significantly weaken Islamabad's case for being a principal party to the Kashmir dispute. This is of a piece with the increasing domestic flak faced by General Pervez Musharraf for taking a soft line on Kashmir; in the main by his unilateral promise to end cross-border terrorism. The general would like nothing better than a chance to win over his critics, especially given the impending general elections in Pakistan. It's just as well that the issue of free and fair polls in Kashmir is no longer a matter of interested rhetoric between two hostile neighbours. It's now up to the 'disinterested' third parties — i.e. the foreign observers — to ensure that someone has to answer for the mindless killings of the past month and more.



41 PER CENT TURNOUT IN THIRD PHASE

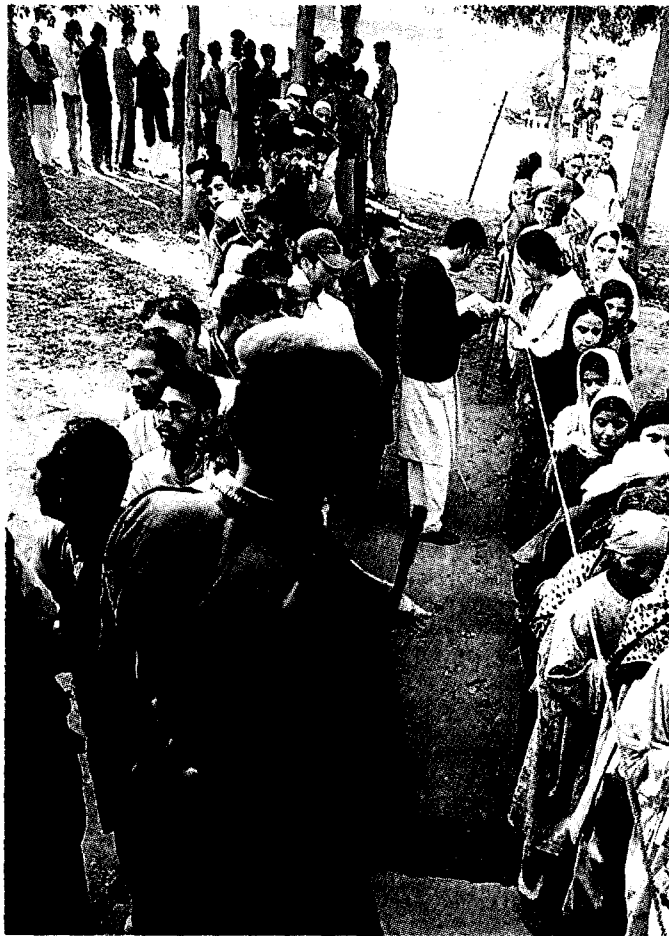
# 16 killed as violence mars J&K polls

By Shujaat Bukhari

ANANTNAG/ PULWAMA, OCT. 1. A low to moderate turnout, boycott of polls and many militant attacks marked the third phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir today. As many as 27 attacks by militants took place in which at least 16 persons were killed and many injured. The enthusiasm witnessed in the rural segments in the first and second phases was missing.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Pramod Jain, said the third phase of polling — in Anantnag, Pulwama, Kathua and Udhampur districts — recorded a voter turnout of 41 per cent. While Kathua recorded the highest turnout of 59 per cent, it was followed by Udhampur (56), Pulwama (28) and Anantnag (25).

In the Kashmir division, Rajpora recorded the highest of 37 per cent and Pampore the lowest at seven per cent. Jammu, however, was different and the highest voter turnout was 67 per cent in Bani and the lowest 46 per cent in the Hiranagar segments. "Violence-free polls prompted our friends from across the border and they did everything to disrupt the polls today," said Mr. Jain adding "this was despite the highest level of arrangements and alertness." But for these incidents, the percentage and enthusiasm would have been much better. Despite threats and boycott calls, people came out in high numbers to exercise their fran-



A security personnel stands guard while voters wait for their turn in Pulwama in south Kashmir on Tuesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

chise, he said.

The major towns of Anantnag, Pulwama, Shopian and Bijbehara wore a deserted look

even at the end of the day with most of the booths not crossing the single digit. Boycott of polls was near total in these towns. In

Shopian, hundreds of people took out a procession against alleged coercion by the security forces, who, they said, forced them out to cast the vote. Slogans such as "we want freedom" were raised. No slogans for "azadi" (freedom) were raised but people said they had lost "faith" in the system. "We have not seen the MLA, we do not have power supply, no roads, no employment, why should we vote" asked an angry resident. Tral looked like a ghost town and angry crowds protested against the elections.

In Bijbehara, hometown of the People's Democratic Party president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, not a single voter had turned up till 1 p.m. at a polling station having 1,041 voters. Anantnag too was deserted. At the Sarak polling station, of 1,405 votes, only two votes had been polled. In the Lal Chowk booth, just one vote was cast by a retired civil servant out of 838 votes.

In Akar, Aishmuqam, Botakot and Mamal, though at a low pace, voting was on with people saying that they had come on their own. "There was no coercion" said a voter at Botakot in the Pahalgam segment where 30 votes of 1,301 had been polled at 10.35 a.m. Pahalgam did not show much enthusiasm but voters were waiting for their turn. At Kaimoh village in the Homeshalibug segment, no voter was seen but 201 votes had been polled out of 1,110.

Kulgam, where the CPI (M) sitting MLA, M. Y. Tarigami, is pitted against the National Conference nominee, G. N. Dar, the turnout was again not encouraging though people said they were voting out of their own volition. The division among the voters here was evident. Out of 995 votes, 207 had been polled at 1.40 p.m. A scuffle took place between the contesting parties. Chansar village observed a boycott and only six votes had been polled at 2 p.m. "We will not vote as we have laid down the lives of 80,000 people for azadi," said a person.

A general strike was observed in the Kashmir Valley today paralysing normal life. The call was given by the All-Party Hurriyat Conference in protest against the elections.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2002

JK

## STANDING THE TEST

HQ-10 27/9

WHILE THE REMARKABLY smooth conduct of the first round of the Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir and the encouraging turnout therein were cause enough for cautious optimism about the success of the democratic process, the second — completed last Tuesday — has by and large helped to sustain that hope. The event itself passed off peacefully and without any serious disruption, despite a disturbing spurt in terrorist violence in the Valley on poll-eve. The most worrying moment was in Srinagar where a militant squad had taken three police officials captive and ultimately got killed after a fierce overnight encounter that continued till about an hour before the polling booths were to open. By all accounts, this incident had a significant dampening effect on voter response especially in urban parts of Srinagar and contributed to a poor turnout, which has been placed provisionally at 11 per cent in the district. Also to be reckoned with is that these are the areas where the separatist outfits constituting the All-Party Hurriyat Conference are believed to have considerable influence. Presumably, the Hurriyat's boycott call had its impact there.

That the average overall voter turnout of 42 per cent for the second phase that covered 28 Assembly segments across three districts (Jammu and Budgam, besides Srinagar) is much lower than that of the first (47.25 per cent) should come as no surprise. It was indeed anticipated that Srinagar, with its track record, would depress the overall average substantially, although the impression post facto going by the mood on the ground is that the figure could have been somewhat higher but for the 'hostage'-induced terror. In a refreshing contrast, Budgam — the other district in the Valley to figure in Tuesday's poll — returned a reasonably good turnout, 51 per cent, while Jammu that accounts for 13 seats topped with a tally of 59 per cent. It is rather unfortunate that the Tuesday exercise too, like the one on September 16, has given rise to complaints of coercion

and undue influence, although they appeared relatively muted. But there is little doubt that the poll managers have not yet been fully sensitised to the enormity of damage such intimidatory acts inflict on the credibility of the electoral process.

What is striking is the wide disparity in voter turnout, as suggested by media reports, at the constituency and local area levels, a trend perceived even during the first phase. In fact, there appears to be a distinctively dichotomous urban-rural divide, with the villages tending to record higher percentages. Of course, whether this will hold for the rest of the constituencies going to the polls in the coming two phases remains to be seen. Yet, the pattern throws up some interesting possibilities about a better understanding of phenomena such as voter apathy, alienation of the people, sway of the separatist/militant groups and so on. This is apart from whatever pointers one may look for vis-a-vis the prospects of major contenders for power.

The electoral process so far must be said to have stood the test creditably, given especially the formidable odds stacked against it. Particularly commendable is the response of the voters who braved the militant's gun and ignored the boycott call of some separatist elements to walk to the polling booth and exercise their franchise. And the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has thought it fit to 'salute' the people of Jammu and Kashmir for having acted with "courage and conviction", even though the exercise is just more than halfway through. As the focus now shifts to the third round (scheduled for October 1), the pressure is all the more on the security forces to see that the rate of success is sustained, if not improved upon. Already, there are ominous signs of the terrorist groups having moved into those areas and, after the success recorded in the earlier phases, they are bound to redouble their efforts to sabotage the process. There can surely be no lowering of the guard, yet.

27 SEP 2002

INDIA

## PM says 'salaam' to J&K people

By V. Jayanth

**MALE, SEPT. 24.** The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has congratulated the people of Jammu and Kashmir for their "courage and conviction with which you have participated in the first two rounds of polling in the elections to the Legislative Assembly of your State."

In a statement released to the media here, Mr. Vajpayee, who is on a four-day official visit to the Maldives, said: "All the people in the rest of the country join me in saying with admiration and thanks, 'salaam' to you".

"We, in India, have many elections. But rarely has there been an election in which the voters have had to brave threats to their very lives just to exercise their fundamental right, in which the vote is not so much for this or that party, not for this or that candidate, but for democracy and

national unity. Irrespective of who wins, it is clear to the whole world that in Jammu and Kashmir, the ballot is winning in a resounding victory over the bullet."

The Prime Minister went on: "By answering with fortitude, you have foiled the sinister designs of those indulging in terrorism and their patrons across the border. They did everything to subvert the polls, kill candidates, intimidate voters and threaten polling personnel. Their description of the polling in Jammu and Kashmir so far as a 'sham' shows nothing but their growing frustration.

"Before the start of the electoral process, we had pledged that the elections in Jammu and Kashmir would be free and fair. The first two rounds of polling are a proof that, with your cooperation, we have redeemed that pledge.

"I am confident that the

remaining part of the election would further reinforce its positive message and open a new chapter of peace and development in the history of your State," he said.

The "successful anti-terrorist operation in Srinagar this morning was yet another reminder of the lethal plans of anti-India and anti-democracy forces to sabotage the polls. I take this opportunity to express our appreciation and gratitude to all the security and administration personnel who worked for the smooth conduct of polling in the State".

Since the elections were announced on August 22, Mr. Vajpayee said there had been "as many as 400 incidents of terrorist violence in which 37 political activists, including two candidates, have been killed, 60 security personnel also have lost their lives and over 100 others have been injured".

## 'Second phase of J&K polls peaceful'

By Our Legal Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24.** The Election Commission said today that barring minor incidents, the second phase of polling in Jammu and Kashmir for the 28 Assembly constituencies went off peacefully and an approximate 42 per cent of the 28 lakh voters exercised their franchise.

Briefing presspersons, the Deputy Election Commissioner, Sayan Chatterjee, said the polling spread over 2160 polling stations in Jammu, Srinagar and Badgam districts was "by and large incident free." However, he

said the Commission felt that militant attacks in the run-up to the poll acted as a dampener on the voter turnout in Srinagar. He said in the first phase of the polls held on September 16 for 23 constituencies the polling percentage was 47.25. "If militant attacks immediately prior to the polls were not there, the voting percentage would have been a little bit higher this time," he added.

r. Chatterjee said the pattern of high turnout in rural areas in the first phase was followed in the second phase also. Giving district-wise figures, he said

Jammu, with 13 constituencies, recorded the highest voter turnout of 59 per cent; in Badgam, which has five constituencies, it was 51 per cent and in Srinagar, with 10 constituencies, it was just 11 per cent. It might be recalled that Srinagar was the stronghold of the Hurriyat Conference which had given a boycott call.

He said the Chhamb Assembly constituency in Jammu district recorded the highest turnout of 70 per cent; Habbakadal, once dominated by the Hindu population, registered just one per cent.

## Kashmiris giving a 'fitting reply' to Pak. designs: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 24.** Despite Pakistan's best efforts to disrupt the elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the people of the State are giving a "fitting response" through their encouraging participation, the Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson, Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said today. "The guns of militants will be silenced successfully and our security agencies are quite capable of tackling the militants," Mr. Naqvi said.

It was clear from the statements emanating from the leaders of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference that they were speaking after taking the cue from their "Pakistani masters." And these leaders who had boycotted the elections and followed "Pakistan's signals" had no right to comment on

the electoral process. And Pakistan, which was trying to cover its military dictatorship with the "fig leaf of flimsy and non-credible elections," had no right to do so either.

India did not need a certificate from the Hurriyat leaders or their "mentors" in Pakistan, Mr. Naqvi said.

"But the world must understand that the Al-Qaeda network is still alive in Pakistan and unless it is finished at the roots there, the global effort against terrorism will not be entirely successful."

On reports that the Maharashtra Government was contemplating a ban on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal, Mr. Naqvi did not want to comment, saying they were "separate organisations." Nor was the party spokesperson willing to join issue on the continuing controversy sur-

rounding the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's "provocative and communal speeches."

### Revamp of Pondicherry unit

In another development, the BJP's Pondicherry president, M. Krishnamurthy, has sent in his resignation to the party president, Venkaiah Naidu.

There is a strong indication that the resignation will be accepted and the entire State unit will be re-organised before October 3 when Mr. Naidu will be visiting Pondicherry to participate in a state-level workers' meet.

The meeting is part of a countrywide programme of state party conventions, being held in the wake of the five zonal meetings which concluded last week.

110-1  
25/9

# 0 TO 2 PER CENT IN SRINAGAR SEGMENTS 987 79K

## 42 p.c. turnout in second phase of polls

By Anjali Mody and  
Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, SEPT. 24.** The second phase of the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir concluded today with an official voter turnout of 42 per cent in the three districts of Srinagar, Budgam and Jammu. In the Valley, voting was along predictable lines. The eight urban segments of Srinagar polled between zero and two per cent of the votes, while the two rural segments, Ganderbal and Kangan, recorded between 40 and 50 per cent of the votes. Budgam district registered a 51 per cent turnout.

According to the Chief Electoral Officer, Pramod Jain, the elections were "by and large violence free." He told presspersons here that in the Valley, the

highest turnout of 59 per cent was recorded in Charar-e-Sharief, and the lowest "less-than-one-per cent" in Habbakadal.

Srinagar's other urban constituencies were not very different from Habbakadal. The city wore a deserted look and a complete "hartal" was observed in support of the All-Party Huriyat Conference's boycott call. At a funeral procession outside polling station 14 in Zadibal at 10 O'clock this morning, mourners broke away to tell journalists "this is a funeral... these people are not going to vote."

In Kamangarpura of the downtown area, not a single vote had been cast till 4 p.m. In Soura, booth after booth recorded zero vote. In Alamgiri bazaar, voters, primarily of the Shia community, turned out to

vote "according to our leaders' wishes" but there was less than five per cent turnout. In some booths, an "attendant" was available to assist the people in voting.

Voting in the crucial Ganderbal constituency from which the National Conference president and Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, is contesting, was varied, with less than 10 per cent turnout in some booths in Dardhama and upwards of 50 per cent in Lar. In Lar, police sources reported attempts by National Conference activists to storm two polling booths. But, by and large, voting was incident-free. At many places, National Conference leaders faced angry mobs, who alleged that they had come to rig the polls.

In Kangan, the turnout was

brisk in the booths between Sonmarg and Kangan town. By one O'clock, between 30 and 40 per cent of the votes had been cast. Long queues were seen at the polling stations off the main highway. In the Margam village, 410 of the 1,233 voters had exercised their franchise by noon. In the two polling booths in Chirwan, 50 per cent of the votes had been cast by one O'clock. In Mannigam and Chinnar, south of Kangan town, polling was slower. The explanation given was that the people were "busy in their fields."

In contrast, the mood was one of enthusiasm in the Chadoora, Charar-e-Sharief, Khan-sahib, Budgam and Beerwah segments. Long queues were seen outside most booths. In Chadoora, polling was moderate to brisk. The Chadoora polling booth had recorded 183 votes out of 1,571 at 9.45 a.m. Panzan was no different and out of 861 votes, 183 had been polled at 10.10 a.m. However, in the Ompra village of Budgam district, people boycotted the polls and only five votes had been polled at a booth around 11 a.m.

But in Budgam town, there was a heavy rush of voters outside the booth. The Beerwah segment witnessed low to brisk polling.

In Beerwah town, 276 votes out of 1,052 had been cast at 2.30 p.m. The Shia-dominated Magam was surprisingly cool to the elections.

Of the 3,000 votes, only 300 had been polled. At places like Soibug, Razwen, Wahungam, Chewdara, Chewa and Rathsun, people alleged that the security forces asked them to come out to vote.



Polling officials waiting for voters at the Babshah polling station in Lalchowk in Srinagar on Tuesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Salaam to Kashmiris,  
says PM: Page 11

25 SEP 2002

INDIA

# Srinagar boycotts polls but overall turnout is 42%

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

**Srinagar:** About 90 per cent of the voters in Srinagar district did not cast their votes during the second phase of the Jammu and Kashmir assembly elections on Tuesday, but an overall turnout of 42 per cent was recorded in the 28 constituencies that went to the polls.

The Valley district of Budgam witnessed a turnout of 51 per cent, while in Jammu, the turnout was 59 per cent. Chamb in Jammu district witnessed the highest turnout of 70 per cent while Habbakadal in Srinagar recorded the lowest (one per cent). In National Conference president Omar Abdullah's constituency of Ganderbal, the turnout ranged between five and 50 per cent depending on the polling stations. There was little voter enthusiasm in evidence.

Anti-poll demonstrations at a few places, firing at a booth in Budgam, a clash between Congress and NC workers, in which two people were injured, and a shutdown enforced by the Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar marked the voting, which was held amidst tight security. How-

Reuters



Paramilitary troopers point towards a house in the Gojibagh locality of Srinagar in which two militants had held three police officials captive overnight. The captives escaped by jumping out of a first-floor window on Tuesday morning. The soldiers later blew up the building and killed both militants. Two jawans were also injured during the shootout. Another picture on Page 7.

ever, the polls were by and large peaceful.

In Srinagar, polling started at 7 a.m. with an extremely low turnout amidst extraordinary security arrangements. By the end of the day, the Election Commission said only 11 per cent of its voters had cast their ballots. However, the Valley-wide dichotomy between areas of high and low turnout was evident here as well: If Habbakadal saw only 605—or less than one per cent—voters coming forward, Charar-e-Sharif witnessed a turnout of 59 per cent.

By contrast, voting was brisk to heavy in all five assembly constituencies of Budgam district. The simple rule of thumb was that the closer the polling booth to Srinagar, the lower the turnout.

Unlike the first round, when voters in some outlying areas had alleged that they had been coerced into voting by the security forces, no such charges were levelled in the areas travelled by correspondents from *The Times of India*. There were, however, some allegations of voting irregularities.

● **Complaints of malpractice, Page 7**

# Terrorists raise pitch on election eve

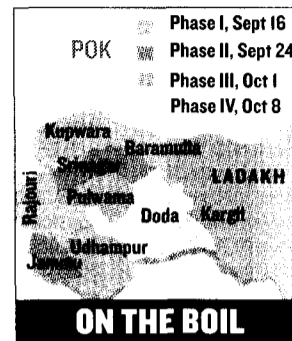
HTI 29/9 9 8 35K

- Rebels kill cop, kidnap 3
- Fear shuts down Srinagar



**TROUBLED WATERS:** A BSF jawan jumps out of a boat after patrolling the Dal Lake in Srinagar on Monday. Srinagar goes to the polls on Tuesday amid fears of terrorist attacks.

REUTERS



## ON THE BOIL

- One policeman killed, three taken hostage in the heart of Srinagar
- 13 security personnel wounded in grenade blasts across the Valley
- 10 people injured in attack on PDP rally
- Pitched streetfights between police and demonstrators halt life in central Srinagar
- Rumours spread chaos across Srinagar

Rashid Ahmad & Arun Joshi  
Srinagar/Jammu, September 23

IN A crescendo of violence on the eve of the second phase of Jammu and Kashmir elections, militants killed a constable and took three policemen hostage at a private house in Srinagar's posh Gogji Bagh locality this evening. Security forces have laid siege to the area and were preparing for a commando action later tonight.

Militants, two to four of them, entered the house early this morning or late last night. They had planned to attack the Polytechnic College polling station near the house. A police contingent headed by DSP Mohammad Yousuf Band raided the house and constable Jagdesh Singh was killed in the gunfight. Band, along with SHO Bhagwant Singh and a wireless operator, were taken hostage.

In separate incidents, 28 people, including 13 security personnel, were wounded in a series of grenade blasts across the Valley. A grenade attack on an election rally of People's Democratic Party at Sangam in Anantnag injured 10 people. Terrorists also fired grenades on two polling stations and two security pickets in Srinagar.

The second phase will cover Jammu, Srinagar and Budgam, where nearly two million voters will decide the fate of 263 candidates in 28 constituencies under the full gaze of diplomats from 15 countries. Several high-profile leaders are contesting in this phase, including National Conference chief ministerial candidate Omar Abdullah.

The importance of this crucial phase of elections is evident from the elaborate security bandobast comprising 500 companies of paramilitary forces. The bulk of the security patrolling is being conducted in the twin cen-

## Hurriyat U-turn

HURRIYAT LEADER Mirwaiz Umer Farooq has told *Washington Times* that the separatist conglomerate is ready to consider "an alternative negotiated settlement" of the Kashmir problem providing greater autonomy to Kashmiris even if it does not lead to an independent state.

PTI, Washington

tral Kashmir districts of Srinagar and Budgam, with 10 and 5 seats respectively. Jammu is considered relatively tame.

Despite enhanced security measures, fear ruled the day in poll-bound Kashmir. Mere rumours of militant strikes triggered chaos at Gojwara, Nowhatta, Anchar, Soura, Jamia Masjid, Khanyar, Hawal and Nowshera. Pedestrians and shopkeepers ran for life, without even downing the shutters. Several people were injured in the stampede. Police said the rumours are part of the plan to create a fear psychosis.

Police resorted to lathicharge and tear gas at Naidkadal, Bahorikadal and Sarafkadal to disperse anti-election demonstrators. The street fight stretched for several hours as the protesters retaliated with bricks and stones and brought life in central Srinagar to a grinding halt.

Tension was palpable also in uptown localities of the city, with very little civilian movement. A bandh-like situation prevailed there as many business establishments stayed closed since the afternoon.

Dakhtaran-e-Millat's poll boycott call has made the situation worse. Hurriyat has also urged people to boycott tomorrow's elections.

## US to press for talks after polls

Saurabh Shukla  
New Delhi, September 23

IN A clear sign that Washington will step up diplomatic pressure on New Delhi after the J&K elections, the US State Department has decided that one of its priorities for 2003 will be resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan on all issues barring Kashmir.

The formulation is a middle-ground solution to get the South Asian nuclear neighbours talking again.

In a performance plan submitted to President Bush and the Congress which outlines the State Department's strategic goals for 2003, Secretary of

State Colin Powell notes: "We have transformed our relationships with both India and Pakistan...we have worked to resolve conflicts in troubled parts like South Asia..."

Crucially, Washington's plan says that one of its strategic goals to defuse Indo-Pak tensions would be making sure "that (cross border) infiltration and number of terrorist attacks (in J&K) declined by at least 50 per cent from the 2000-2002 average."

Without mentioning Kashmir by name, the plan also talks about undertaking a "terrorist interdiction programme" in Pakistan — "a critically important terrorist transit point" —

to track international terrorists and make sure that they find it difficult to cross international borders undetected.

India has ruled out de-escalation even after the J&K polls. But the State Department's goal will be to ensure that both India and Pakistan de-escalate and that forces on both sides return to pre-crisis locations and readiness levels.

Another Kashmir-related US projection for 2003 is "substantial dismantling" of military training camps and related infrastructure in Pakistan.

Interestingly, the State Department has also contrasted its 2003 goals with the current scenario in the region. With a se-

ries of bilateral visits likely over the next few weeks, Washington's interlocutors should have an opportunity to take the Indian side into confidence about their plans for the region.

US Assistant Secretary for South Asia Christina Rocca will be here later this week.

She will be followed by the State Department's crisis manager Under Secretary for Political Affairs Marc Grossman who is the US counterpart of Indian Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal. Under Secretary for Global Affairs Paula J Dobriansky, too, will be in New Delhi for bilateral consultations.

More reports on Page 7



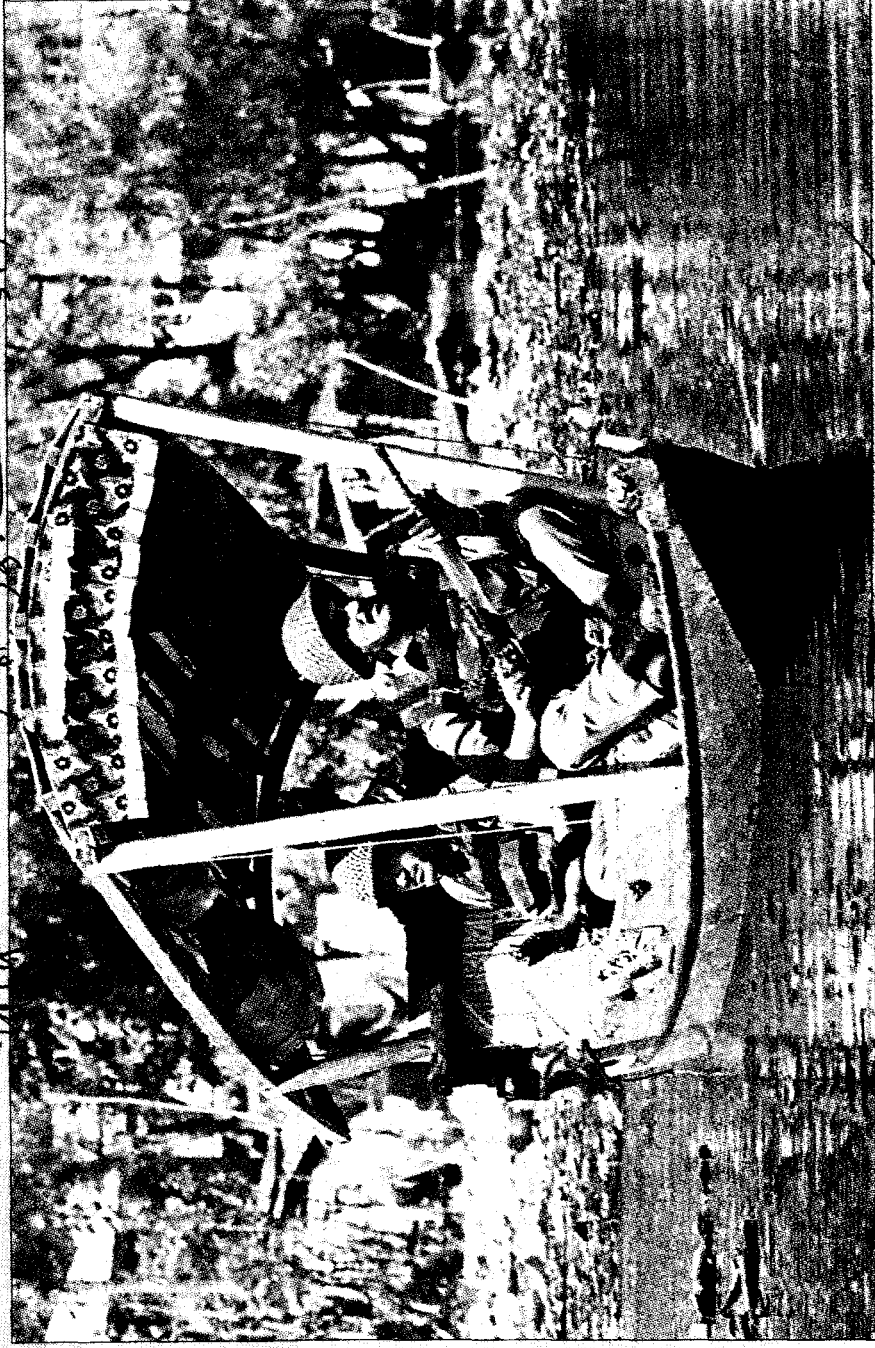
# Militants take 3 cops hostage on poll-eve

SRINAGAR, Sept. 23. — Militants took three policemen hostage and killed a constable here today, hours before polling begins for the second phase of Assembly elections in the state. At least 28 people were injured in a series of grenade attacks throughout the Valley.

Militants called up the Raj Bagh police station and said some terrorists were holed up inside a house at Gogji Bagh. Sub-divisional police officer Mohammed Yusuf, station house officer Mir Bhagwat Singh and two constables went to the spot, officials said. The police team searched the house and found one room locked. They were trying to break open the door when militants started firing from inside. A constable was killed on the spot. Wireless connection between the police party and the control room was snapped.

In another incident, ultras hurled a grenade at a vehicle of the People's Democratic Party in Anantnag. The grenade exploded on the road injuring eight civilians, officials said. Eleven people were injured in two grenade explosions at Sangam bridge and Bijbehara in Anantnag. — SNS

More reports, photographs on p 4



RIPPLES OF ALARM: BSF jawans on duty in a shikara on Dal Lake on Monday, a day ahead of the second phase of polling in J&K. — AFP

# A victory over proxy war: Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 23.** On the eve of the second round of elections in Jammu & Kashmir, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, today hoped that the successful conduct of the polls would help India score a moral victory over Pakistan which was waging a proxy war.

The Government is looking forward to these elections as an instrument to change the situation in the State for the better. A reasonable percentage of polling in all the phases would help India score over Pakistan in the current proxy war just as it did in the three covert wars, Mr. Advani said at a book release function.

He echoed the sentiments expressed by the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, on Sunday by maintaining that Pakistan was back to its old ways of sponsoring violence against civilians in J & K. "Infiltration had decreased in May and June this year be-

cause the international community was focussing on Pakistan. But as the election campaign began, J & K started feeling the heat because the ISI felt that the smooth conduct of polls would be a feather in India's cap," he reasoned.

Mr. Advani took the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, to task for casting aspersions on the fairness of the electoral process in the State. 'I cannot guarantee 90 per cent polling in the J & K elections which Gen. Musharraf can, but the first round of polling has been decent.'

He wondered whether a person, who had banned two former Prime Ministers of his country from contesting the polls, should be commenting on the J & K elections. He had ousted the democratically elected leader of his country on the same day that an elected government took the oath of office in New Delhi.

Dwelling on terrorism in J & K, Mr. Advani felt the West had failed to take note of

the menace posed by ISI. The West was being misled if it felt that Pakistan had mended its ways by joining the war against terrorism. To buttress his argument, he referred to the repeated warnings by the slain anti-Taliban warlord, Ahmed Shah Masood, about Pakistan's plan to consolidate a potent geo-political instrument in Afghanistan to further its regional ambitions. Masood had maintained that this instrument was being grounded in a dangerous triangular alliance among the Taliban, Osama bin Laden and the ISI, turning Afghanistan into a major source of instability in world politics.

Quoting strategic analyst, Amin Saikal, he said: "Washington's failure to help Masood limit the menace eventually cost both the Commander and the U.S. dearly....Why did the U.S. fail to act earlier over Afghanistan and how is it now capable of addressing effectively the root causes of the present crisis? "

## Musharraf sees 'poor turnout' in Kashmir elections

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 23.** The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, claimed today that the turnout in the first round of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was between 2 and 10 per cent, even as the Foreign Office made it known that it had expressed "concern" to the United States over the remarks made by its Ambassador in New Delhi that there was spurt in infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC) from the Pakistan side.

At the weekly media briefing, the Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Aziz Ahmed Khan, maintained that the U.S. Ambassador in India, Robert Blackwill, was perhaps influenced by the "propaganda" against Pakistan. At the same time, the spokesman did not attribute any motives to Mr. Blackwill's remarks.

Earlier in the day, Gen. Musharraf told reporters that the "low" voter turnout reflected Kashmiris' rejection of the "sham" elections and described Indian claims of a higher turnout as "rubbish".

In response to questions on the comments of Mr. Blackwill the spokesman maintained that the U.S. envoy had been "misled". The Ambassador "gets influenced by the reports and propaganda he sees around him. So, I would not call it motivated. It is just that he is misled by lot of propaganda that is poured on him all the time."

On Sunday, Pakistan came down heavily on the *New York Times* for a report quoting unidentified militants saying that the Pakistan Government had given them the green signal to resume infiltration into the valley. In a sharply-worded statement, the Pakistan Foreign Office termed it as "motivated"

and meant to heighten tensions in the region. However, for obvious reasons, Pakistan is not willing to attribute any motives to Mr. Blackwill's remarks.

Mr. Khan said, to verify claims of infiltration Pakistan had offered international monitoring on both sides of the border. "We have been repeatedly saying that we are prepared for verification by any neutral monitors".

On the U.S. assessment that the first phase of polls in Kashmir was free and fair he said, "I would like to draw your attention to media reports that some stations recorded no turnout. There are reports that people were forced to go about and

vote. In the light of it you can draw your own conclusion".

Asked about the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement that India has no plans to hold talks with Pakistan even after the J&K polls as there was no change in the Pakistan stand, Mr. Khan said India was dishing out excuses to avoid talks.

"It is unfortunate that they have to hide behind excuses to avoid dialogue. In a manner of looking, yes there is no change in Pakistan stand. Pakistan stand throughout is that there should be reduction of tension. There is need for peaceful resolution of issues, need for a dialogue and a permanent, durable solution to the Kashmir issue in

accordance with the wishes of the Kashmir people. This has been Pakistan's stand throughout and we will continue to remain firm on it. On the contrary, India has not changed its stance of intimidating Pakistan."

India continued to deploy forces and believed in a policy of intimidation and avoiding dialogue and negotiations. On the remarks by the Indian Foreign Secretary, Kapil Sibal, that India had no confidence in Gen. Pervez Musharraf, Mr. Khan said India was inventing new excuses to avoid talks.

"They have to hide behind some excuse or the other to avoid talks with Pakistan".

## Bilateral approach not totally rejected: Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 23.** Pakistan has said that it has not "totally rejected" the option of resolving its differences with India through bilateral means.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Aziz Ahmed Khan, told a news conference here today that the recent observations made by the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, have to be looked at in the proper context.

Inaugurating a seminar on security-related issues in South Asia last week, here, Gen. Musharraf had accused India of practicing a peculiar "doctrine of bilateralism" and acting as a bully in the region. He had made a strong case for a multi-lateral approach towards resolution of issues and changes in the SAARC charter to provide the mechanism for resolution of disputes.

Asked whether Pakistan has given up the bilateral approach followed since the days of the former Prime Minister, Z.A. Bhutto, in the light of the remarks made by Gen. Musharraf, Mr. Khan said Islamabad had not rejected the bilateral option entirely.

"You have to look at the President's remarks in

a certain context. He has expressed his opinion as far as resolution of disputes with India was concerned. Gen. Musharraf had said that that we have been attempting bilateralism for such a long time. But bilateralism is not working because India is refusing dialogue. So, obviously, the policy of bilateralism is being held hostage by India through its intransigence," Mr. Khan said.

The spokesman maintained that India, while "championing" the bilateral approach, has consistently refused to talk to Pakistan. As the bilateral approach has not worked, other options such as third-party mediation or resolution of issues through regional forums as suggested by Pakistan need to be worked out, he said.

"The point is that we should break the logjam and get things moving so that there is resolution of the dispute which is threatening the entire region. And it is a serious problem. So it was only in that context that the President has talked about multilateralism. It does not mean that we have rejected bilateralism entirely. The major part of inter-state relations is conducted through bilateral relations and through bilateral dialogue," he said.



## Now for the second phase

In J&K, there's no scope for complacency — or rhetoric and self-praise

ON Tuesday, the second phase of polling takes place in J&K. The first phase, with a turnout of nearly 47, has clearly indicated that this round has gone in favour of the ballot over the bullet. But this should not lead to the complacency that is so endemic to our political and social culture. We should also avoid any rhetoric and self-praise until the entire process has been completed and its success made clear. There can be no denying that the credit for the victory of the ballot over the bullet should really go to the people of J&K. After all, last Monday's polling took place in 23 constituencies spread across five border districts. They were, therefore, very vulnerable to infiltration and terrorist violence. Despite this, the turnout in Kupwara, made notorious by terrorist killings for over a decade, and Poonch, exceeded 52 per cent. Kargil, of course, topped the table with 76 per cent voters exercising their franchise.

The United States, broadly indicating the judgement of the international community, has recognised the fairness of the electoral process so far. But the very success of the first phase could spell increasing dangers ahead. Reprisals by jihadi groups should be expected. Sure enough, the last few days have witnessed several strikes,

with even schoolchildren being made targets of terrorist reprisal. *The New York Times* reports of jihadi organisations claiming that the Pakistan government has restarted facilitating infiltration across the Line of Control after July last, point to the reality that the war is far from over. In fact, the greater the success of the election process, the greater the risk of escalation of attacks from across the border. In any case, the impending elections in Pakistan could have the effect of adding domestic political fuel to the jihadi fire.

While the voter turnout thus far appears lower than the official figures for the 1996 elections, it is widely accepted that the process has been largely free and fair. Some lessons from the first phase, like the need to have more voting machines so as to reduce exposing voters to the ire of the terrorist, have already been learnt. Further precautions to protect the voters and their families would need to be instituted. The state is ultimately responsible for the security of the citizen. Providing that crucial security would enhance voter confidence in the institutions of the state, which have taken a severe beating in recent years thanks to abysmal governance and an insecure and violent climate created by cross-border terrorism.

# Militants up the ante for Round II in J&K

## NC MLA attacked, BSF No going back to Delhi convoy ambushed after polls, says Omar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK & AGENCIES

By Aunohita Mojumdar  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Srinagar:** Amidst a fresh surge of violence by militants targeting candidates, rallies and party offices, the curtain came down on electioneering for the second phase of assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir covering 28 constituencies in three districts of Srinagar, Budgam and Jammu on Tuesday.

The campaigning drew to a close under the shadow of terrorism as activists of the National Conference, the Congress, the BJP and the Awami League held very few rallies and instead undertook door-to-door campaigning because of urban areas' vulnerability to terrorist attacks.

With hardly two days left for the second round of voting, the army launched a major operation against Pakistan-backed militants, killing 13 of them in different parts of the state since Saturday night. Two rifle grenades were hurled by militants on Saturday night on the house of MLA and NC candidate from the Shopian assembly constituency, Sheikh Mohammad Rafiq, at Kachdooru in Pulwama district but they fell short of the target, causing no harm to any life or property, sources said.

A BSF jawan was killed and two others critically injured when militants ambushed a Jammu-bound convoy in Anantnag district on Sunday, official sources said. BSF troops cordoned off the surrounding area and a hunt has been launched to nab the militants.

Predictably, the Congress and the BJP fielded a galaxy of star campaigners in Jammu, which has the maximum number of seats as well as most voters in the state. The major parties in the fray are the National Conference, the BJP, the Congress and the BSP. A new factor is the RSS-sponsored Jammu State Morcha, which is likely to influence results in at least three seats.

**Srinagar:** Red flags with the 'albani' (the National Conference's symbol, the plough) flutter from the boats and shikaras as the rally makes its way through the water with supporters singing and dancing. It is the would-be chief minister Omar Abdullah on the move on the last day of the campaigning.

Mr Abdullah says he is quite certain that there will be no return to Delhi and that he will resign from the Union ministry immediately after the elections. He also suggests that the party's participation in the government at the Centre may be reviewed since the NC has to take a decision on whether to replace him.

While saying that there will be no drastic change in the NC's relationship with the NDA, he points out that staying out of the government would in itself change the equation, making it akin to the TDP's relationship with the Vajpayee government.

Acknowledging that the party has suffered because of its alliance with the Vajpayee government, he says that it is not so much the BJP as the fact that the National Conference loses some of its character if it allies with the Centre.

He is also bitter about the many barbs from leaders within the BJP. The NC, he says, has emerged as the common enemy for all political forces in the state—the political parties as well as the militants.

The electoral rhetoric of the other parties and the recent violent attacks suggest that Mr Abdullah is not off the mark. But the NC is also the beneficiary of opposition disunity. Its leading rival, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's People's Democratic Party (PDP), may well suffer as a result of this, except where the electoral battle has become polarised, as it clearly has in Budgam.

27 2013

## Fourth bid on J&K Minister's life

By Shujaat Bukhari

MIRHAMA (KULGAM), SEPT. 21. The Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Minister, Sakina Ittoo, had yet another miraculous escape today when militants tried to blow up her motorcade here.

The senior vice-president of the State Congress, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed, also survived a grenade attack when he was addressing an election meeting at Kokernag in the run-up to the second phase of elections to the State Assembly.

Eyewitnesses told *The Hindu* that Ms. Ittoo, whose Damhalhanjipora residence was attacked only on Friday evening, was on her way home.

The militants detonated a powerful improvised explosive device when her convoy was passing the Mirhama bridge. Ms. Ittoo's escort vehicle, carrying personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force, was hit by the IED and blown up.

An Inspector, Kishan Singh, was killed on the spot. A young girl, Naza, who was passing by, was also killed. And four CRPF personnel were injured.

Villagers said that in retaliatory fire by the Minister's security personnel, at least three girls were injured. On Friday, militants had thrown grenades at Ms. Ittoo's residence but none was hurt.

Today's attempt was the fourth on Ms. Ittoo's life. She was attacked by militants on

September 11 and 15. A report said that militants tried to kidnap her a few days ago but police rescued her.

Ms. Ittoo is the only woman Minister in the Farooq Abdullah Government and is seeking re-election from Noorabad.

Her father and former Speaker of the State Assembly, Wali Mohammad Ittoo, was gunned down by militants in Jammu seven years ago.

Militants attacked Mr. Sayeed in the Kokernag area of Anantnag district.

Ten persons were injured, of whom the condition of at least three is stated to be critical. And police said a National Conference activist, Abdur Rehman Daka, was also killed in the same area.

### Police colony attacked

Militants attacked the highly-guarded Police Housing Colony at Bemina on the outskirts of Srinagar and took some families hostage. A policeman was killed and four others were injured.

A group of militants, disguised as policemen, entered the colony around 7 p.m. throwing grenades and opening fire.

The fire was returned but two fidayeen (suicide squad) militants sneaked in and took position in Block-M, where at least six families of police officials live.

They have been taken hostage and it has become difficult

for police to take on the militants.

The militants opened fire from the colony and detonated an explosion, a terrified resident said over the phone.

In the exchange of fire, three policemen, including a Personal Security Officer of the DIG, Kashmir, Farooq Ahmed, were injured.

Reinforcements have been rushed to the colony where over 200 families reside. The area has been cordoned off and searches are on to flush out the militants.

Photos of victims on Page 8

'NEEDED: AN UNCONDITIONAL DIALOGUE WITH ALL'

# We will never allow trifurcation of J&K: Sonia

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, SEPT. 19. Describing the problem in Jammu and Kashmir as "serious", the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, today called for an unconditional dialogue with the representatives of all the three regions of the State, including separatists. But she firmly opposed any idea of trifurcating the State, which she said would strengthen Pakistan's plans and promote terrorism.

Addressing an election rally amid tight security arrangements in the Sher-e-Kashmir stadium, Ms. Gandhi said the Kashmir problem could be solved only through dialogue and the gun had no role. She asked Pakistan to stop aiding and abetting infiltrators and militancy saying, "By doing so, it will not succeed in weakening Kashmir's relations with the rest of the country." The Pakistani guns had only brought death and destruction to Kashmir and had snatched peace and tranquility from the people.

Ms. Gandhi said the Congress wanted resolution of the crisis and "we are for an unconditional dialogue with the people from all three regions of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh and the aspirations and needs of all the three regions have to be taken into consideration". She advocated talks with the separatists, but without naming them. "*Bina shart batchheet un logon ke saath bhi honee chahiye jin key man mein shak ho*" (Dialogue should be initiated also with those who have doubts

in their hearts).

Ms. Gandhi came down heavily on those demanding trifurcation of the State and said, "We will never allow trifurcation and, in the Indian Constitution, there is the possibility for taking care of the aspirations of the people of any of the regions." The NDA Government in Delhi was being run by the RSS. These were the people who were responsible for the bloodbath in Gujarat and were still trying to vitiate the atmosphere there, she alleged.

She said the ruling National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir "has been keeping the people in the dark and misleading them for the last many decades". She charged the Central and State Governments with failure to restore peace and protect the lives of the people. Reiterating her party's support to the Centre in restoring peace in J&K, she said, "We have also stood behind the Government but it failed to make any serious effort on this front."

Down memory lane: Page 11



The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, at an election rally at the Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium in Srinagar on Thursday — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

## Remarkable voter turnout, says Blackwill

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 19. The United States Ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, said today that the first phase of elections in Jammu and Kashmir had been "very positive" and the 48 per cent turnout was "remarkable".

He was quoted as telling television channels that infiltration across the Line of Control had "gone up" since the end of July and that he condemned the acts of violence, which impacted the results of the Assembly elections. "Infiltration across the LoC was down in June and July but since the end of

July it has gone up and has been up in August and in September," Mr. Blackwill said. "This (the voter turnout in Kashmir) is remarkable. We hope it (the trend) continues. If there is less violence, there will be more turnout," he said describing press reports about rigging as "exaggerated".

"It will be an exaggeration to say there was a lot of hue and cry (about rigging). There may have been isolated incidents," he said. "I would like to salute the individual voters in J&K who came out to exercise their democratic rights despite threat from terrorists," he was quoted as saying. Asked about Pakistan's claims that the elections

were a "sham", Mr. Blackwill took the view that the polls were not a sham. "We think India is committed to holding free, fair and inclusive elections in J&K without violence. This is exactly right." He was hopeful that the elections would lead to the resumption of a dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Asked whether the U.S. had given any deadline to put an end to cross-border terrorism from Pakistan, Mr. Blackwill said diplomacy was a matter of urging, persuading, enticing and giving incentives. "It is outrageous that India has to suffer from terrorism from outside," he said, adding that infiltration should end.

## Ballot over Bullet

Two and a half cheers for democracy in Kashmir: On a day the world was intensely focused on them, wanting to condemn, waiting to detect the smallest slip, Kashmiris — not all, but a significant number — showed they had it in them to fight back. Not with bullets but through the power of the ballot. Braving incessant gunfire and dire death threats, they trudged many miles to cast their votes, thereby signalling their faith in the democratic process. If there were regional variations in the voting patterns, that was only a reflection of the plurality that has long been the hallmark of Kashmir. Certainly, 44 per cent turnout would not count as big in normal circumstances. But 'normal' is a word not easily applied to Kashmir. Everything about the place is abnormal, from the looming presence of security forces to the continuous boom of militant guns. So what does the first phase of voting say for Kashmir's future? Is it a vote for India? While any such inference would be decidedly premature, the fact that voters went out to defy the diktat of the militants would suggest at least a marginal improvement in the comfort levels between India and the average Kashmiri. Indeed, a disenchanted person is hardly likely to defy the gun and go out and vote. For comparison, we need only look at the often lower turnouts that urban India registers elsewhere.

This is both the biggest message and lesson of Monday's voting: Kashmiris desperately want out of militancy; they want a break from insurgency-induced fatigue. This is affirmed not merely by the voter turnout but by the participation in the contest of non-mainstream parties and organisations, including some proxy candidates apparently fielded by the Hurriyat Conference. In other words, elections-2002 was a potential watershed, which an unimaginative Indian establishment typically could not visualise, much less seize upon. Take the issue of Kashmir's internationalisation, on which India has been sounding the same note of caution again and yet again. A moment's thought would tell our officialdom that when Kashmir gets internationalised, so does Pak-based terrorism. Which is why it made zilch sense to resist the sending of foreign observers to Kashmir. In the event, the few observers there were saw exactly what India wanted them to see: That open threats by militants and occasional complaints of forced voting notwithstanding, Kashmiris turned up at polling booths. To be sure, not all of the foreign press was euphoric. But none could deny that the 'most dangerous place' in the world had voted, even if haltingly, for democracy.

# Kashmir votes

Great first day, keep it up

**K**ashmir can be a particularly nasty graveyard for pollsters. The 44 per cent average polling and the small blood spill in the first phase proved almost everyone wrong. Equally dangerous would be to extrapolate from that enormously satisfying performance and declare that the remaining three phases of J&K polls will return a similar experience on the resilience of Indian democracy. Srinagar, along with Baramulla and Jammu, goes to polls for the second phase on 24 September. The state capital will hold special attraction for terrorists who missed out on the first day. Securing Srinagar may be as tough as scaring off militants in Anantnag, which goes to polls in the third phase on 1 October, along with Pulwama, Kathua and Udhampur. Anantnag is where intelligence reports indicate Al Qaida rogues may have gathered. That is also the area where a state minister was shot dead two years back and a current minister was attacked while on the campaign trail this time. Kashmir watchers apprehend that militants from Doda, which goes to polls in the fourth phase on 4 October, may come into Anantnag. Doda, itself, has a long history of terrorism.

The state government, the EC and the Centre must, therefore, cut short self-congratulation, however justified, and prepare for the worst. The inspirational defiance of terrorist blackmail from ordinary Kashmiris on the first day will depend crucially on the establishment's ability to prevent the jihadis from carrying out spectacular strikes. Fear spreads faster than word on post-incident government assurance, and is more credible. On the other hand, even a minimal feeling of safety can induce people from terrorism-ravaged areas to vote in large numbers. The other crucial official task is to repeat the near-exemplary conduct of security personnel seen in the first day of polling. There were a few and not terribly convincing reports about voters being coerced. Note that elections in politically charged states like West Bengal, UP or Bihar produce more examples of coercion. But in Kashmir every failing will get magnified — so the soldiers and policemen will have to be again reminded by their officers of the importance of staying out of private decisions on whether or not to vote.

One thing out of India's control is the response of that great democrat and peace lover, General/President/Dictator Pervez Musharraf. Having described the elections in advance as a farce and now confronted with a first day show that even Western media has found hard put to dismiss, Musharraf may unleash many more dogs of the unholy war. They were barking yesterday, too — there was shelling by Pakistani troops in the Poonch sector. The US, if it wasn't brazenly hypocritical on Kashmir, could have ensured the general behaved during the Kashmir polls. That not being the case, India will need some luck and enormous determination to see them through.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2002

## CHALLENGING BUT NOT DAUNTING

BY FAR THE most satisfying aspect of the first phase of polling in the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir completed on Monday is that the exercise had been strikingly smooth and peaceful, given the context of the stepped up violence during the run-up to the poll by terrorist groups that are out to disrupt the process. In fact, the scale of violence must be regarded as relatively low, going even by the new 'benchmarks' set by States such as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in recent times. Again, considering the formidable odds against which the poll is being held, the average voter turnout — placed by the Election Commission tentatively at 44 per cent — is indeed impressive and the credit should naturally go to the poll panel, the civic administration and the security agencies for their painstaking efforts to ensure a conducive milieu. But the ones to be commended more are really the voters who dared the militants' gun and, in most places, defied the poll boycott call of organisations such as the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to exercise their franchise. Although the 'selective targeting' resorted to by the terrorist elements did dampen electioneering close to the date of poll, its negative impact on the voter turnout has obviously not been such as to erode the overall credibility of the process itself. Notably, Kupwara district that saw the killing of two candidates registered a 40 per cent turnout, while Baramulla, the other district in the Valley that figured in the first phase, witnessed 37 per cent polling. Behind these 'moderate' averages are significant divergences at the constituency level, with Sopore, for instance, recording an abysmally low percentage.

Now, for the more critical question: did the turnout reflect the free will of the electorate or was there any intimidation by the security personnel? It must be said that the official claim of the exercise having been 'free and fair' does sound essentially credible, going by the general tenor of media reports. To be fair, any qual-

itative evaluation has to recognise the bottom line that, in a situation where the people are held to ransom by the terrorists and are under a real threat of death if they took part in the elections, not every act of the security personnel by way of enabling a willing voter to exercise his (or her) franchise can be given the 'coercion' tag. As for the September 16 poll, there have been allegations especially from the foreign mediapersons in the field that security forces had indeed exerted undue pressure on voters in some cases. Perceptions are bound to differ. Whether such instances have been so numerous and pervasive as to vitiate the process is the moot point; they can only be aberrations. Yet, even if charges of coercion and rigging made by anti-poll forces are ignored as 'motivated', similar accusations coming from independent observers from the media need to be taken very seriously, gone into thoroughly and necessary correctives effected in the functioning of the security mechanism for the remaining three phases of the poll; Monday's exercise covered only 23 of the 87 Assembly constituencies in the State. After all, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly poll this time around has come under close international scrutiny and the Government of India, for its part, has indicated its determination to ensure that the exercise was free, fair and participatory — and transparently so. While there is much for the Indian polity to feel satisfied about the way the September 16 poll event was managed, one has to keep one's fingers crossed hoping that the rest of the task will be accomplished even more efficiently and rendered much less vulnerable to allegations of coercion. Indeed, given the highly problematic nature of the constituencies to be covered, what lies ahead could well prove to be much more challenging from the standpoint of securing the democratic process against terrorist attacks and ensuring a credible level of participation in the face of the boycott call by the likes of the Hurriyat.

# In the crossfire, ballot means bunkers

TERRY FRIEL

Dawar, Sept. 16 (Reuters): For Ghulam Khadu, Kashmir's election means just one thing — bunkers.

"We need more of them to protect us from the Pakistani shells," he said after casting his vote in this remote, mountain village in sight of Pakistani peaks.

Despite separatist threats to disrupt the poll, Khadu turned out to vote, hoping his candidate will provide shelters from the frequent shelling between Indian and Pakistani forces and better medical care for the village, cut off six months a year by snow.

Security was tight. A machinegun guarded the gate and villagers were frisked before squatting in the sun — one line for men, one for women — for anything up to six or seven hours to press their choice on electronic voting machines.

"It's our right," said housewife and mother of three, Mina Begum. "We want someone to take up our problems."

For some, it was a party atmosphere, a chance to catch up on gossip, a day off from tending the maize fields. Some sent their children home for food for impromptu picnics.

But this polling booth is next to an army camp. The surrounding territory is held by the army and its open, rocky slopes are not ideal hideouts for militants.

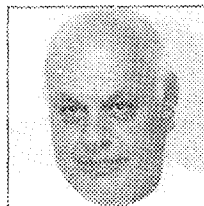
As Kashmiris went to the polls in the first round of voting today, feelings varied enormously. Some felt caught between the militant threat if they voted, and trouble from officials if they didn't.

"We are trapped from both sides," said a voter in Chajjla village, near the border town of Poonch. "We will be in trouble whether we vote or not. The villagers feel scared after the militant threat, but they are also worried that government officials might trouble them if they do not vote."

People in some villages reported being beaten by soldiers for refusing to vote. "They beat me with rifle butts when I refused to come out of my home (to vote)," Mukhtar Ahmad said in Singhpore village, just outside Srinagar.

## THE KASHMIR SWEEPSTAKES: WHO WANTS WHAT

### Brief profiles of the players in Jammu and Kashmir



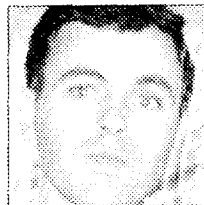
● **FAROOQ ABDULLAH**  
Chief minister and a fanatic golfer, the flamboyant Abdullah belongs to the family that has ruled the state for most of the time since it joined India in 1947.

Critics say his main interest is keeping power and convincing Delhi that he and his National Conference are the Centre's best hope.



● **ABDUL GANI BHAT**  
Chairman of the separatist alliance, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. A former professor, 66-year-old moderate was dismissed from government service in 1986 for "anti-Indian" activities.

Under Bhat, the Hurriyat says it will not contest the election because these cannot be a substitute for a UN-mandated vote to allow Kashmiris to decide to join either India or Pakistan. Favours a merger with Pakistan.



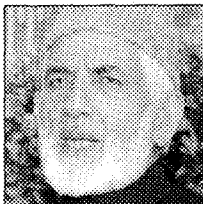
● **OMAR ABDULLAH**  
Farooq's only son and heir-apparent and junior foreign minister. Omar was appointed president of the National Conference this year in apparent preparation to take over from his father.

Omar, a commerce graduate now aged 32, is expected to become chief minister if the National Conference wins, which is likely.



● **MOULANA UMAR FAROOQ**  
Former Hurriyat chairman and leader of the Awami Action Committee, a religious group. Umar Farooq is head priest of Kashmir's largest mosque, the Jama Masjid. His father,

Moulana Mohammad Farooq, the former chief priest, was killed by unidentified gunmen in 1990. An Islamic scholar, sportsman and a self-confessed Internet addict, 31-year-old Umar recently married a US-based woman. The priest-politician is pursuing Islamic studies and plans to study international relations. Thousands listen to his sermons every Friday. He wants Kashmiris to choose their fate after leaving India.



● **SYED ALI SHAH GEELANI**  
A hardline separatist and former legislator. Geelani is leader of the Jamat-e-Islami religious group. Geelani, a 73-year-old clergyman, enjoys the support of most militant groups fighting Delhi rule in Kashmir and is now in prison.

Geelani believes Kashmir's merger with Pakistan is the only solution.



● **YASIN MALIK**  
A former guerrilla commander, Malik leads the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) pushing for Kashmir's independence from both India and Pakistan. Malik and his JKLF declared a ceasefire in 1994.

Malik, 34, tall and frail, has undergone heart surgery and undertaken long fasts to protest against Indian rule. In March, he was detained and remains in jail.



● **BILAL LONE**  
Elder son of senior Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Lone who was assassinated in May. Bilal is a low-profile businessman. Abdul Gani Lone was considered the political strategist of the Hurriyat.

Bilal, now an executive member of the Hurriyat, and his father survived a car-bomb in 1996 that exploded at the gates of their house in Srinagar. The soft-spoken, 38-year-old Bilal is a commerce graduate and father of two girls and is considered

a moderate leader like his father. He favours independence for Kashmir.



● **MEHBOOBA MUFTI**  
A popular politician. Mehbooba is the daughter of former Union home minister Mufti Mohamed Syed. In 1999, she and her father broke away from

the Congress and formed their own People's Democratic Party. Mehbooba has earned a reputation as a firebrand for standing up to the powerful Farooq Abdullah. The mother of two has campaigned against human rights violations by security forces. She and her father are contesting the election. Mehbooba wants Kashmir to remain part of India, but she has been critical of the way the state and federal governments have tackled the issue.



● **SHABIR SHAH**  
Dubbed Kashmir's Nelson Mandela after spending more than 20 of his 48 years in jail for his pro-independence stand.

Shah was suspended from Hurriyat in 1996 for violating a ban on meeting the US ambassador to India. He then launched his own Jammu Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party. Shah wants talks with Indian leaders to end the dispute. He said he was ready to contest the election, if Delhi promised talks on a permanent settlement, but said there was little hope of that happening.



● **KUKA PARRAY**  
A separatist rebel who changed sides and became a pro-government militant and later a mainstream, pro-India politician. Kuka Parray, alias Jamsheed Shirazi,

leads the pro-India Awami League. Human rights and Kashmiri groups have accused Parray, who is a musician, poet and singer, and his militiamen of human rights violations.

## Poll panel happy with first round

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 16: The Election Commission claimed a 44 per cent turnout at the end of the first phase of the Jammu and Kashmir polls. Twenty-three constituencies, covering five districts, went to polls today.

"We are satisfied with the elections," said deputy election commissioner Sayan Chatterjee.

Although comparisons with voting percentages in 1996 in the same constituencies might show a decline, the two situations are not comparable. In 1996, the polls were widely perceived to have been rigged and people complained of coercion by the army.

This time, there were no reports of coercion. Foreign diplomats and journalists were allowed to visit booths in all areas to see for themselves whether the polling was free and fair. This is, perhaps, one reason why the Election Commission expressed its satisfaction despite sporadic incidents of violence.

"There are two cases of repolling before us. One constituency in Pattan in Baramulla district and the other in Mendha in Poonch district," Chatterjee said at a press conference.

Militant-infested constituencies like Kupwara recorded 40 per cent polling, Hindwara 26 per cent, Langate 31 per cent, Rafiabad 33 per cent, Sangrama 11 per cent, Bandipore 31 per cent, Naushera 50 per cent, Rajouri 47 per cent, Kalakot 43 per cent, Surankot 33 per cent, Mendhar 45 per cent and Poonch 48 per cent. Except for Poonch, Rajouri, Kupwara, Bandipore and Langate, the figures available were for 4 pm.

Among the other constituencies, Uri recorded 60 per cent polling, Karnah 55 per cent, Gurez 60 per cent, Baramullah 23 per cent, Gulmarg 45 per cent and Darhal 32 per cent (all figures for 4 pm). Pattan recorded a 41 per cent turnout at the end of polling.

Kargil recorded the highest turnout with 67 per cent, while 42 per cent voted in Zanskar. The lowest turnout was at Sopore, where only six per cent people cast their ballot.

Paramilitary police, wearing flak jackets and toting automatic weapons, guarded polling stations — mainly schools. Some were surrounded by rooftop guard posts. Some election officials wore flak jackets and helmets.

Many towns and villages were almost silent, shops and businesses closed after separat-

ists, not running in the election, called a day-long strike in protest. Such strikes are often observed as much out of fear as support.

Voters trickled in to vote in the early morning autumn cold, but increased as temperatures rose. Many were dressed in their best clothes. Some carried babies in their arms, some

walked along steep mountain tracks using walking sticks. Authorities also laid on buses.

The turnout appeared moderate. At some polling stations, very few people turned up. At others, the queue was so long they started demanding that the booths be kept open late into the night, poll officials said.

Some voted to express their

anger: "I am fed up with this government. I want a change," said one.

Others stayed away for the same reason. "There is no point," said another. "The situation is getting worse. The government doesn't do anything for us and they don't protect us, either. The militants are just as bad."



POLL PANEL CLAIMS 44 PER CENT TURNOUT

# Democracy wins round one in J&K

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 16 - Democracy won in Jammu and Kashmir's first round of polling today. Election Commission figures show a hugely impressive 44 per cent of the 14 lakh electorate in 23 constituencies voted, surprising even the most optimistic observer. Equally triumphal for New Delhi, the first election day claimed no victim, according to the EC and the home ministry. However, an agency report from Srinagar said three persons were killed.

Some guns fired, some bombs exploded, a state government chopper was targeted, and there were some injuries. But even in militancy-synonymous districts like Kargil, no one was killed. Kargil, in fact, has the distinction of claiming the highest poll percentage today, 67 per cent. Poll figures for the other four districts are Poonch 48 per cent, Rajouri 47 per cent, Baramulla 37 per cent and Kupwara 40 per cent. The average voting percentage for the first phase is 44 per cent.

The false note in this story was the Sopore assembly constituency where polling was lowest — between 3 per cent and 5 per cent.

Visibly elated EC officials described today's voting as "a big success story" which gave a lie to "anti-India propaganda".

Mr Sayan Chatterjee, EC spokesman, said there was no loss of life, some "injuries from the field caused by bomb explosions" and "stray incidents of violence".

There was intermittent firing from across the border in Poonch district when polling was in progress. But the attempt by "hostile forces", EC officials said, "failed to deter voters, who continued to arrive at polling stations".

Polling took place in all the 205 booths set up for the first phase of the polls. There was only one incident of 'booth capturing' at Mendara booth in Poonch district where some miscreants snatched the electronic voting machine and damaged it. There will be re-polling there and in one more booth



THE VALLEY VOTES: A voter has her finger marked with ink at a polling booth in Langate village in Kashmir on Monday. — AFP (More reports, photographs on page 4)

in Baramulla where the EVM failed to operate.

EC officials said that "terrorists tried to disrupt polling in several places but polling resumed after short interruptions." Security forces engaged some militants groups in encounters but no casualty was reported, Mr Chatterjee said.

The Army killed about a dozen militants, crossing the Line of Control, in the last 48 hours. The Pakistan-supported militants were shot along the LoC while entering the Kupwara area in three separate instances.

In a night encounter, nine militants were killed in Tangdhar in Kupwara yesterday and a large amount of arms and ammunition found. These militants were carrying seven Kalashnikov rifles, two grenade launchers, two pistols, two radio sets, 30 anti-personnel mines and some explosives. They were also carrying Rs 1 lakh in Indian currency. Documents found in their possession suggest that they belonged to the Hizbul Mujahideen.

Turn to page 4

# Army foils infiltration bid, kills 17 militants

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Even as the electoral process got into motion in strife-torn Jammu and Kashmir, the army reported a spurt in infiltration attempts and shelling from across the volatile Line of Control (LoC). The army, in fact, killed 17 militants in three infiltration attempts on Sunday.

"Pakistan is making a determined bid to disrupt the polls by sending in a large number of militants. Huge sums of money are being offered to the militants by their Pakistani controllers specifically to target candidates standing

for the elections," a senior army officer said on Monday.

"In the Kashmir valley alone, troops have foiled 23 infiltration attempts and killed about 70 militants along the LoC in the last six weeks," he added.

The latest infiltration incident took place in the Tangdhar area of Kupwara sector late on Sunday night, just hours before the first phase of polling got under way. "Nine terrorists, belonging to the Hizbul Mujahideen, were killed while they were trying to sneak into India," an officer said.

Seven AK-47 rifles, two grenade

launchers, two pistols, 12 magazines, 1,150 rounds of ammunition, 30 grenades, 30 anti-personnel mines, five kg of explosives, 70 remote-controlled detonators, two radio sets and Rs 1 lakh in cash were reportedly seized after the encounter.

"The large amounts of weapons and explosives seized indicate that the infiltrators' aim is to spread a fear psychosis among the voters to discredit the elections," the officer said.

Earlier, two families in the border town of Poonch had a narrow escape when their houses were hit by mortar bombs fired from Pak-

istan shortly after polling began, officials said.

Nine to ten shells were fired from across the LoC, Deputy Inspector General (DIG) of poll security, Rajouri-Poonch, Ashok Gupta said.

While the first bomb landed at a cremation ground, the other shells fell at Poonch airport and in the vicinity of the Betar Nallah and Purani Poonch localities, he added.

The Pakistani army also fired a shell at a chopper that was about to land at Poonch airport, but missed the target, the police official said.

17 SEP 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## COERCION BY SECURITY FORCES ALLEGED

# 44 p.c. turnout in first phase of J&K elections

By Shujaat Bukhari  
and Anjali Mody

**BARAMULLA/ KUPWARA, SEPT. 16.** Amid coercion by security forces, a partial election boycott, a general strike call given by the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, and a spate of militant attacks in which a policeman was killed and eight persons were injured, the first phase of elections in five districts of Jammu and Kashmir was completed today with zero to brisk polling.

A complete strike was observed in the Kashmir Valley in response to the Hurriyat call. All the shops, business establishments, offices and banks were closed. Traffic was also off the road. The Hurriyat, which also called for an election boycott, alleged that the security forces coerced the people to vote as "the Government wants to thrust elections on Kashmiris."

**Hizbul reward for killing Farooq;  
Other reports: Page 11**

The Chief Electoral Officer, Pramod Jain, said that the overall voting percentage in Baramulla, Rajouri, Kupwara, Poonch and Kargil districts was 44. Kargil recorded the highest of 67 per cent voting, followed by 48 per cent in Poonch, 47 per cent in Rajouri, 40 per cent in Kupwara and 37 per cent in Baramulla.

There was unmistakable determination among the voters in a few segments to exercise their franchise, and in some others people were equally determined not to do so. In yet others, fear was a major factor, which kept the people away.

At least five segments out of 15 in Kupwara and Baramulla witnessed brisk polling. People defied militant threats and a 'hartal' called by the Hurriyat. But, the turnout in many other segments was extremely low with the number of votes polled in many stations remaining in single digits at the end of the day. Till late afternoon, most of the polling booths in Pattan, Sangrama, Sopore and Baramulla wore a deserted look. At 8 a.m., only 13 out of 958 voters had exercised their franchise at the Delina polling station near Baramulla. In Pattan too, only



Enthusiastic women at Trehgam in Kupwara constituency of north Kashmir waiting to vote during the first phase of the Assembly elections on Monday. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

13 of the 1,298 votes had been cast at 7.30 a.m. In Baramulla town, the residents categorically said that they were not going to vote. "We will not vote, come what may. We will not allow the sacrifice of 80,000 people to go in vain," said an angry resident of the Bag-i-Islam locality.

Enthusiasm among the people to vote seemed strong in the most important segment of Handwara, Kupwara district, where a former People's Conference member, Mohiuddin Sofi,

is pitted against the National Conference nominee and Minister, Mohammad Ramzan. "It is something beyond my imagination," a journalist, who has covered all the four elections held here since 1996, said. Long queues outside the polling booth in Handwara town indicated a complete change in the mood of the people. Handwara, however, also obliged the Hurriyat by observing a complete 'hartal'. "There is no coercion, we are here voluntarily," said

Zamruda. This was also the case at Wadipora village, around 7 km from Handwara. However, in Nutnusa village on the Sopore-Kupwara road, where a tent in an open field was converted into a booth, long queues of voters alleged that the Army had forced them to come out for voting.

Like Handwara, Kupwara town also witnessed brisk polling and people did not complain about any coercion. This was also the case in Trehgam. The villagers in Seelo village on the same road, however, alleged that the security forces had forced them out of their homes. The Bandipora segment wore a sharp contrast. At mid-day, Nadihal had recorded a two per cent turnout. In Aitmula, 12 voters out of 1,333 had cast their votes at 12.30 p.m. in the two polling booths. Booth 24 in Watpura bucked the trend with 389 of the 842 votes being cast. Here, the People's Conference supporters alleged that the elections were rigged and that people whose names were not on the voters' list had voted.

In Sopore, the scene was grim. At the three polling booths in Warapore, no voter out of 2,880 turned out until 3 p.m. The 'hartal' here was complete.

## Bid to disrupt polls

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, SEPT. 16.** Militants made at least 20 abortive attempts since Sunday evening to disrupt the first phase of elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Two persons were killed and as many injured in these attacks. The Director-General of Police, A.K. Suri, said "the situation was fairly under control and the security forces did a good job in providing a sense of security to the candidates and voters." Giving details, police said the militants attacked a police station in Sarsoi Dandi in the Mendhar segment of Poonch district and opened indiscriminate fire. A constable, Jarnail Singh, of the Punjab Police was killed.

In the same district, militants fired in the Sarkhaya area and a civilian, Ghulam Ahmed, was killed. A major tragedy was averted when security forces detected and defused seven improvised explosive devices in different parts of north Kashmir. In the Shehla area of Handwara, a powerful blast took place around 8 a.m. in which two civilians were injured.

Militants attacked Ladoora (Rafiabad), Bandipore, Handwara, Tangmarg, Darhal and Dudsan Bala in Rajouri district.

# Fear versus franchise in Valley

9-8-98K



**BALLOT, NOT BATTLE, GEAR:** A poll official tries on a bullet-proof jacket and headgear in Poonch. (Reuters)

SUJAN DUTTA

**Srinagar, Sept. 15:** The Valley votes and does not vote tomorrow, ringed by artillery on the border, the politico-military machinery in the centre, the diplomatic community as overseers and the world's media as recorders.

"I know that the situation is not ideal," state chief electoral officer Pramod Jain said. "But you will find that elections have been held despite conditions not being ideal. For instance, in Kosovo."

All sides geared up today for the first phase of polling that can set the trend for the rest of the election. It could just as well be a reason for more violent outcomes.

The army and security forces began intensive combing operations last night, rounding up suspects and putting more road-opening patrols in position to clear highways of improvised explosive devices.

Near the LoC, the army prepared for intensive shelling in what can be a repeat of events during the 1996 poll.

In Srinagar, 16 diplomats arranged logistics for travel tomorrow, telling the state gov-

ernment that they "wanted transport, not guides".

In the towns, another frisson of fear swept through after the state tourism minister and National Conference candidate from Anantnag was ambushed this morning. (She survived, her securitymen were killed; Anantnag goes to polls in the third phase).

In villages, people mostly kept indoors, left for other (safer) places or simply waited for the morrow to unfold.

In Delhi, chief election commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh appealed to voters not to disappoint the visiting diplomats.

Twenty-eight diplomats will be in the state during the elections. Sixteen diplomats reached here this morning.

"I am told (that) we will be taken by helicopter to Baramulla (just an hour's drive from Srinagar). From there, we will have transport which we will take to places we want to visit. We have asked for transport, and not for a conducted tour," a diplomat said.

For a place that is just a Valley that can be driven across from end to end in four hours, the elections have been vested with unprecedented importance.

For India, a peaceful poll will be interpreted as conferring le-

gitimacy; for Pakistan, a violent poll with little participation will be grist to Pervez Musharraf's mill. For Kashmir and its people, their home will continue to be the battleground of competing diplomats, the razor's edge of brinkmanship.

In feedbacks from recent visits, the diplomat said: "We've learnt of apprehensions that there might be poor voting in the towns and forcible voting in the villages. We would like to check that out."

If Kashmir is the arena, Kupwara is the ring. The district, just north of Srinagar, has had the bloodiest, tensest days leading up to the poll.

Kupwara is both town and country, the bridge between the urban and the rural. It is also along the LoC. The radical extreme of parliamentary candidates is in the fray here, with the National Conference and the Congress. Kupwara can define the poll.

In the 23 seats in the Valley for tomorrow's polling, a low turnout is more than likely in the towns. The National Conference stands to benefit more than the others from poor attendance.

Fear will be the overriding factor that will determine attendance. (See Page 6)

'DIPLOMATS, MEDIA WILL BE WATCHING'

# Vote enthusiastically, Lyngdoh tells J&K voters

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15. On the eve of the first phase of elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M. Lyngdoh, today appealed to the voters to exercise their franchise enthusiastically as the international media and diplomats would be keenly watching the elections.

Addressing a press conference after a full Commission meeting here to take stock of the poll arrangements in the State, Mr. Lyngdoh said that no person would be forced to vote. "But there are many of you, going by the media coverage of the election, who wish to vote despite the needless bloodshed and tribulation you have been through." Arrangements had been made and security personnel deployed in large numbers to protect the voters.

"The intrepid media and members of the diplomatic



Armymen keeping vigil on Sunday at Sopore constituency in Baramulla district. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

corps in strength from many parts of the world are your guests just to see you voting. Do not disappoint them," he said.

The CEC, who was accompanied by the Election Commissioners, T.S. Krishnamurthy and B.B. Tandon, said that the

Commission had, to ensure openness of the poll process, issued special passes to 28 Delhi-based diplomats, who would have free access to the polling stations. While 16 diplomats would be visiting Kupwara and Baramullah in the first phase, two would visit Rajouri and Poonch in the Jammu region. As many as 14,36,151 people would exercise their franchise in tomorrow's polling that would be spread over nearly 2,000 polling stations.

The Commission had sent 17 special observers as well as 48 additional observers and they had already started monitoring every stage of the election process. Nearly 5,000 personnel from Uttar Pradesh and Punjab had been deployed for election duty.

Meanwhile, the Kashmir Committee, led by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, said that the panel would not meet Pakistan's National Kashmir Committee until there was a "warmer response" from other side. While maintaining that the Committee's aim was to find a durable and honourable solution to the Kashmir problem, Mr. Jethmalani said Sardar Abdul Qayyum of the Pakistan's Kashmir Committee had sent an e-mail to him extending complete support.

## Nine LeT militants killed

PTI reports from Srinagar: At least nine Lashkar-e-Taiba militants were killed today when the Army foiled an infiltration bid in the Kupwara sector, a Defence spokesman said. The infiltrators were killed when the troops took them on at the Tangdar sector near the Line of Control this afternoon, he said adding that the action set off an encounter, which was on till late tonight.

More reports on Page 13

## Minister survives bid on life

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, SEPT. 15. Militants today hurled grenades and opened fire on the vehicle of the Jammu and Kashmir Tourism Minister, Sakina Ittoo, in the Noorabad Assembly segment, the second such attack in four days. She, however, survived the attempt. Two of her bodyguards were killed and one was injured. The attack comes amid claims by the State Government and the Election Commission that adequate security has been provided to all candidates.

Police sources said Ms. Ittoo, seeking re-election from Noorabad in Anantnag district, which goes to the polls in the third phase, was on her way to Danew-Kandinar to address a rally. The militants attacked her convoy near Bahunar, about 90 km from here. They hurled grenades and opened indiscriminate fire, which hit an escort vehicle of the Central Reserve Police Force.

Gyan Singh, a Sub-Inspector, and a constable died on the spot. Ms. Ittoo's bullet-proof vehicle was also hit but she escaped unhurt. Though her guards retaliated, the militants escaped.

Militants had attacked Ms. Ittoo's Noorabad residence on Wednesday but she was not at home. The attack has disturbed the authorities, who have made all the arrangements for the smooth conduct of the elections in the 23 Assembly segments which go to the polls in the five districts of Baramulla, Kupwara, Rajouri, Poonch and Kargil tomorrow. The Chief Electoral Officer, Pramod Jain, however, said "this will not unnerve or deter us from furthering the cause of democracy." Asked if the attacks would affect the voter turnout he said "it does require some courage and I hope with the security arrangements we have made, things will be better."

An estimated 1.5 million voters are expected to exercise their franchise.

16 SEP 2002

THE HINDI

# Centre geared for renewed violence in J&K

HD-1  
15/9

By Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 14.** The Centre is expecting a dramatic increase in the violence in Jammu and Kashmir as the troubled State embarks on an electoral time-table on Monday. The view here is that Pakistan is desperate enough to want to "activate" all its "assets", including those in the "separatist" leadership, in the State to unleash violence in order to undermine the legitimacy of the electoral exercise.

For example, whereas the entire month of August recorded eight deaths in militants' attacks, the first 12 days this month saw 18 activists killed. Based on intercepts from across the border of instructions to militant groups to engineer the maximum possible violence, the Centre is mentally prepared for an unusual increase in militant activity.

On the other hand, the Union Home Ministry feels confident that the dominant sentiment in the Kashmir Valley is in favour of the elections, and that this time the elections would be far more representative, despite the Pakistani agents' efforts to disrupt the poll.

It is pointed out that

compared to the entire month of August which witnessed 68 political meetings (of all political parties, including the National Conference, the BJP, the PDP, the Congress and others), the first 12 days of September saw as many as 121 meetings. Or, for example, Kupwara district had only 24 candidates in the 1996 Assembly elections, but this time 45 candidates are in the fray.

Pakistan's desperation emanates from the fact that there are a very large number of "other" candidates (28 in Kupwara district, 30 in Baramulla district, 34 in Srinagar district and 12 in Badgam district). Many of these "independent" candidates could turn out to be "proxies". For instance, a close associate of the Jamat-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, is believed to have floated a "revolutionary movement" forum and is contesting election as its candidate. According to one count, Kupwara district alone has as many as eight "proxy" candidates.

Though in private the Centre is not exactly pleased that the Chief Election Commissioner, J.M.Lyngdoh, has made "anti-security forces" statements, there is also the realisation that there

may be unintended beneficial fallout from his blunt statement (that it is not the job of the security forces to bring voters to the polling booths). The new realisation has resulted in the decision to allow foreign diplomats access to the polling booths.

This despite the fact that the poll "boycott" calls are aplenty. Both Shabir Shah and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, which held elaborate talks here recently with the Kashmir Committee, have issued "poll boycott" calls; the local Urdu media regularly reports these boycott calls as well as threats from this or that "tanzeem" to those who participate in any way in the election exercise.

Given the judgment that the Pakistani "assets" are out to create a bloody scenario, the earlier decision to confine the Army to the border areas has been revised. So far, the local police and other paramilitary forces were expected to handle the poll duties; but given the evidence of a massive militant onslaught, the Army has been asked to lend a helping hand in ensuring that those who want to participate in the elections feel sufficiently un-intimidated to be able to travel to the polling booth.

Campaign reports or  
Pages 8 & 10

15 SEP 2002

# Nod for foreign diplomats to watch J&K polls

HT Correspondent/Agencies  
Srinagar, September 13

ABOUT 20 DIPLOMATS from various countries, including the US, the UK and Germany, will visit Jammu and Kashmir to witness the four-phase Assembly elections in the State beginning September 16.

Envoys from Japan, including a woman, are already here while consular representatives from the US, Canada, Germany are expected by Saturday, official sources said.

The remaining diplomats will arrive here before the commencement of the first phase of polls on Monday.

India has rejected the demand for international observers but said representatives from various embassies were free to come and witness the election process, including the counting of votes.

Two choppers have been pressed into service to facilitate the movement of diplomats. Security for them is to be provided jointly by the police, security agencies and paramilitary forces, the sources said.

The diplomats have been told they are free to speak to various sections of the people in the State about the election process and the arrangements made for it.

**Related reports on Page 9**

# Kashmir elections

5/8/09  
Blood is thinner than democracy

**B**y Kashmir's tragic standards and given the extraordinary importance of the assembly polls, Wednesday's violence — the state law minister, Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, shot dead and Congress leaders narrowly escaping — should be considered electorally manageable. But that may change if the few days till 16 September drown in blood. If that happens, India must know how to react, specifically whether to press ahead and risk a turnout too low to be meaningful. Unless Kashmir descends into complete gory chaos, elections should proceed. True, that may invite skepticism from the US and the West, who will use turnout figures to argue that elections prove little. The answer to that is two fold. First, holding elections in Kashmir, as long as they are free and fair, is very important proof of India's commitment to a political process. Second, not holding elections would give terrorists a massive boost, General Musharraf the opportunity for many weeks of gloating and the US new talking points about how Kashmir needs a "dialogue". India simply cannot afford giving them such elbowroom. Politically, a low turnout is said to be an advantage for the National Conference, which has not exactly had a sizzling poll campaign so far. Father Farooq has looked to be in the first stages of becoming an anachronism. Son Omar hasn't quite set the Jhelum on fire. His linguistic handicap is one reason. But more important is NC's record in government, which has been, to be polite, quite ordinary. The Abdullahs want to stress their record as Kashmir's primary Indian politicians to the exclusion of their administrative performance. That is not working, and it should not work. In fact, a vote against NC and an alternative government will, in real terms, be an acceptable outcome from India's strategic view, of the Jammu and Kashmir elections.

Irrespective of the composition of the next government, it and the Centre must address developmental priorities ignored by the NC administration. This does not, of course, mean throwing money about. Indeed, the Centre must correct its propensity to treat troubled provincial governments as specially qualified for profligacy and corruption. Power, roads and communication, in other words, the basics, are all insufficient in Kashmir. A quick and discernible improvement in these, apart from positive economic effects, will change popular assessment of the state machinery. Next comes the trickier issue of generating jobs. Investment is hard to attract in Kashmir and schemes for finding jobs for locals outside the Valley have not had much success. The public sector is mostly overstaffed and the private sector understandably does not like quotas to fill its ranks. An essential condition is that some of these unemployed young men do not create too much mayhem between now and the elections.

THE STATESMAN.

13 SEP 2002



## SPREE OF ATTACKS ON POLITICAL LEADERS

# J&K Minister, guards shot dead at poll rally

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, SEPT. 11.** In a setback to the National Conference and to the electoral process in Jammu and Kashmir, a militant today shot dead the Minister of State for Law and National Conference (NC) nominee from the Lolab constituency, Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, and three of his guards in Kupwara district. Seven others were injured in the attack for which the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has claimed responsibility.

Militants also attacked the residence of the Tourism Minister, Sakina Ittoo, and a vehicle belonging a People's Democratic Party (PDP) candidate in Bandipore, injuring nine persons.

Eyewitnesses told *The Hindu* that the 43-year-old Mr. Lone was addressing a public meeting in Rednag in the Tekipora area of the Lolab segment. Around 1 p.m., a militant wearing a traditional Kashmiri "pheran" (a long coat used in winter) stood up from the women's enclosure and opened fire. People ran helter-skelter as Mr. Lone and his guards fell down. The guards, Bishen Singh, Gulzar Ahmed and Mohammad Yaseen, died on the spot.

"The security forces also ran away and did not retaliate," said an eyewitness, who was standing near the podium. Mr. Lone died of injuries on the way to



Relatives of the Jammu and Kashmir Law Minister, Mushtaq Lone, wailing at his residence at Tikipora Sogam, in the Kupwara sector, on Wednesday.

— Photo: Nissar Ahmad

hospital near Dragmulla, close to the Kupwara district headquarters. The injured were admitted to hospital.

The LeT spokesman for north Kashmir, Mohammad Shakeel, told a local news agency, Kashmir Press Service, that the attack was carried out by an "anti-election squad" headed by Saiful Islam. "Today's attack was carried out by a 14-year-old boy, Abu Waqas," he said. Earlier, another outfit, Al Afreen, had claimed responsibility for the attack.

A pall of gloom descended on Sogam village, from where Mr.

**Bid to sabotage polls, says PM; Fernandes in Srinagar to review security : Page 11**

Lone hails, as the news of his killing spread. Thousands of supporters and admirers thronged his house. "We have lost a popular leader, who was simple and generous," said a supporter.

The Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, and his Cabinet colleagues, Chowdary Mohammad Ramzan, Ali Mohammad Sagar and Khalid Suhrawardy, have rushed to Sogam.

In Bandipore, militants attacked the vehicle of the PDP candidate, Mohammad Abdullah Mir, injuring five persons, including his son and brother. The district president of the NC women's wing, Mehra Begum, was shot dead in Baramulla on Tuesday.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

12 SEP 2002

# J&K minister shot; Congmen escape

Kavita Suri in Jammu <sup>Sri</sup> <sub>MA</sub>

Sept. 11. — Heightened pre-poll violence rocked the state today with terrorists gunning down state law minister Mr Mushtaq Ahmad Lone. AICC general-secretary Mrs Ambika Soni and state Congress chief Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad narrowly escaped a bid on their lives.

Twelve persons, including seven BSF and one Indian Reserve Police jawans, two police officers and two children were killed and 15 injured in the attack on the two Congress leaders. Both the incidents occurred when the leaders were addressing campaign rallies.

Militants fired several rounds and hurled grenades at a Congress rally at Surankote, about 100 km from here, which was attended by Mrs Soni and Mr Azad. Mr Lone, National Conference

MLA from Lolab, was killed at a meeting in Takipora, Kupwara. The state government has declared a day's morning tomorrow. Mrs Sonia Gandhi will address rallies in Poonch tomorrow.

## Countermanded

NEW DELHI, Sept. 11. — Polls to Lolab Assembly seat are countermanded following Mr Lone's death by the provisions of Sec. 61 of the J&K Representation of the People Act 1957. The EC will decide on fresh dates. The first phase of polling in J&K begins on Monday. — SNS

"Around 12.30 p.m., when Mr Lone was addressing a rally in Mohalla Takipura, terrorists fired several rounds at him and his team, severely injuring him. He died on the way to hospital," Mr RS Bhullar, DIG BSF, told The

Statesman over phone from Srinagar. Five state police constables and a civilian were killed in the attack. Sources in Srinagar said militants had first triggered a landmine blast as Mr Lone's motorcade was on its way to the rally. Two of his bodyguards were killed.

A little-known militant group, Al Arifeel, has claimed responsibility for the attack. But an Intelligence officer said message intercepts don't rule out the hand of the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba. "With an aim to disrupt the polls, the Lashkar has created small operational groups such as Al Madina, Al Mansoorin and Al Arifeel." Mr Lone is the second NC minister killed by militants since 1996.

**Minister's house attacked:** In Anantnag, militants attacked the house of MoS for tourism Mr Sakina Itoo. There was no report of any casualty.

More reports on page 5

# 'Big Three' review Kashmir

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 10. — Mr LK Advani today reviewed the situation on the border in Kargil and other areas in Kashmir, even as Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee plans to meet Mr George W Bush in New York on Thursday to apprise him of the nation's security concerns.

Mr George Fernandes and Mr Jaswant Singh met the Deputy Prime Minister this afternoon. The three members of the "Big Four" discussed the situation on the border in Drass and Kargil where heavy firing has reportedly been going on for the past few days, officials said.

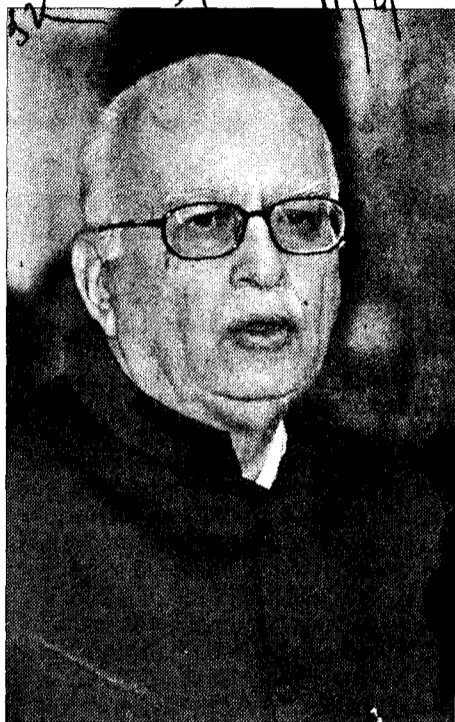
Mr Singh has now shifted to the finance ministry but his expertise in foreign affairs and his presence at the meeting proves that his position in the government remains unchanged, officials said.

The defence minister said India had "irrefutable evidence" that the Pakistani army was trying to disrupt Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. He asserted that the Centre was determined to ensure free and fair polls in the state.

Would India would cross the LoC if the situation became untenable? Mr Fernandes said India would do everything to fight terrorism and would not be cowed down. "The polls will end the gun-culture in the Valley."

The defence minister accused Pakistan of "highly provocative acts" along the LoC, especially in Drass and Kargil. Pakistan, he said, was trying to provoke India to counter-attack, but India would not fall in such a trap. Islamabad has not stopped supporting militants in J&K, he said.

On the deployment of troops on the border, the defence minister said it was only after India had deployed troops on the border that Pakistan had admitted to helping terrorists. Gen. Pervez Musharraf's 12 January speech was because of India's actions and the USA was aware of this. Deployment of troops was a "calibrated response". Since



Mr LK Advani

1990, 13, 835 lives have been lost in terrorism. About 3,250 security men have died. India has still maintained a restrained approach.

The defence minister said the "USA would not pull our chestnuts out of the fire". But he said Delhi understood and realised the utility and relevance of Pakistan in the US war against terrorism. The US should realise that "Pakistan is part of the problem and of the solution", he said.

On the USA's twin objectives: capture Osama bin Laden, and of overthrow of Taliban regime and re-establishment of democratic rule in Afghanistan, Mr Fernandes said he had predicted even before the US military action began that the first task would end up unfulfilled and the second would be a long-term gamble.

## Mirwaiz concedes Hurriyat climbdown

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

Sept. 10. — The joint statement with the Kashmir Committee was a climbdown on the part of Hurriyat, Mirwaiz Omar Farooq has said.

The Kashmiri cleric and Hurriyat leader says Delhi has been "flexible" in its approach, but Pakistan is a party by "default" in the Kashmir issue.

He told The Statesman: "Realistically speaking, everyone has to climb down a bit for a settlement. If you look at the stands we had taken earlier on the (tripartite) talks between India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat, the possibility of a settlement seemed quite dim. But... with a realistic and softened approach by parties... it can only help in moving towards a settlement".

The Prime Minister's statement yesterday that he hadn't got a formal proposal on Hurriyat's wish to visit Pakistan and that the government would look into the matter once it let's know its desire, is a "positive" thing.

"Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee hasn't rejected it. I think there is a realisation in Delhi too, and some amount of flexibility. ...let the poll dust

## Bangladeshis held in Jammu

JAMMU, Sept. 10. — The Border Security Force arrested 162 Bangladeshis yesterday when they were trying to infiltrate into the country through the forward posts of Alla Mai Di Kothi (AMK) and Badyal in RS Pura sector. Of the 162 Bangladeshis arrested, 39 were women and 64 children, officials said. — SNS

settle down... a process has already begun." he said.

"What is lacking in Kashmir is a concentration on the process and that's where we have to put in more efforts and the Kashmir Committee can help us in this regard."

Pakistan is a party to the issue "by default and we can't deny it," he said. Pakistan controls one-third of "Azad Kashmir", which belongs to Kashmir.

"The issue is very much there. Azad Kashmir is part of the dispute and that has been the Hurriyat's position. Hence, Pakistan is a party by default and you have to talk to them and involve them."

NO NEED FOR INTERMEDIARIES, SAYS ADVANI ✓

# No proposal for Kashmir panel to visit Pak.: PM

 10/1 ✓

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9.** The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today dismissed the report that the Line of Control (LoC) would be converted into the border between India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir issue, saying he had "also heard about it".

The Prime Minister, who left on a week-long tour to the U.S. to attend the United Nations General Assembly session, reacted thus, when asked about reports in some Indian and Pakistani media that there was a move to turn the LoC into the International Border.

Talking to reporters before emplaning, Mr. Vajpayee denied that there was any proposal to allow the Ram Jethmalani-led Kashmir Committee to visit Pakistan to hold talks with the Hurriyat leaders there.

The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, who was also present at the airport, said the Government did not need any intermediaries to solve the Kashmir issue. "The day we decide to hold talks with Pakistan, the Government will do so on its own. There is no need for intermediaries."

Mr. Vajpayee said that in his talks with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and other world leaders on the fringes of the U.N. General Assembly, he would reaffirm India's determination to firmly counter terrorism across the globe.

"Our basic message is that the democracies of the world have a crucial role in countering terrorism together," said Mr. Vajpayee, who will be addressing the U.N. General Assembly on September 13.

Asked whether Washington was really keen on New Delhi's request to jointly counter cross-border terrorism backed by Pakistan, he said "they (U.S.) are saying that they are fulfilling



The Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, being greeted by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, before his departure to the U.S. in New Delhi on Monday. The HRD Minister, Murlidhar Joshi, and the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, are also seen. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

their promise and would continue to do so". — PTI

## Advani holds meeting on J&K elections

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 9.** The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today held a meeting with his Cabinet colleagues and the BJP leaders on the coming Jammu and Kashmir elections. The meeting was attended, among others, by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, the Information and Broadcasting Min-

ister, Sushma Swaraj, the Telecommunications and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie, the Food Minister, Sharad Yadav, the BJP president, Venkaiah Naidu, and the party spokesperson, Vijay Kumar Malhotra.

They were briefed on the preparations for the elections by officials of the Home Ministry, the Election Commission and the External Affairs Ministry.

The meeting was primarily held to ensure that the various

components of the NDA Government and the BJP spoke about the election exercise "in one voice."

Speaking to presspersons after the meeting, Ms. Swaraj said the Government's intention was to hold an election that was "free, fair, credible and participatory." She said "it is the people's participation which is a guarantee for free and fair polls."

The Minister said the fact that party offices had seen queues of people seeking ticket to contest the polls was a sign that there was "a lot of enthusiasm among the people for the election."

# Kashmir panel reaches for Big Apple

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

Sept 9. — Mr Ram Jethmalani's Kashmir Committee has a self-defined big remit — but it also has a big "reach". According to Hurriyat leaders, the committee and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference plan to meet on the sidelines of the UNGA summit in New York and hope to rope in some of the government representatives travelling with the Prime Minister's party. The Kashmir Committee is also trying to create space for the members of the Kashmir Committee of Pakistan on the same platform.

Home ministry officials dismissed such a move as an "initiative that could be at the most be of the Kashmir Committee and the Hurriyat ; we have not been told about it. It doesn't seem as if the government would be interested in such a move ... the Prime Minister did not give any such indication before leaving for the UNGA summit meeting".

Besides two Kashmir Committee members who are travelling with the Prime Minister, APHC executive member Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is leaving for New York tomorrow to

## Centre calls meet on Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Sept. 9. — Worried over the "discordant" voices on Kashmir polls, the Centre today held a meeting to hammer out a consensus.

The ministers were briefed about the official position on Kashmir and how Pakistan was attempting to internationalise the issue. The preparedness of the Election Commission was also discussed. Defence and home ministry officials also reportedly briefed senior leaders about the ground situation, including cross-border infiltration of militants and how the security forces were engaged in regular battles with terrorists. — SNS

attend the OIC meeting on 13 and 17 September. The resolutions passed by the OIC, a body of 52 member countries, form a significant part of the UN resolution. His speech at the OIC would focus on "dialogue".

Speaking to The Statesman, Mirwaiz Farooq said : "We are trying to push for a meeting on the sidelines of the UN

meeting; let us hope for the best. ...After all the Prime Minister did not outright reject us, which is a positive sign. ...We hope that those who are in the Kashmir Committee of Pakistan will visit New York so that they can also be present at the meeting". But he did not specify who would represent the government, if the meeting takes place.

Mirwaiz Farooq said the Kashmir Committee is basically a channel to highlight a proper perception about the Hurriyat to the government and others. He said : "We have a point too and the committee is helping us on this front. ...The Kashmir Committee is an honest broker. ...This (the meetings with Hurriyat and others) is just the beginning of a dialogue process, let the election dust settle down ...". According to him, the Kashmir committee has the government's indirect support.

Defending the Hurriyat's anti-poll campaign, APHC chairman Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat today said if the government has the right to tell the people of J&K to cast their votes in the coming elections, "we also have the right to stop them while giving the logic ... let the people ultimately decide".

JETHMALANI TEAM READY TO MEET PAK. PANEL

## KC, Hurriyat leaders for structured dialogue

By J. Venkatesan 9/9

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 8.** The Kashmir Committee (KC) and the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today called for a "structured dialogue" among all parties concerned, including the people across the borders, to create conditions conducive for a solution to the Kashmir issue. A joint statement by the KC and the APHC said all parties must rise above their traditional positions, abandon extreme stands and show flexibility and realism to reach an acceptable, honourable and a durable solution.

After a meeting, M.J. Akbar, journalist and one of the members of the KC, told reporters that the "KC supported the APHC's wish to pursue a dialogue for peace and a durable solution with Kashmiri political elements in Pakistan and with the Government of Pakistan".

The APHC team at the meeting comprised its chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, Sheikh Mohammed Ali, Javed Mir and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, while the KC delegation was led by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, and included Ashok Bhan, M.J. Akbar and Dilip Padgaonkar.

The Mirwaiz said "the Hurriyat would continue with its poll boycott call as elections are a closed chapter for us. Elections in the past had failed to resolve the Kashmir issue". Expressing happiness over the KC decision to meet Pakistan's Kashmir Committee, headed by Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, at a mutually convenient time and

place, he said "the venue could even be a third country". He said "it is indeed a step forward and the Hurriyat is also of the firm belief that besides government-to-government contact, there should be a people-to-people contact". The Mirwaiz wanted the Indian and Pakistani Governments to take steps

for achieving a durable solution. It was agreed that the strength of the solution lay in its acceptance by all parties. "We believe that all the matters in the world need to be resolved by sitting across the table."

Asked if the KC endorsed the proposal for converting the Line of Control into a border between India and Pakistan, he said "we don't accept that. Kashmir is not a territorial dispute. We want the reunification of Kashmir and we don't want any further division of the State". Mr. Akbar said New Delhi had made it clear that it was not against the process of holding talks but Islamabad needed to address certain issues, including an immediate end to infiltration. The KC and the APHC called on the Governments of India and Pakistan to make all efforts to create conditions for reducing border tensions.

Asked whether the two sides would continue to hold meetings, the Mirwaiz said the next date would be fixed either after the Assembly polls or after the end of the U.N. General Assembly session.

### Decision hailed

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 8.** Pakistan's National Kashmir Committee (PNKC) today welcomed the desire expressed by the Kashmir Committee for a formal dialogue between the two.

The PNKC chairman and former Prime Minister of Pak-Occupied Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, said here that the outcome of the ongoing dialogue between the Hurriyat and the KC members would determine the course of dialogue.

### Pak. shells Kargil, Drass

By Shujaat Bukhari

**KARGIL SEPT. 8.** Two civilians were killed and 10, including five soldiers, injured and an ammunition depot was gutted when Pakistani troops resorted to heavy shelling on Kargil and Drass towns since Saturday evening.

The residents of Kargil and Drass woke up to the shelling from across the border. Shells hit the Kargil airport, Minji, Kubartham and Drass township. One civilian was killed and six others were injured in Baroo, while another was killed and four others injured in Drass.

# Engaging Pak., a better option

By K. K. Katyal

40-10 9/9

*It is in India's interest that the Kashmir problem, which has done incalculable damage over the past 55 years, is resolved.*

IT WAS, doubtless, highly speculative — a report in a Pakistani daily, *The News*, last week that Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, would "discuss a strategic headway for Kashmir solution" with the U.S. President, George W. Bush, during his Washington visit. The package, according to it, provides for a bargain — recognition, by both India and Pakistan, of the Line of Control as a permanent border, withdrawal of India's claim on "Azad" Kashmir and the Northern Areas, and Islamabad's message to Kashmiri groups that the Assembly elections in "held" Kashmir are to be treated as an internal affair (of India). The Indian newspapers which reproduced the story highlighted the point that the formula enjoyed the support of a "strong lobby of Generals, politicians, Cabinet Ministers, strategists and experts" in Pakistan. But the other part, related to the American interest in the plan, did not attract attention. This was about Washington's idea to request Pakistan for a base for its troops in the Northern Areas, most probably in Skardu. The purpose: to conduct operations against terrorist outfits and to safeguard U.S. interests in the region on a long-term basis.

It was not difficult to dismiss the report as conjectural but not that easy to find out the how and why of its publication by a mainstream newspaper. There was no originality about the "formula" — such ideas had been mooted informally from time to time by all manner of persons taking interest in the settlement of the Kashmir problem — it only evoked instant fierce opposition in Pakistan, both by the Establishment and others. The former Pakistan Foreign Minister, Abdul Sattar, used to dismiss such suggestions with a curt one-liner: "The LoC is the problem, not the solution." Such suggestions were regarded as part of a "conspiracy" by anti-Pakistan elements, and a ploy to deprive the Kashmiris of the "right to shape their destiny". And now this very proposal gets respectability through publication in *The News* — and what is more surprising, it is supposed to enjoy the support of the "generals" among others. The Pa-

kistan Foreign Office spokesman predictably denied it, but the disclaimer was not as strongly worded as would have been the case in the past.

Various theories are doing the rounds in New Delhi. One, the report could have been inspired by anti-Musharraf elements to discredit him for departing from cherished policies and to project it as the culmination of the process that began with a u-turn vis-a-vis the Taliban and the campaign against religious extremists in the country. Or that he could go to any limit at the behest of the Americans. Two, this could be intended to lure India into a dialogue on Kashmir, forcing it to give up the "no talks till the end of cross-border terrorism" line.

Three, the formula was favoured by the U.S. as a compromise between the rigidly-held positions of India and Pakistan, with the additional merit that an early settlement would help the Americans who "are going to make their stay in the region longer than initially perceived and, for this purpose, need some mini-garrisons in close but safer areas for logistics and operational purposes" in their campaign against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

India did well in refraining from reacting to the speculative report. But New Delhi could have avoided reiterating its line against resumption of the dialogue. In any case, talks before the end of the Kashmir Assembly elections and the parliamentary elections in Pakistan are out of the question — and a positive response by New Delhi now would not have made any difference at the practical level. There is another aspect. A reasonably peaceful election in Jammu and Kashmir would generate strong pressures for talks, which India would be unable to resist. A positive line on the dialogue would have restored to New Delhi the diplomatic space it had lost through its persistent "no".

Cross-border terrorism is, un-

doubtedly, the major concern of India and it could not be blamed for not sharing the view held by a large section of the world community crediting Gen. Musharraf with genuine efforts to check infiltration. There were reasons to believe that the clandestine movement was not the handiwork of just the rogue elements or the members of divided families or that all sections of the ISI had not fallen in line with the officially-stated policies. All that is true but, on balance, there is greater merit in engaging Pakistan than in refusing to do so.

It is in India's interest that the Kashmir problem, which has done incalculable damage over the past 55 years, is resolved. To say this is not to suggest a sell-out of national interests but to make a case for using any opening that becomes available, in an effort to settle the issue. Similarly, New Delhi could afford to take a positive line over "facilitation" by the U.S., while taking care that it does not approximate to arbitration or a third-party role. Haven't we willingly involved the U.S. in the fight against terrorist violence and cross-border flow of militancy? If there is no harm in U.S. participation in the counter-terrorism drive in Jammu and Kashmir, any move by Washington to bring India and Pakistan to the conference table on Kashmir could not create problems. After all, India agreed at Lahore to discuss with Pakistan all outstanding issues "including Kashmir". Gen. Musharraf was free to change the Lahore formulation to "Kashmir and other issues".

The dialogue need not be held, in its entirety, under the glare of publicity. At some stage, when the sensitive aspects of the Kashmir issue are taken up, secret diplomacy would be highly useful. The two sides did try this process after Lahore — it survived Kargil, but could not withstand the pressures generated by the military coup in Pakistan. The 1999 secret discussions, it became known later, revolved round the division of

the Valley. True the two sides could not agree, during the limited time at their disposal, on the dividing line. They considered various possibilities — division along the LoC with slight variations, along the Jhelum or the Chenab. They may well have succeeded had their mission not been cut short by factors beyond the control of the negotiators.

Even at the risk of repetition, attention needs to be drawn to the informal discussions in 1972 — at the time of the Shimla Agreement — by the leaders of India and Pakistan, Indira Gandhi and Z.A. Bhutto, on converting the LoC into the international border. Mr. Bhutto accepted the proposition but sought time to make a formal announcement, in order to prepare the public opinion in his country. Later — after securing the release of 93,000 prisoners of war and the territory captured by India in the preceding war — he went back on the informal, unwritten understanding.

A noted Pakistani commentator, Humayun Gauhar, called it Bhutto's diplomatic artistry. Gauhar's oft-quoted comment on the disclosure of this episode by the then Prime Minister's Principal Secretary, P.N. Dhar, acquires a new relevance now — "If it took a private talk between Mr. Bhutto and Mrs. Gandhi in which he made certain commitments to her but which he was clever enough not to have written down in the Shimla Agreement, or on a separate piece of paper, then it was diplomatic artistry of the highest order. He would have known better than anyone else that such a private secret agreement, which is only verbal, was worthless. Face it Mr. Dhar, even if we accept what you say, Mr. Bhutto fooled your Prime Minister."

Fooling may give satisfaction to one side or the other but it does not serve the interest of the subcontinent and the vast mass of the poor residing here. India will be justified in guarding against any double-dealing or the tendency to score cheap propaganda points. While taking these precautions, New Delhi could shed hesitations and engage the Pakistani side, with the objective of finding a solution to the Kashmir problem, not letting it linger on.

# Hurriyat, Kashmir panel agree, but only just

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, Sept. 8. — The Hurriyat Conference and Kashmir Committee today said they “unanimously agreed that all parties (to the Kashmir issue) must rise above traditional positions, abandon extreme stands and show the flexibility and realism to reach an acceptable, honourable and durable solution”. In Jammu, the JKLF said Kashmiris would fight tooth-and-nail any move to change the LoC into the India-Pakistan border.

The Hurriyat team at the two-and-a-half-hour meeting comprised Mr Abdul Gani Bhatt, Sheikh Mohammed Ali, Mr Javed Mir and Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq. The Kashmir Committee delegation was led by Mr Ram Jethmalani and included, among others, Mr MJ Akbar, Mr Ashok Bhan, and Mr Dilip Padgaonkar.

The Kashmir Committee has supported the Hurriyat demand for talks with the Pakistan government to find a solution to the Kashmir problem. “The committee supports Hurriyat’s wish to pursue a dialogue with the Pakistani government and Kashmiri political elements there,” Mr Akbar



Arms seized from a surrendered militant on display in Baramulla. — PTI

told reporters after the meeting.

In a joint statement, both sides called on the Indian and Pakistani governments to reduce tensions and create conditions for talks. The leaders agreed that a solution could be found if there is a structured dialogue between all parties to the dispute. They reiterated that a solution would have to take into account wishes of all regions of J&K.

Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq and Mr Akbar said the two sides had condemned all forms of violence. They said they were ready to meet Pakistan’s Kashmir

Committee, led by Sardar Abdul Qayoom, at a mutually convenient time and place.

On the reported proposal to convert the LoC into international border, Mirwaiz said: “We don’t accept that... Kashmir is not a territorial dispute. We want the reunification of Kashmir...we don’t want any further division...” He rejected the Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, saying the exercise would not serve any purpose.

Mr Akbar said the Kashmir Committee wanted people to actively participate in the polls. The

elections, he hoped, would lead to “healthy democracy” in the state.

In Jammu, the JKLF has warned against any decision to convert the LoC into the International Border. “Peace at the cost of justice will not be tolerated,” a JKLF source has said.

In a letter titled “Kashmir — the double-edged sword” addressed to Mr George Bush, JKLF chief Mr Amanullah Khan said the Kashmir issue was akin to a “double-edged sword with which one could commit suicide and also kill one’s enemy”. Copies of the letter have been sent to Gen. Musharraf and Mr Vajpayee.

If the issue was not addressed properly, the letter said, it could destroy the region and damage world peace. If solved amicably, India, Pakistan and Kashmir would have a prosperous future. **Grenade blast:** Five persons were injured as militants lobbed grenades at BSF patrol parties at two places in Srinagar last night, police said, adds PTI. A Tehreek-e-Jehad militant surrendered before the security forces today (see photograph).

**National Conference manifesto:** The NC manifesto, released in Srinagar today, makes autonomy its main poll plank, adds PTI.



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2002

SR  
HP-10

## A RETROGRADE SIGNAL 7/9

THE DETENTION OF Kashmiri separatist leaders — including the Hurriyat Conference Chairman, Abdul Ghani Bhat, and the Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) leader, Shabir Shah — reflects the arbitrariness and confusion which mark officially blessed attempts to resolve the Kashmir imbroglio through negotiations. The timing of the house arrests gives the game away. They were made barely 24 hours before the Ram Jethmalani-headed Kashmir Committee was to hold talks with a delegation of separatist leaders. Moreover, they were made on the very day that Mr. Shah's DFP and those owing allegiance to the Hurriyat Conference had proposed to launch an 'awareness campaign' aimed at persuading people to boycott the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly poll.

It is not clear how long the detentions will be enforced, but independent reports establish that the leaders were ordered to stay at home (even though the Jammu and Kashmir police have denied making any house arrests). What the incidents expose is the insecurity and impatience of the Farooq Abdullah administration towards the entire exercise of entering into a dialogue with separatist leaders — the Chief Minister has gone as far as accusing the Kashmir Committee of having no other agenda but to undermine the National Conference. If the aim was to scuttle the dialogue, the house arrests may have achieved its cynical objective temporarily with the Hurriyat leaders declaring their inability to attend the second round of talks that was scheduled to take place in Delhi over the weekend. If a related objective was to dampen the anti-poll campaign, then surely this is something that should be done by persuading people about the importance of exercising their franchise and not through intimidatory tactics such as making house arrests of political voices seen as of consequence in Kashmir.

Whatever the motive, at a larger level, the incidents expose the total lack of coherence on the part of the Centre when it comes to policy matters on Jammu and Kashmir. A part of the reason for this is self-evident. We have a sit-

uation where the Centre, on the one hand, signals its (albeit tacit) support for the initiatives taken by the Kashmir Committee and, on the other hand, has as a constituent the National Conference, which has made no secret of its opposition to any proposal to constructively engage the separatists in a dialogue. The utter helplessness of the Centre in preventing the Abdullah Government from detaining separatist leaders on the eve of a dialogue which it is in favour of is unmistakable.

Added to this inherent contradiction is the lack of clarity that has characterised the Vajpayee Government's initiatives on the Kashmir front. From the beginning, there have been too many interlocutors with no clear approach about what they wanted to achieve and how they proposed to go about it. The much hyped K.C. Pant mission proved to be a non-starter with the Hurriyat objecting to the choice of the person who headed it. The recent nomination of Arun Jaitley, to discuss more devolution of power to Jammu and Kashmir, seemed more like a stratagem to give the National Conference something it could hold up as an achievement in the poll campaign rather than a serious bid to address the issue. As for the Kashmir Committee, it spent a good part of the time canvassing for the impossible — the postponement of elections after the election schedule was announced. Although the Centre has indicated that it supports the Committee's efforts, neither the Prime Minister nor the Home Minister cared to meet Mr. Shah when he was in Delhi recently — a visit which ended in his piqued assertion that he too would boycott the polls. If the second round of talks became possible, it was only because of a specific understanding that the dialogue will be delinked from the poll. It is a pity that a potentially forward-moving dialogue has been obstructed by a thoughtless move to detain Shabir Shah and the Hurriyat leaders. Such retrograde political signals such as these could dangerously dissipate much of the positive atmosphere created by New Delhi's decision to hold elections in the troubled State.

# Shabir Shah, Bhat under house arrest

Statesman News Service

JAMMU/NEW DELHI, Sept. 6. — The leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Mr Shabir Shah, All-Party Hurriyat Conference chairman Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, Shia leader Maulana Abbas Ansari, People's Conference chief Mr Sajjad Lone, Jamaat-e-Islami leader Shiekh Ali Mohamad were put under house arrest by the J&K police in Srinagar today. Former Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, however, was not put under house arrest.

Prof Bhat was scheduled to lead a four-member delegation to Delhi for the second round of talks with the Kashmir Committee chairman, Mr Ram Jethmalani, this afternoon. Prof Bhat said: "We will informally meet tomorrow to decide on our future course of action."

The Hurriyat chairman said from his Wazir Bagh residence

in Srinagar that police force came to his house early this morning and put him under house arrest. "When I woke up in the morning, I found scores of policemen surrounding my house. When I asked them why they were here, they said I had been put under house arrest."

He said the Hurriyat headquarters at Raj Bagh, Srinagar, too had been "under siege", with the BSF, CRPF and J&K police surrounding the building.

Mr Shabir Shah said over phone from Srinagar that police entered his house at 5 a.m. today. "Since then, I am under house arrest." He attributed the "sudden move" of the state government to sheer frustration. Mr Shah was scheduled to address a press conference in Srinagar today. "I will address the press tomorrow."

**DGP denial:** The DGP, Mr AK Suri, denied that any of the separatist leaders, including Prof Bhat and Mr Shah, were put under "house arrest" by the police to-

day. "The Hurriyat leaders are free to go wherever they want. We wouldn't stop them. They were themselves not interested in going. Mirwaiz Farooq even addressed the Friday congregation."

The Doordarshan too denied the reports.

The house arrest of separatist leaders in the Valley has left the Hurriyat leaders determined to come to Delhi tomorrow. They warned that if stopped by the state government, they would start a mass campaign against the National Conference.

The Centre was caught unaware when the reports reached the Capital. Frantic phone calls were made to the Valley and confusion prevailed for quite some time. By evening, a new theory about the leaders' detention was being floated. It said that under the instructions from Pakistan, the Hurriyat leaders had decided not to come to Delhi. "The Hurriyat has been warned by Pakistan. Police didn't keep them un-

der house arrest. The separatists chose to stay in their houses, but spread the rumour that they were under house arrest to create tension," an official said.

Speaking to The Statesman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said that after telephonic talks with other Hurriyat leaders it was decided that they would take the flight to Delhi tomorrow.

Denying any Pakistan link, Mr Farooq wondered why everything was seen through the prism of Pakistan. "It's difficult to understand why the administration took a step like this ... If at all they were so apprehensive about the separatists saying something on a Friday namaz, why didn't they take action last Friday?"

Attributing it to the Chief Election Commissioner, he said that a "peaceful boycott call is the right of the people".

The Kashmir Committee has condemned the house arrest of the leaders while accusing the NC of acting as a "spoiler of peace".

# Jethmalani slams Advani's refusal to meet Shabir Shah

**NEW DELHI, SEPT. 1.** In a scathing attack on the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Kashmir Committee (KC) chairman, Ram Jethmalani, today said that his refusal to meet the senior Kashmir separatist leader, Shabir Shah, was a move that had the potential of derailing the peace process.

Terming Mr. Advani's attitude "discouraging", the former Law Minister said, "It was a move which may have the consequence of derailing the peace process. Luckily, it has not happened as is clear from the statements of Shah and the Hurriyat."

However, seeking to ignore the "unfriendly gesture" of Mr. Advani, he said, "Surely, the meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister was not the be-all and end-all of the peace process."

Mr. Jethmalani said that last year when K.C. Pant went to Kashmir, the Union Government issued a long statement devoting a whole paragraph to the Hurriyat.

"You (the Centre) wanted them (Hurriyat) last year, but why have you closed the door particularly after a change of scenario since September 11 and particularly after the Kashmir Committee has done so much of work in this regard? Obviously this kind of attitude is intended to derail the excellent work that is being done. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the desired effect of derailment has not taken place."

On the conflicting statements of Mr. Shah regarding his participation in the elections, made after he met the KC for nearly five hours spread over two days, Mr. Jethmalani said, "The misunderstanding was created because the statements were blown out of context. What he said was participation in the elections would depend on the creation of a conducive atmosphere after taking certain concrete confidence-building measures and now the ball is in the Centre's court."

"The most important achievement was that Shah and his party wanted dialogue and peaceful means to solve the Kashmir problem," he said, adding, "It should be seen in the proper context. He said I will participate if you fulfil the conditions."

## 'Hawks responsible'

Sounding critical of the decision of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Mr. Advani not to meet him, Mr. Shah said hawks in the Central Government had sabotaged a "seri-

ous effort" to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"We have been neither against the democratic process nor are we scared of fighting elections. But mere change of government is not our motive, we want to resolve the Kashmir issue."

Mr. Shah said some of the "hawks in the Government had managed to put impediments not only in his path but also in the path of the Kashmir Committee, led by Ram Jethmalani, whom the Kashmiris see as their friends".

"What is the policy of the Government vis-a-vis Kashmir

is not known to us. First, they invite separatist leaders for talks through the Kashmir Committee and then back out."

He flayed the statements of the BJP accusing the Congress chief, Sonia Gandhi, of attempting to sabotage the peace process, saying, "The BJP today stands exposed in the eyes of the public for not being sincere in resolving the Kashmir issue."

Mr. Shah said he had two rounds of talks over telephone with the chairman of Pakistan's Kashmir Committee, Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan, and discussed the Kashmir issue threadbare. — PTI

## Hurriyat defers decision on People's Conference

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, SEPT. 1.** The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today failed to take any decision about the possible "expulsion" of the People's Conference, which is alleged to have fielded dummy candidates in the elections.

A joint meeting of the APHC working committee, executive and general council held today was stormy, but did not decide on the expulsion. The People's Conference chairman, Sajjad Lone, however, dared the Hurriyat to take action against his party. The APHC meeting, chaired by Abdul Gani Bhat, was convened after some of its constituents demanded the expulsion of the PC for "proxy participation" in the elections. The issue was discussed first by the seven-member executive and the PC was represented by Pir Hafizullah Makhdoomi.

Later, all the three bodies met at a marathon session, during which some members shouted slogans demanding the PC's ouster from the 23-party conglomerate. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, the Muslim League, the Islamic Students League and the Muslim Khawateen Markaz were more vocal in their demands. As the PC's fate was being discussed, some 200 supporters of the Lone brothers reached the Hurriyat headquarters and raised slogans. It was a show of strength by the PC warning the Hurriyat leadership not to expel the party.

In the executive meeting, the JKLF member, Mohammad Salim, wanted the PC expelled for its "anti-movement and pro-



Sajjad Lone

election activities" while the senior executive member, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, suggested giving sufficient time to the PC representative, Bilal Lone, to explain his position. The Jamat-e-Islami leader, Sheikh Ali Mohammad, sources said, threw his lot behind the PC. The executive then agreed to continue the discussion on Monday.

The APHC chairman, Prof. Bhat, later told presspersons: "We met and discussed the issues pertaining to the decision taken by PC members on contesting the elections. The discussion will continue and we will issue a statement tomorrow." Sources said the APHC wanted to take the extreme step but "timely intervention from across the border" prevented the move.

At his Ralwalpora residence, Mr. Sajjad Lone said, "There is no action yet from the Hurriyat. So we will not react." However, "as long as they go by the Hurriyat constitution and if we are guilty, we will receive the decision with thanks. If they feel we are guilty they have to prove it."

# 'Autonomy' dialogue on hold; Kashmir panel meets Sonia

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 31. The "autonomy" dialogue between the Central Government and the Jammu and Kashmir Government has been grounded, at least for now. The Centre's designated "representative" and former Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, was to travel this week to Srinagar to hold the third round of talks with G. M. Shah, senior-most Minister in the Farooq Abdullah Government. In the last round on August 9 in New Delhi, it was agreed that the interlocutors would meet next in Srinagar at the end of the month.

However, the Jammu and Kashmir Government is be-

lieved to have informed New Delhi that the "autonomy dialogue" should be put on hold, till the Assembly elections are out of the way. The ostensible reason for putting the talks on hold is that the National Conference leadership, including Mr. Shah himself, is fully engaged in the coming elections, and could not be expected to allow itself to be distracted by the "autonomy" talks.

The National Conference leadership, nonetheless, is reported to be cut up with the Centre for "entertaining" separatists such as Shabir Shah of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party or those associated with the All-Party Hurriyat Conference. The Kash-

mir Committee, headed by Ram Jethmalani, held another round of talks with Mr. Shah this week here, and next week a Hurriyat delegation is expected to engage the Jethmalani panel.

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, has publicly ridiculed Mr. Jethmalani's efforts. But in particular, the Abdullah Government did not take kindly to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's reported assurance to Mr. Jethmalani that the "dialogue" with the separatists could continue even after the Assembly elections.

The National Conference leadership also feels that at a time when it is trying to position itself as an antagonist against the Bharatiya Janata Party, there is not much political mileage in being seen holding a dialogue with a Central "representative" who also happens to be the BJP's public face. In any case, the "autonomy" card has not generated the kind of excitement the National Conference leadership had hoped for.

Meanwhile, the Kashmir Committee had an hour-long interaction with senior leaders of the Congress, including the party president, Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Natwar Singh and Pranab Mukherjee. Mr. Jethmalani and his colleagues told the Congress leadership of the nature of discussions they had had so far with the Kashmiri leaders. While reportedly blessing the panel's efforts, the Congress leadership was keen on knowing how the committee's labours would be of help in the current context of the Assembly poll.

## More protection for 'proxy' candidates

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 31. The Centre is believed to have taken extra precaution to ensure the physical safety of "proxy candidates" in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections. It seems to have become alert to the new element of some activists of the People's Conference entering the electoral fray.

At least four candidates in the Kupwara district are deemed to be "former" members of the People's Conference. The leader of the People's Conference, Abdul Gani Lone, was assassinated at a public meeting only a few months ago. Though the party continues to maintain its nominal membership of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, it is fairly well known that the Lone brothers, Sajjad and Bilal, hold pro-Pakistan elements within the Hurriyat as having conspired in the assassination of their father.

The Centre, therefore, is reported to have realised that these "proxy candidates" would need to be protected because they have courageously entered the fray risking intimidation, threat or coercion from the agents of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, the Hurriyat-controlled mujahideen groups and the National Conference "hot-heads." Ashok Bhandari, Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, is already in the Valley.

'CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES NEEDED FOR PARTICIPATION'

# Shabir Shah says 'no' to polls

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. The Kashmir Committee-centric initiative to involve the separatist camp in next month's Assembly elections collapsed today with the leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Shabir Shah, putting forth pre-conditions which simply cannot be met, even if the Centre was inclined to concede Mr. Shah's stipulations.

Even though after a marathon session with the Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, Mr. Shah had "in principle agreed to participate in the elections," he later made it clear that there was no question of his party's participation in the next month's exercise.

The Kashmir Committee apparently endorsed Mr. Shah's stand that "a number of comprehensive confidence-building measures needed to be taken to

ensure participation in such free, fair and meaningful elections."

A joint statement issued by the two sides lists these confidence building-measures: The release of those who have been illegally/unfairly jailed; a honourable and dignified return of migrants; greater accountability of the Special Operation Group and other anti-insurgency groups; end to custodial killings; a speedy trial of those jailed for petty offences; constitution of a commission to probe custodial killings and disappearance of persons; and, facilitation of an intra-Kashmir dialogue. Except for the "return of the migrants" (read the Kashmiri Pandits), these measures have figured in almost everybody's list of potential "confidence-building measures." Each of these has an appeal of its own, which the administrators find difficult to operationalise and accept.

The only concession that the Kashmir Committee appears to have secured from the JKDFP is a reiteration that "it was never against such a participation (in the election) since it has always been committed to democratic process. It wholeheartedly agrees with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, that elections alone can identify the true representatives of the people of the State for a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue." The Shabir Shah side also conceded that "violence as a principle or a strategy has no role in the resolution of any problem anywhere in the world including the Kashmir problem."

Whatever comfort this affirmation of an intent of peaceful means may provide, there is a sense of disappointment in the Kashmir Committee that its exertions have not moved Mr. Shah. As it is, the committee was bitter that the Centre was unwilling to heed its advice to

postpone the Assembly elections.

Mr. Jethmalani failed to arrange a meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Shah. The prime ministerial refusal was built into the uncertainty that dogged the Committee; its status or the nature of patronage it enjoyed from the Vajpayee Government has never been clarified, even though Mr. Shah today claimed that the committee had been "authorised by none other than the Deputy Prime Minister himself."

Realising that the Jethmalani Committee had been rendered irrelevant as far as the next month's elections were concerned, Mr. Shah decided to widen his consultation process. Along with the Kashmir Committee convener, Ashok Bhan, he called on the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and the senior Congress leader, Manmohan Singh.

Mr. Shah is believed to have conveyed to Ms. Gandhi that his party is committed to a "secular India, and not to the Sangh Parivar India." He is likely to meet other secular leaders. "Yes, I will be meeting Mulayam Singh Yadav and other leaders with secular credentials," he told reporters after meeting Ms. Gandhi. Later in the evening, Mr. Shah had an hour-long interaction with the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr. Yadav.

The JKDFP leader also sought to craft a secular/communal context to his quest when he noted that he would not be meeting the BJP leaders.

"This party has shown its real face. I thought there was a ray of hope in the party by the presence of Mr. Vajpayee but that too seems to be dwindling now," he said. The Kashmir Committee itself is likely to have an audience with the Congress president. The meeting has been agreed upon after considerable behind-the-scene discussions within the AICC establishment.

## Hurriyat's programme fails to take off?

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 30. A mass contact programme of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference to mobilise public opinion against the coming elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly has apparently failed to take off.

None of the Hurriyat leaders who addressed the Friday congregations in various mosques today talked of a poll boycott or commented on the filing of nominations by three candidates "covertly" supported by the Peoples Conference, a constituent of the Hurriyat Conference.

Addressing a gathering at the Jama Masjid here, his first after a visit to the European countries, the Hurriyat chairman, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, said the organisation would hold talks with the Kashmir Committee for the resolution of the Kashmir crisis. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had acknowledged that wrongs had been committed and that he would do everything to address the grievances of the people. "We are ready to talk to the Kashmir Committee with the good faith that it will help in the resolution of the Kashmir dispute," Mirwaiz Farooq

said. "The Hurriyat is ready for unconditional and meaningful talks with the Government for a durable resolution to the long-standing Kashmir issue... If the Government takes any step in this direction, the Hurriyat will respond positively."

He, however, did not urge his supporters to boycott the elections. He only cautioned them that their casting of votes would "damage the movement." The world had changed after September 11. The attacks in America had led to all the "freedom movements" being termed "terrorist" but now "genuine movements" were being recognised as legitimate freedom struggles. "We are not against elections, but they should be held under United Nations observation and for the resolution of the Kashmir crisis," he said.

Agha Hassan, a second-rung Hurriyat leader, addressed a similar gathering in which he said that the Centre was striking a rigid posture.

The leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Javid Mir, and Sheikh Ali Muhammad also addressed a meeting and urged the people to stand their ground. The Hurriyat was ready for talks for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute.

# Jethmalani in J&K warp

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 29. — The Kashmir Committee, headed by Mr Ram Jethmalani, appears to be contradicting what the Prime Minister had said on 15 August. In response to a question, Mr Jethmalani today said the government would speak to "every element" in J&K. Mr Vajpayee, however, had earlier categorically said that the Centre would speak only to elected representatives and organisations.

The Prime Minister in his Red Fort speech on 15 August had said: "...I wish to assure the people of J&K that if any mistakes have occurred, we shall make amends. For this, we shall talk to elected representatives and organisations. Talks will also take place on the demand for more powers to the state".

However, when Mr Jethmalani was asked who the government would speak to when the separatist leaders with whom the Kashmir Committee is talking to has rejected participation in elections, he

said: "The government will speak to every element, including elected representatives".

Government officials told The Statesman that there is no change in policy. "The government has not changed its policy and it will stick to what the Prime Minister said on Independence Day. The government will speak to elected representatives because they have a mandate. Therefore, there can be no talks with the government before the elections," said an official.

The officials said Mr Jethmalani sought an appointment with the Prime Minister today in his individual capacity and not as part of the Kashmir committee. Officials indicated that giving an appointment to Mr Jethmalani as part of the Kashmir Committee would have sent the wrong signals. "Therefore, Mr Jethmalani could seek an appointment only in individual capacity ... he gave an impression to the separatists that an appointment would be fixed with the PM but he has failed because the government cannot change policy." Mr LK Advani has also refused to meet separatist leaders.

30 AUG 2002

# Going with an open mind: Shabir Shah

By Luv Puri

**JAMMU, AUG. 28.** The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) chairman, Shabir Shah, said here today that he was going to Delhi with an "open mind" and an "air of optimism" for a second round of talks with the Kashmir Committee headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani.

Talking to *The Hindu* before leaving for Delhi Mr. Shah said that he had had fruitful discussions with the members of the Kashmir Committee in the first round in which both sides got to hear about each other's view points.

"I expect that the second round will be equally exhaustive and lead to some positive results".

It was now time for specifics and gave a shape to the dialogue process. Hoping

that the people-to-people dialogue initiated by Mr. Jethmalani would succeed, he said that if some consensus was reached the proposals would be forwarded to the Central Government.

Asserting that he was not afraid of contesting the coming Assembly elections, Mr. Shah said he was ready to prove his representative

character. He had the people with him and "why should I feel scared of any democratic exercise? But I should be assured that this will lead to a final solution of the Kashmir problem and for this I am stressing time and again the need to hold a dialogue; only then will the question of my participation in the elections will arise."

## Comedy of errors

**NEW DELHI, AUG 28.** In a comedy of errors at the Indira Gandhi Airport here, the Congress workers today garlanded Kashmiri separatist leader, Shabir Shah, shouting slogans such as "bharat mata ki jai" and "desh ka laal, tujhe salam".

The Congress workers, who had come to receive Sunil Dutt, M.P., were unaware as to who had come out of the departure

lounge as the mediapersons surrounded Mr. Shah for his comments on the Kashmir problem.

As Mr. Shah finished his brief interaction with the media and walked through the ramp of the departure lounge, the Congress workers garlanded him and showered rose petals amidst slogans in praise of his "commitment" to the nation. — PTI

29 AUG 2002

# PoK not ours, says Farooq

By Our Staff Reporter

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 25.** The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, today said here that the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) cannot be reclaimed and it was time India came to terms with this harsh reality.

"We should accept that PoK is not ours. We can keep issuing statements and pass resolutions, but we cannot get it back," Dr. Abdullah said at the Press Club of India while releasing a book "The Black Book of Gujarat".

The book on communal violence in the State is edited by M.L. Sondhi and Apratim Mukarji. Its contributors include Fali S. Nariman, Imtiaz Ahmad, C. R. Irani, Kanwal S. Rekhi, A.N. Dar, Roger Fisher and R. K. Amin.

The National Conference leader, who had been advocating attack of terrorist training camps across the border, called for "forgiving and forgetting the past mistakes" of the Pakistani military ruler, Pervez Musharraf, for the sake of peace in the region. "The problem cannot be solved through guns and violence. It can be resolved only through dialogue."

In his over an hour-long speech, Dr. Abdullah alleged that the schedule for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls have been announced without consulting him. "The Chief Minister did not know about the schedule when it was announced. I first came to know about it only through the media," he claimed.

However, he asserted that elections in the State would be free and fair. "J. M. Lyngdoh (the Chief Election Commissioner) would ensure it," Dr.

Abdullah said, adding that his Government was fully co-operating with the Election Commission.

Referring to the communal violence in Gujarat, he said the country was passing through the same situation as it did in 1947 immediately after partition. Blaming the fundamentalists of both Hindu and Muslim communities for murder of humanity, he said: "Those fighting in the name of Allah or Ram have only lust for power and nothing beyond that. It is not just innocent lives but the nation's secular ethos that has been murdered," he said.

Dr. Abdullah blamed the political leadership for the present situation, which instead of uniting the nation has only helped in dividing society. "India is going further down," he said. Expressing his deep frustration and anguish over the way politics was shaped in the country, he said: "I do not want to be in politics now."

Refusing to comment on the controversy surrounding the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, Dr. Abdullah regretted that the religious identity of Mr. Lyngdoh was being dragged into the controversy. However, he cautioned not to push Mr. Modi to the wall. "Do not push him to the wall. In that case, he would become a hardcore fundamentalist which will not be good for the country. Try to win him. Bring him back," he said.

Earlier, the former Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey, said secularism in India was reduced to mere slogans. "Politics has come to such a low that remaining in power has become the sole aim of politicians," he said.

26 AUG 2002



## Hurriyat agrees to round two of talks

Srinagar: The Hurriyat Conference and separatist leader Shabir Shah on Thursday accepted the offer of the Kashmir Committee led by Ram Jethmalani for holding the second round of talks to resolve the Kashmir imbroglio. "We have not received the invitation but I have been communicated officially about it and we have agreed to hold the second round of talks," Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said. Asked about the offer of the committee to facilitate talks with Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, Mr Bhat said "we have made it clear that we will talk to the leaders at the Centre if they accept that the Kashmir issue has to be settled and they agree for our going to Pakistan."

However, Mr Bhat said that the executive committee of the amalgam was meeting soon to formalise the agenda for talks with the Kashmir Committee. Mr Bhat refused to reply when asked about Mr Jethmalani's comment after his three-day visit to the Valley that the Hurriyat was "dancing to the tune of Pakistan".

Asked whether the Hurriyat would be sending in the same team which held talks with the committee last week, Mr Bhat said "not necessarily, I think this time the delegation will comprise three members only." Another separatist leader, Shabir Shah, also accepted the invitation and said "we will meet the Prime



Abdul G. Bhat



Ram Jethmalani



Shabir Shah

Minister also, if an invitation is extended."

The Hurriyat leadership told the official that the Kashmir problem had not only "endangered" peace in the sub-continent but also in South Asia, the spokesman said. Commenting on the visit of diplomats of several countries to Jammu and Kashmir, he said efforts for a solution to the Kashmir problem in the changing global scenario had speeded up and international community leaders were visiting Kashmir to acquaint themselves of the latest situation.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission has convened a meeting of poll observers to review the poll preparations in Jammu and Kashmir. Agencies

# Hurriyat, Shabir Shah invited for talks

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 22.** The Kashmir Committee (KC), headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, has formally invited the All-Party Hurriyat Conference and Shabir Shah, chairman of the Democratic Freedom Party for "continuing the dialogue which commenced in Srinagar when the committee was recently there."

The committee convener, Ashok Bhan, has sent identical invitations to the Hurriyat chief, Abdul Gani Bhat, and Mr. Shah. The letter said "it would be appreciated if you can make the visit early next week so that a further structured dialogue could go on for hammering out a peaceful and lasting solution to the Kashmir imbroglio." It is believed that Mr. Shah has agreed to come to the capital next week.

Mr. Jethmalani and Mr. Bhan are reported to be of the view that notwithstanding the rejection of the Committee's sug-

gestion that the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections be deferred, the dialogue with the "separatist" camp must not be allowed to fall into disuse. Mr. Bhan, who is the pointman for contact with the Kashmiri leaders, remains engaged with Kashmiri leaders, especially Prof. Bhat. The KC leaders have come back from Srinagar convinced that the mood in the Valley was ripe for a breakthrough only if "New Delhi" could muster imagination.

It will be the committee's endeavour to see if a meeting could be organised between the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and Mr. Shah, without either side diluting its known stand.

Though the KC is known to have been granted audience by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Prime Minister's Office has been lukewarm to its efforts.

Hence, the keenness to find ways of signalling that the com-

mittee enjoys confidence across the board among the powers that be.

However, there is the realisation that the KC's exertions would be affected by the BJP's decision to have an electoral understanding with the newly-created, RSS-sponsored Jammu State Morcha, which is agitating for trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir. Different actors in the separatist camp in the Kashmir valley are bound to see the ruling party's move as the weakening of the Centre's "integral part" resolve.

Meanwhile, the Kashmiri Samiti, an organisation of the Kashmiri Pandits, has criticised the holding of elections.

"The ensuing elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly are meaningless for Kashmiri Hindus as these do not, in any way, help them to pursue their objective of returning to their homes with honour and dignity," the committee president, Sunil Shakhder, said in a press statement.

## RECONSIDER DECISION: JETHMALANI

By Our Special Correspondent

**HYDERABAD, AUG. 22.** Undeterred by the Election Commission's notification today ordering polls in Jammu and Kashmir from September 16, the Kashmir Committee chairman, Ram Jethmalani, reiterated his plea to reconsider the decision and postpone elections, in the troubled State.

Mr. Jethmalani said elections at this stage would stifle wider participation in the process. Just a few days ago, a new front comprising 13 former militant groups had expressed willingness to contest the elections. "The decision may be technically correct but it is politically idiotic," he said at a press meet here.

23 AUG 2002

119-10  
23/8

# J&K and autonomy

By Balraj Puri

**I**N THE current debate on autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, it is being argued that the State was granted special status or that it agreed to accede to the Union on only three subjects due to special reasons. The fact is that the State was neither granted nor did it demand a special status. All the states ruled by princes were required to accede to India or Pakistan on only three subjects — Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. Jammu and Kashmir was not and could not be an exception.

However, later other princes surrendered their right of Constitution-making to the Constituent

Assembly of India which eventually adopted a uniform Constitution for the former princely states and those of the former British India. Neither the ruler nor the political leadership nominated by him to run the Government of Jammu and Kashmir surrendered more powers. Instead, in accordance with the Constitutionally prescribed procedure, the representatives of the State and the Union Government agreed that "Constituent Assembly of the state would be empowered to determine other powers — beyond the Instrument of Accession — to be transferred to the Government of India". Accordingly, Article 370 was introduced in the Constitution of India. Sir Gopalaswamy Iyengar told the Constituent Assembly that "the State Constituent Assembly would decide both on the Constitution of the State and the range of federal jurisdiction over the State". While Sheikh Abdullah had insisted on abrogation of Article 370 after State-Centre relations were finalised, in accordance with the decision of the State Constituent Assembly, the Government of India persisted in retaining it to use it, as was explained later, as a tunnel through which the process of integration could continue indefinitely.

Meanwhile, after a series of talks with Nehru, Sheikh Abdullah agreed to extend some more provisions of the Indian Constitution to the State under what was known as the Delhi Agreement signed by both of them in July 1952. These provisions included right of citizenship, fundamental

rights subject to suitable modifications to protect the land reforms of the State, limited jurisdiction of the Supreme Court, acceptance of the Union flag along with the State flag and that the head of the State would hold office during the pleasure of the President.

The process of evolution of the State's relations with the Centre was jolted by the crisis of August 1953 when Sheikh Abdullah was dismissed from power and detained indefinitely. The causes of that crisis are too complex to be discussed here. The letter of the Constitution was strictly followed in extending its provisions and Central laws to the State thereafter also. Concurrence of the State

Meanwhile, at the political level, the ruling regional party, National Conference, was dissolved and made a branch of the All India Congress Party. These measures and the haste with which they were taken were perceived in Kashmir as a threat to its identity. They caused an unprecedented wave of anger in Kashmir against relations with India. It tempted Pakistan to exploit the popular anger by sending thousands of infiltrators to Kashmir in 1965 that led to the second Indo-Pakistan war. But that did not deter the "integrationists" from pursuing the process till the mid-1980s.

A glaring case of the misuse of the "tunnel of Article 370" for the pur-

duct. The only purpose it is intended to serve is to boost the election prospects of the ruling party in the State.

Second, any agreement on Centre-State relations with Dr. Abdullah will block avenues of a dialogue and settlement with the alienated popular leadership of Kashmir. Any agreement on the subject would be worthwhile only if it gets universal approval of the people and leads to the end of the secessionist movement. Third, the transfer of power from the Centre to the State must be preceded by equity among its three regions which must have adequate autonomy within the State and an equal say.

Fourth, in the absence of federal autonomous institutions to act as checks and balances — like the Supreme Court, the Auditor General and the Election Commission — the State might become an authoritarian and regimented system which may deprive the people of whatever liberties they have today. Fifth, the present ruling party of the State has surrendered the political autonomy other State Governments enjoy by shifting its loyalty to any party that comes to power at the Centre. More autonomy to such a State might help in imposition of a combined dictatorship of the ruling parties at the Centre and the State over the people.

Sixth, before a discussion on autonomy for the State, its ruling party must agree to grant autonomy to institutions such as universities, cultural academies, the Public Service Commission, cooperative societies and panchayati raj institutions as also to religious institutions such as the Auqaf Islamia and managements of religious shrines which are controlled by the Governor. In short, rampant misuse and abuse of existing power in the State must stop. The State's Government must be democratised and federalised before it aspires for more powers from the Centre.

The Prime Minister must consult representatives of all parties and regions of the State before taking any decision. Consultation should not be confined to the representatives of the Government as there are still doubts whether they would be elected through a perfectly free and fair election.

---

## *The Prime Minister must consult representatives of all parties and regions of the State before taking any decision.*

---

Government, as required, was obtained in every case. But the way the Governments were elected is by now well known. Moreover, all these integrative measures were taken after putting the popular leadership in jail. It is not the question of merit or demerit of such measures. It is the manner in which these were taken and their lack of political and moral legitimacy that caused popular alienation in Kashmir.

Further, whatever justification may be cited for transfer of powers from the State to the Centre to

implement the decisions of the State Constituent Assembly in 1956, it was insignificant as compared to the massive erosion of the State's autonomy by the post-Nehru leadership in 1964-65 with the concurrence of the leftist Government of G.M. Sadiq in the State. Articles 356 and 357 of the Indian Constitution — regarding emergency provisions — were extended to the State in December 1964. Nomenclature of the head of the Government and of the State were changed from Prime Minister to Chief Minister and from Sadar-e-Riyasat to Governor respectively in April 1965. The latter was to be nominated by the President instead of being elected by the State Assembly.

pose of integration of the State in violation of the spirit of the Constitution is the way Article 249 was extended to the State — when Jagmohan was Governor. Exercising the powers of the State Constituent Assembly and the executive, he recommended to the President its application to the State. It empowered Parliament to legislate with respect to matters in the State List of Subjects. Mr. Jagmohan himself acknowledged, "if the present set up had not been there, much noise would have been made over the extension of Article 249 to the State".

I was one of the few who had opposed the manner of constitutional integration of the State — which was at the cost of its emotional integration. I have now similar reservations about the manner in which Farooq Abdullah is seeking restoration of the autonomy and the liberal arguments in support of that. My first and foremost objection is to the discussion of the subject after announcement of the election dates. The nomination of Arun Jaitley as the Centre's interlocutor with Cabinet rank for talks on the issues of devolution of power, as the demand for autonomy is put, with the National Conference is a gross violation of the code of con-

23 AUG 2002

# Needed: a Kashmir policy — II

By Muchkund Dubey

22/8 HD-10  
ALL THE moves made by the BJP-led Central Government during the last few years, to bring about a change in the situation in Jammu and Kashmir have proved miserable failures. This is true of the Ramzan ceasefire of 2000, the extension of that ceasefire, the so-called clandestine talks carried out by Government nominees with the Hurriyat leaders, the publicly announced parleys carried out by K. C. Pant, the current talks entrusted to Arun Jaitley of the BJP and to the Kashmir Committee under the chairmanship of Ram Jethmalani. All these moves, including the deployment of forces along the border in full military preparedness, have suffered from two fundamental flaws. First, they have all been externally oriented. Their sole purpose has been to pressure the United States and other Western powers to put pressure on Pakistan to stop cross-border terrorism against India. This is, of course, a legitimate diplomatic pursuit. But, unfortunately, the Government has not been able to grasp the inherent limitations of such diplomatic moves. It should have been clear right from the beginning that the U.S. can at best coax, cajole and up to a point coerce Pakistan to end cross-border terrorism. And there should be no doubt about its bonafides in this regard. But the U.S. has its own limitations, derived both from the given perception of its national interest and practical necessity, in delivering the goods for us. For example, the U.S. cannot turn against Pakistan if it continues to prevaricate on its assurance to end permanently cross-border terrorism.

The second and the more disabling flaw was that in all the moves made by the Indian Government, the issue of settling the problem with our own Kashmiri people was always evaded. None of those entrusted with the task of carrying out the dialogue was ever given a mandate to offer anything worthwhile to the Kashmiris for assuaging their feelings and restoring their dignity. In the case of Mr. Jaitley, the Deputy Prime Minister clarified even before the former began his talks that he had been au-

thorised to talk only about devolution and not autonomy. In the absence of a Kashmir policy, the objective of all the parleys held so far has been of a narrow tactical nature — to outsmart and isolate the anti-Indian leadership of the Hurriyat and to entice the pro-Indian leadership with the promise of pelf and power, to contest the coming Assembly elections.

The official position of the Hurriyat and other Kashmiri leaders such as Shabir Shah has been consistent

India's official position on Kashmir is well-known and needs no reiteration. Our unofficial fallback position, shared by successive Governments and a vast majority of the people who have an opinion on this subject, is to get the Line of Control converted into an international boundary. But this is less of a Kashmir policy, and a move in the nature of wishful thinking. For, it is unrealistic to expect Pakistan to accept such a solution unless it is forced to do so. And, apart from bringing ex-

can be persuaded, almost as a last chance, to remain in the federation. Let alone devolution, even autonomy is fast on the way to becoming a non-option. The option that takes precedence over autonomy in the Kashmiri mind is independence and, for some, merger with Pakistan.

Politics like nature, tolerates no vacuum. If the most desirable option is not pursued, then the least desirable ones would move into the open. If autonomy is not seriously and earnestly pursued today, India will stumble upon one of the last two options, not by choice but by compulsion. Since the BJP's official position is to scrap Article 370 of the Constitution which provides for special terms and conditions for the merger of the State of Jammu and Kashmir with the Indian Union, the present BJP-led Government is not capable of evolving a Kashmir policy centred on autonomy. It will not, therefore, be surprising if it is working towards an externally imposed solution. The demand for the trifurcation of the State on a religious basis neatly falls in this category.

It is significant that this demand is supported by both the RSS and the Washington-based Kashmir Study Group. Some of the BJP leaders who are now publicly opposing this proposal had been deliberately ambiguous on it in the past.

The secular democratic forces and parties in the country cannot but view this situation with grave concern. They, therefore, must evolve a consensus among them in favour of pursuing the most desirable option of autonomy and force the Government to commence negotiations with the Kashmiris on that basis. These forces must move before it gets too late — before a combination of domestic forces, i.e. the Sangh Parivar and think tanks and loose-cannon intellectuals inspired by foreign powers, imposes upon us a solution based on trifurcation which compromises the secular ethos of the nation and which provides only a halting place before the eventual merger of the Muslim-majority parts of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan.

(Concluded)

---

*The core of a Kashmir policy has to be the offer of the fullest possible autonomy to the people... It is the only modern, democratic and secular option available.*

---

over the years. The Government of India must recognise Kashmir as a problem, that its solution must involve Pakistan preferably from the very beginning and that the Hurriyat will consider joining the elections only if they are meant not to install a new Government in power but to elect representatives who could negotiate with the Government to find a solution to the Kashmir problem. With our usual penchant for wishful thinking, we have read new meanings into stray remarks made by some Kashmiri leaders, from time to time. But there has never been any change in their basic position. It is very unlikely that the present parleys with them by the Kashmir Committee will bring about any change.

Individual Kashmiri leaders, including those who are now members of or associated with the Hurriyat, have in the past desperately wanted a dialogue with the Indian Government without bringing in Pakistan or raising the issue of Indian sovereignty over Kashmir. But successive Governments in the past allowed these initiatives to fall by the wayside through sheer neglect or procrastination. This was principally because they did not have a Kashmir policy. This drove these leaders into the arms of the Hurriyat and Pakistan.

ternal pressure to bear on Pakistan, we are in no position to force this solution on Pakistan. We do not even have the leverage to demonstrate to the Pakistanis that they will have to pay a very heavy price for continuing with their proxy war. It should be plain to any right-thinking person that the only means of acquiring such a leverage short of declaring war, is to resolve the problem with our own Kashmiris.

The core of a Kashmir policy has to be the offer of the fullest possible autonomy to the people. It is the only solution in keeping with the dignity and legitimate political aspirations of the Kashmiri people. It is the last available chance, which is getting slimmer with every passing day, for saving the Indian federation as it is presently constituted. Besides, it is the only modern, democratic and secular option available to India.

Confusing 'autonomy' with 'devolution of power' betrays a tragic lack of appreciation of the essence of the Kashmir problem. The problem in Kashmir is not one of managing the federation for which devices such as devolution can be helpful, but of saving the federation as presently constituted. What is called for is redefining the terms and conditions under which the Kashmiri people

22 AUG 2002

# Needed: a Kashmir policy — I

By Muchkund Dubey

HD-10 2/18  
**T**HE EVENTS since the launching of the proxy war by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir in 1989, have demonstrated the dire need for a Kashmir policy for India. Successive Central Governments have treated the situation in the State as a law and order problem, but they have been unable to overcome it in spite of the massive deployment of security forces. Some of our Prime Ministers, including the present one, displayed remarkable courage by taking initiatives for holding a dialogue with their Pakistani counterparts, on Kashmir and other bilateral issues. But in the absence of a Kashmir policy, these have proved abortive.

The Western powers on whom India has recently come to rely excessively for putting an end to Pakistan's proxy war, have started exerting renewed pressure on India to start a dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir. The French Foreign Minister, Dominique de Villepin, in an interview with an Indian journalist on August 1 said: "... to await the total cessation of all terrorist activities before a dialogue can be resumed is to resign oneself to the maintenance of a high level of tension, keep the prospect of an armed conflict open and, ultimately, run the risk of intensified violence." During his recent visit to the Subcontinent, the U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell, expressed the hope that if things go well, it would be timely to press for the beginning of a dialogue in the middle of August this year. Though the United States still stands by its position that the dialogue should come only after the cessation of cross-border terrorism by Pakistan, there are indications that in the ultimate analysis India will also be required to pay some price in terms of greater flexibility in its position on resuming the dialogue. High-level U.S. emissaries who have visited India since the launching of the "global campaign against terrorism" have made this clear to their Indian interlocutors in informal discussions. It is also becoming clear that Pakistan is going to use its most potent option of the proxy war as a bargaining counter to oblige India to come to the nego-

tiating table. The major Western powers appear to have accepted this position. Therefore, the resumption of a dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir in the very near future appears to be an inevitability. But as in the past, India will go to the talks unarmed, without a Kashmir policy.

As compared to the previous interactions on Kashmir, India is likely to have much less manoeuvrability this time. The major powers have now openly recognised the centrality of the Kashmir issue in India-Pakistan relations. This was confirmed by the Deputy Spokesperson of the U.S. State Department, Philip Reeker, when he stated on July 29 that "every-

*The resumption of a dialogue with Pakistan on Kashmir in the very near future appears to be an inevitability.*

body is now focussed on it (Kashmir). Everybody understands that one had a close run thing about a month ago... and the ultimate cause of that potential conflict was Kashmir". Thus the talks will be on Kashmir along with other bilateral issues rather than the other way round. This is precisely what the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has been pressing for ever since he came to power nearly two years ago.

Finally, these talks are unlikely to be allowed to meander along aimlessly, as their progress is likely to be closely monitored by major Western powers. Unfortunately, in spite of the vastly changed salience of the coming talks, in the absence of a Kashmir policy India will stumble upon it virtually blindfolded.

We have set high store by the coming elections in Jammu and Kashmir. In this we have fortunately the full backing of the U.S. Mr. Powell during his visit to Delhi stated that the polls could be "a first step in the process aimed at addressing the grievances of the Kashmiris and leading the two countries back to the path of dialogue". He said he would be speaking to the Pakistani side "to make every effort to avoid disturbing these elections". He stood by his promise and

while in Islamabad he called upon all parties to ensure that the polls "can be held in safety and without interference from those who would like to spoil these elections".

We were somewhat rattled by his observation that the U.S. "looked forward to concrete steps by India to foster Kashmiri confidence in the election process" and that "permitting independent observers and freeing political prisoners will be helpful." The Indian Government spokesperson promptly rejected both these suggestions on expected lines. This is more due to a chink in our armour than a reflection on the legitimacy of the U.S. suggestions. After

all, such suggestions have emanated from several quarters in India also.

The coming Jammu and Kashmir elections are not going to solve the Kashmir problem. It is a mandatory constitutional process we have to go through in order to put a formally elected Government in power. In all probability, the elections will result in the maintenance of the *status quo* in Kashmir, i.e. the continuance of the National Conference Government in power while leaving the Kashmir problem intact. As a matter of fact, it will be far more difficult to resolve the Kashmir issue in the post-election situation than would have been the case if honest and earnest efforts were made to resolve it during the course of the preparations for the elections. The elections would hopefully be free, both from violence and rigging; but they are unlikely to be fair. Almost all political groups claiming to represent the will of the Kashmiri people will not be able to go to them because they would not have anything up their sleeves to offer by way of a political solution to the problem. If they join the election fray without being able to make such an offer, they would be making themselves unwitting victims of the militants' violence. Hence, only those parties which have

little or no following among the people and whom the people are likely to ignore are likely to contest the elections. The turnout in the election is, therefore, going to be extremely low, even without the All-Party Hurriyat Conference actively working for a boycott.

As a matter of fact, the 1996 elections were politically far more significant than the 2002 elections are ever likely to be. The former restored the democratic process in the State. They brought a formally elected Government to power after a constitutional hiatus of two years. And finally since the National Conference Government was elected mainly on the platform of autonomy, it opened up a historic opportunity to solve the Kashmir problem through a broad-based dialogue on the extent, nature and content of the autonomy to be granted to the Kashmiri people. Unfortunately, this opportunity was frittered away because the then Central Governments failed to muster the courage to take initiatives in that direction and because of Farooq Abdulah's short-sighted objective of sticking to power at any cost.

This double failure opened up a vast space for Pakistan to operate freely in Kashmir and bring about a qualitative change in the situation. The Hurriyat, Pakistan's Trojan Horse in the State, firmly established itself as a separatist movement with links extending to Pakistan's ISI and the militants supported by it on both sides of the border. It also came to acquire a degree of respectability by virtue of its frequent contacts and commiserations with foreign diplomatic missions in Delhi. Indian security forces were overstretched in Jammu and Kashmir because of the vastly enhanced scale of violence perpetrated by the Pakistan-controlled militants. The harassment, oppression and indignities heaped upon the Kashmiri people as a logical corollary of the security forces' operation in very adverse circumstances resulted in an almost total alienation of the Kashmiris from the Indian mainstream. This created for the militants a more hospitable environment to carry out their acts of terror.

21 AUG 2002

# J&K polls on schedule

Aloke Tikku in New Delhi

Aug. 19. — Mr LK Advani today ruled out postponement of the J&K Assembly polls as demanded by the Kashmir Committee headed by Mr Ram Jethmalani.

The Deputy Prime Minister rejected the committee's demand to hold talks with the Hurriyat Conference and impose Governor's rule on the state.

The Election Commission too rejected the demand to postpone the polls. In Srinagar, Chief Election Commissioner Mr JM Lyngdoh said the poll panel had no "intention" of postponing the polls. Mr Lyngdoh is on a three-day tour of the state to review the poll preparedness. He said the poll schedule had been issued

and it would not be changed.

Mr Advani told TV channels that Pakistan-backed organisations would not take part in the elections. "I don't think postponement of polls would ensure wider participation because it is clear that there are elements under Pakistan's influence due to financial reasons or fear. They will not participate."

The Hurriyat's decision to boycott the polls did not come as a surprise, Mr Advani said. "Their participation had always been in doubt". And Abdul Gani Lone's assassination has deterred even those who were earlier inclined to take part in the polls. "Gen. Pervez Musharraf's statement denouncing the J&K elections was a clear message for the Hurriyat not to participate ..."

The Kashmir Committee's talks with the Hurriyat over the past few weeks had made the latter the "sole representative" of Kashmiris. But the implications of failing to draw the Hurriyat into the poll process could be "grave", officials said.

"We've been saying the Hurriyat represents a section of the Kashmiris ... Now just before the polls, we give them the importance that indicates their participation was crucial to outcome of the polls," an official said. "Now that their demand has been rejected, it would send a wrong signal to a large number of Kashmiris — represented by the Hurriyat — since they won't be part of the election process."

Last year, the Centre's inter-  
Turn to page 6

## KASHMIR ELECTIONS:

(Continued from page 1)

locutor, Mr KC Pant, had "sent a clear message to the Hurriyat that it was not the only representative of the Kashmiris. The Hurriyat had reacted sharply, questioning his status. But Mr Pant had achieved his objective," a senior official said, suggesting that the problem was that the government's Kashmir policy was being dictated by two offices — the home ministry and the PMO.

The Kashmir Committee idea had found support with the PMO, he said. The home minister — though opposed to the idea — had given in reluctantly.

Underplaying Hurriyat's importance, home ministry officials say it was foolhardy to expect its leaders to contest the

polls. "Some of them have contested elections and had to bite the dust," he said. "Why should they do it again?" As long as the Hurriyat doesn't contest elections, its support would remain a matter of perception. It claims to be the true representative of the people and the government says it's not. But once it takes part in the polls, its support among the masses could be gauged in terms of numbers.

Also, if the Hurriyat were to seek votes from the electorate, it would have to explain why it didn't join the mainstream earlier. Hurriyat chairman Mr Abdul Ghani Bhatt had recently said: "There is no political or moral justification to participate in the elections after so many people have sacrificed their lives... What was all this for?"

Not for forming our government in the state." No Assembly can sit in judgment on the future unless the parties to the dispute (India, Pakistan and the Kashmiri people) accept the basic principle and evolve a mechanism to resolve it, he had said.

**Pak downplays Hurriyat decision:** Pakistan today sought to down play Hurriyat Conference's decision to hold talks with the Indian government on Kashmir issue, adds PTI from Islamabad. The Hurriyat has not said Islamabad would not be involved in the negotiations, it said.

**SC order on Kashmir polls:** The Supreme Court today asked Panther's Party to approach Delhi or Jammu and Kashmir High Court on postponement of J&K polls on the ground that electoral rolls have not been properly prepared, adds PTI.

# Kashmir Committee for deferring elections

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 18. The Kashmir Committee (KC), which wrapped up its three-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir today, has suggested the deferment of Assembly elections in the State — a demand made by several quarters. The KC convener, Ram Jethmalani, termed as "very constructive and tremendous advancement" the talks the panel had held with various political parties and groups in the State on participation in the coming Assembly polls.

The KC met the senior separatist leader, Shabir Ahmed Shah, for the second time today and continued discussions.

M.J. Akbar, a member of the Committee, read out a statement to mediapersons before leaving for New Delhi which said that Mr. Shah had welcomed the commencement and progress of the dialogue to seek a peaceful and permanent settlement of the Kashmir problem. "This process will continue with a meeting with the Prime Minister or the Deputy Prime Minister and the KC will facilitate this meeting at the earliest. Mr. Shah reiterated to the committee that he is not averse to taking part in the elections as a means to identifying the representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for a permanent solution to the J&K problem through future negotiations", the statement said.

When asked whether Mr. Shah was willing to take part in the elections aimed at governance, Mr. Jethmalani shot back, "Postpone this question for two

days. Very soon, he will be in Delhi and you will hear from the horse's mouth".

However, Mr. Shah ruled out participation in the elections saying, "Our stand is very much clear and we stand by whatever we said on Friday."

Amid a mixture of achievements and disappointments, the KC struck a positive note, saying that leaders of several groups had assured them of participation in the elections. The groups included the to-be-formed J&K Resolution Front comprising 13 parties. (This was earlier referred to as the Third Front).

Mr. Jethmalani said a major condition which had come from

almost all the parties and groups, except the National Conference, was that the elections should be postponed for some time. "Unfortunately, this is a matter in which the Election Commission can take a final decision."

Earlier, the KC members met the former Union Home Minister and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) chief, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, at his residence and discussed the issues relating to elections. "I told them that the meeting with the Hurriyat and others was a good opening but there has to be a movement forward and this should not be the end of it," Mr. Sayeed told *The Hindu*.

## Cabinet Committee firm on poll schedule

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 18. An informal meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security this evening decided that there would be no revision of the electoral timetable in Jammu and Kashmir.

The committee chose to reiterate the decision in the context of the impression being created by the Kashmir Committee headed by the former Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, that postponement of the elections in Jammu and Kashmir was an open option. The sub-text of this decision is that for now no effort ought to be made to make the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, resign to bring the State under Governor's rule. Various political parties, including some elements in the separatist camp, have been demanding that the elections take place under a dispensation other than that of Dr. Abdullah. This has been deemed to be the minimum requirement for the much promised "free and fair" elections.

The Centre's unambiguous stand has been that while it would do its very best to ensure free and fair polls, it was not going to go out of its way to propitiate "separatist" elements. The CCS meeting this evening felt there was no new development to rethink the stand.

19 AUG 2002

HD 1  
15/8  
FAROOQ TELLS JETHMALANI PANEL: 9.8A JPK

# 'Ready for Governor's rule if Hurriyat takes part in polls'

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 17. Reiterating its position of not participating in the coming elections to the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference today called for a mechanism to ascertain the "wishes of the people of Kashmir" but with the approval of both India and Pakistan.

In an interesting turn of events, the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, and his National Conference party welcomed the initiative taken by the Kashmir Committee (KC) headed by the former Union Minister, Ram Jethmalani, and stated that the State Government was willing to recommend Governor's rule in case the Hurriyat participated in the elections. He was also willing to discuss with the Hurriyat the conditions to be met for its participation.

In its three-hour long meeting with the Kashmir Committee members, the Hurriyat showed no eagerness for participation in the elections. However, it will decide whether to hold talks with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister on all issues for which a verbal invitation has been extended to them. The Hurriyat will also continue the dialogue with the Kashmir Committee and work in partnership with it to find a final solution to the problem.



The Kashmir Committee chairman, Ram Jethmalani (left), with the Hurriyat Conference chairman, Abdul Ghani Bhat, before the committee held talks with the Hurriyat Executive in Srinagar on Saturday — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

Replying to a repeated question after the meeting on participation in the elections, the APHC chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, asked "we have made it absolutely clear again and again, why ask this everytime? Elections are elections like 1996, what difference does it make now? We have made our position explicitly clear that the KC impressed upon us to participate in the election, we said we will ascertain the wishes of the people of Kashmir. India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris should work together to evolve a mechanism". Asked whether they had accepted Kashmir as a dis-

pute, Mr. Jethmalani said: "There is a dispute and it is foolish of anyone to say that Kashmir is not a dispute. Everything is being discussed and it is argued that elections are being held at a very fast pace."

Earlier, the committee member, Dileep Padgaonkar, read out a joint statement saying that "the APHC and KC held free, frank and wide-ranging discussions on proper ways to settle the Kashmir problem."

In this context, the issue of the upcoming elections was discussed. The APHC was impressed upon that elections are historical and crucial to identify

the real representatives of the people of J & K because these people will be the interlocutors in any kind of talks leading to the final settlement of J & K dispute".

The APHC said that talks would be in the interest of the people of J & K and the whole of South Asia and added that the "APHC has agreed to work in close contact with the KC to find a durable solution to the Kashmir problem, besides agreeing to hold the next round of talks in Delhi".

The ruling National Conference offered to recommend Governor's rule in case the Hurriyat agreed to participate in the elections. At a meeting with the committee members, the NC team led by the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, made no bones about its readiness to "cooperate" with the initiatives and told the members that the State Government was ready to hold talks with the APHC.

The Minister of State for External Affairs and National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, who attended the meeting told *The Hindu* that "We not only offered to recommend Governor's rule in case they are willing to participate in the elections but also to discuss with them what they think is the hindrance in their way of participating in the polls".

1 8 AUG 2002



# Shabir Shah meets Kashmir panel

17/8  
By Shujaat Bukhari 9 SA 13K HD 1

**SRINAGAR, AUG. 16.** The chief of the Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), Shabir Shah, today accepted the invitation of the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, for a dialogue on the Kashmir issue, but said a conducive atmosphere should be created by taking several steps, including stopping human rights violations and releasing political prisoners. He, however, ruled out his party's participation in the coming Jammu and Kashmir elections.

Mr. Shah and his associates today met the seven-member Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, on the first day of its three-day visit to Kashmir.

The Committee — comprising M. J. Akbar (Editor, *Asian Age*), Dileep Padgaonker (Editor, *The Times of India*), V. N. Grover (former diplomat), Shanti Bhushan (lawyer), Javid Laiq (author) and Ashok Bhan (lawyer) — failed to get an assurance from Mr. Shah, as the party stuck to its

position of insisting on fulfilling the conditions necessary for holding a fruitful dialogue.

Mr. Jethmalani told media-persons that the Committee's main objective was to help find a durable solution to the Kashmir problem. Mr. Shah parried questions on elections and



**The Kashmir Committee chairman, Ram Jethmalani, with the president of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Shabir Shah, before the meeting at Rawal Pora near Srinagar on Friday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad**

when asked whether he suggested deferring of elections to continue with the dialogue, he said, "it is up to the Government of India. If they want to go ahead with the dialogue then it needs to be seen if the elections are also necessary."

Mr. Shah said he had made things clear to Mr. Jethmalani — that he was not averse to a fruitful dialogue and cited the example of his talking to the Planning Commission Chairman, K. C. Pant. Unfortunately that failed

to achieve any progress. He also said a "categorical no" to the Kashmir Committee on elections. He outlined the steps to be taken for making the atmosphere congenial for talks. "I conveyed it to the Committee that human rights violations, custodial killings should be stopped, leaders of all hues, including Syed Ali Geelani and Yasin Malik, be freed and the Disturbed Area Act and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act be withdrawn forthwith".

17/8

17 AUG 2002

# Need for a broad-based dialogue in J&K

By Muchkund Dubey

*The elections have once again opened, after almost six years, the window of opportunity for the nation to come to terms with the aspirations of the Kashmir people.*

110-10 16/10  
**T**HE RECENTLY concluded elections in Jammu and Kashmir have very appropriately been hailed as the triumph of democracy. More than that, they also signify a triumph of the political sagacity and courage of the Kashmiris and an emphatic assertion of their preference for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue within a democratic framework.

Democracy produces a strange alchemy of astounding value and significance. In the case of India, in several hopeless situations when everything seemed to be falling apart, it has pulled us back from the precipice and opened the door to sanity. Democracy has proved to be indispensable for holding our society together. Whether it would continue to do so in the future will depend upon the way we practice it and uphold democratic values.

The Election Commission must be congratulated for holding the freest and fairest elections in Jammu and Kashmir in two decades and in conditions more adverse than ever before. One hopes the successful manner in which the elections were completed will come as a chastisement to those who cast aspersions on the Election Commission and dragged it into a totally unnecessary constitutional controversy.

The most likely scenario seems to be that a coalition of the Congress, the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Independents will form the Government in the State. They have first to get over the hurdle of electing a Chief Minister. If political reality is to be taken into account, it is quite legitimate for the party with the maximum number of seats in the coalition to stake claim for leading the Government. On the other hand, there is also a case for the PDP to head the Government as it represents the sentiments of the people in the Kashmir Valley more comprehensively than the Congress.

If the PDP heads the Government, the most likely choice for the Chief Minister's post is going to be Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the party leader who has the requisite seniority and administrative experience. However, if one looks at the issue in the perspective of the overall national inter-

est, the coalition should select Mehbooba Mufti as Chief Minister. For, no one in the coalition, or for that matter very few in the entire State, has echoed the hurt, anguish and the sufferings of the people of Kashmir as forcefully and has identified with their cause as sincerely as she has done. Besides, India has reasons to be grateful to her for building a popular movement in the form of the PDP, which while respecting the sentiments of the people, stands for a change in a peaceful and orderly fashion.

The election results have a few positive external fallouts for India. They have equipped us to deal with Pakistan with greater confidence and firmness than before. They will also enable us to hold our own against the pressures that have been exerted on us by external forces. But much more important than the external consequences, the elections have once again opened, after almost six years, the window of opportunity for the nation to come to terms with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. The last time we had such an opportunity was in 1996 when Farooq Abdullah came to power on the platform of autonomy. Unfortunately, that opportunity was frittered away because of the exclusive pre-occupation of the then United Front Government with the problem of its survival and because the National Conference was blinded by the immediate gain of power and became complacent to the objective of negotiating autonomy which called for political courage and involved risks including that of loss of power. The events will not be allowed to take such an ungainly turn this time because the PDP attaches the highest priority to a political settlement of the Kashmir issue through talks with the militants. Though the Congress will suffer from the constraints that generally hinder the action of a national political party, during its election campaign it expressed full sympathy for the plight

of the Kashmir people and committed itself to a dialogue.

All political forces in the State must be involved in the dialogue which, one hopes, would begin soon after the new Government assumes charge. In particular, the dialogue must include the Hurriyat which, in its own way, reflects genuine Kashmiri aspirations. Besides, it has very close links with the militants with whom the dialogue would be held. The National Conference is also destined to play a very important role. It is the single largest party in the newly-elected Assembly and has stood for the unity and integrity of India in the most adverse circumstances. Besides, once in the Opposition, it is bound to take up the cause of autonomy with vigour and sincerity because this is the only way it can recapture lost ground in the State.

The most critical factor is going to be the Central Government's attitude. In this connection, the Prime Minister's statement in Copenhagen that "the Centre would work in close cooperation with the elected representatives in Srinagar to fulfil the aspirations of the people", provides a good opening. The statement does not exactly commit the Government to parleys on autonomy which is quite understandable at this stage. The Sangh Parivar hardliners will do their utmost to prevent the Government from granting any form of *azadi* to the Kashmiris. However, the Centre will have to recognise the drastic change in the political situation in the State brought about by the elections. It will have to deal with a Government which is bound to be committed to a Common Minimum Programme which will include as its main element the demand for meeting the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, and to contend with an Opposition in the Assembly which will be more sharply focussed on its demand for autonomy. One also expects the Congress not to remain mired in its policy of the recent past

in favour of a *status quo*. After all, the two historic agreements for granting special status to the Kashmiris were negotiated by a Congress Government in power at the Centre. One hopes the Congress will rise to the occasion and play a major role in fashioning another pact for ensuring the continued association of the Kashmiri people with the Indian Union, which is fully in keeping with their dignity and aspirations.

Next to the demand for autonomy, the election results also constitute a mandate for providing good governance. The results reflect a longing of the people for peace, safety and security. It is true that the State's people will not feel safe as long as the militants continue their violent activities and Pakistan continues to support them. But for carrying on their day-to-day activities they want a corruption-free Government and the State to cease to be an instrument of harassment, torture and oppression.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has asked for an economic package from the Centre. What the State needs is not the traditional economic package consisting of mega projects resurrected from the past — which have long been promised but never implemented. Instead, it needs genuine decentralisation of development activities whereby people at the grass-roots level can directly receive resources for development and are empowered to formulate, approve and implement development projects. Jammu and Kashmir has a legislation on decentralisation pre-dating the adoption of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution. But many parts of it are archaic and need to be updated, incorporating the best elements of the 73rd and 74th Amendments. Happily, with the outcome of the elections, the idea of the trifurcation of the State has been rejected. Nevertheless, a solution will have to be found for meeting the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Ladakh for local self-governance. They do not want to look up to the Government in Srinagar for meeting all their needs. An effective devolution of governance to the grass-roots level is the best means of meeting their aspirations.

GANI BHAT TO CONTINUE AS APHC CHAIRMAN

401  
148

# Hurriyat meet tomorrow to discuss talks offer

28  
28K

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, AUG. 10.** The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today failed to arrive at a decision on whether to respond to the "indirect" talks offer by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, or not and said it would discuss the issue in its general council on Monday.

The executive meeting approved the extension of the term of its chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, by another year.

At a crowded press conference, Prof. Bhat said that the meeting discussed the formation of the Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani. "It is a sensitive issue, so we discussed every aspect. There was unanimity in convening the meeting of the general council on Monday so that a final decision could be taken on the issue."

Prof. Bhat reiterated that the Hurriyat was ready for talks on finding a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem.

To a question, he said, "If India accepts in principle to talk to all parties involved in the Kashmir dispute, including Pakistan, we have no problem in talking to India first. We will be talking to the Kashmir Committee as we know it is non-governmental and if we come to know it enjoys the support of the Government, we will



The All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders, (from right) Abdul Gani Bhat, Javed Ahmed Mir, G.M. Bhat, and Bilal Gani Lone, discussing in Srinagar the invitation for talks. — Photo: Nissar Ahmed

be talking to them if they chose to, but that will be discussing Kashmir and beyond that nothing. We have not withdrawn from our stand and we believe that we have to talk to India, Pakistan and the people of Kashmir to find a solution."

Prof. Bhat said that his term as APHC chairman had also been extended. "In the changing political situation, the election was deferred without

amending the constitution. There was complete unanimity among the six members of the executive and therefore, I will be chairman till July 2003."

(The APHC constitution does not allow a second term for the chairman. He is elected for two years).

He said there was no change in the Hurriyat stand on the boycott of the Assembly elections, but added that it had not

been decided whether to launch a campaign against it. "You will have to wait; we will come out with a statement. But not participating is as good as boycotting the elections."

Prof. Bhat said that the Hurriyat executive had also expressed concern over the deteriorating health of its senior leaders, Syed Ali Geelani and Yasin Malik, and others in various jails in and outside the State.

# More massacres

## 45-A 10 Troubled times ahead in Kashmir

Take two incidents occurring within a day of each other — the massacre of pilgrims on the Amarnath trail and the deadly attack on a missionary school near Murree, Pakistan — and the picture is of Islamist fundamentalism promoted by Islamabad's bigoted men in uniform imploding. They may not care too much about the victims — Hindus, Christians, Muslims — but that will not prevent them from being singed by the flames; foreign investment in Pakistan having all but stopped and Musharraf himself targeted in an assassination attempt. The Amarnath massacre illustrates the magnitude of the terror problem India faces: "three-tier" security to pilgrims provided by more than 15,000 securitymen wasn't enough, apparently, to prevent the breach that allowed militants to get close to and loose their magazines on unsuspecting pilgrims. Even assuming that cross-border infiltration has come down in recent times there remain enough terrorists on this side of the border to carry out such periodic atrocities. And Pakistan's army and certainly wouldn't want a large turnout in assembly election, J & K which would make nonsense of its claims that Kashmir are disaffected from the Indian political process.

More likely Musharraf will continue with a kind of double shuffle — keep down visible support for the *jihadis* to satisfy the West, while quietly pandering to them in order to fight strengthening democratic opposition at home and keep up the proxy war against India. This is akin to driving a car with one foot on the accelerator and another on the brake; the car will break down sooner or later. Although Washington is backing Musharraf, elements of civil society in Pakistan are blowing the lid on the sponsorship of terror networks by the regime, and Benazir Bhutto appears to have chosen the right psychological moment to return to Pakistan, when elections are due and Musharraf's attempts to prop up a "king's party" have not borne fruit. If Musharraf puts Bhutto behind bars, it will be under the full glare of international media, which in the sub-continental scheme of things amounts to making a martyr out of one. New Delhi ought to make capital out of Musharraf's discomfiture by saying it backs restoration of democracy in Pakistan and prefers to speak to elected leaders not to military governors. That is similar to what the Israelis or George Bush are doing to Arafat, except that New Delhi is on stronger ground because Arafat was actually elected by the Palestinians while the referendum confirming Musharraf's presidency is widely acknowledged to be sham. In other words, don't take Washington's word for it — Musharraf's regime is the problem and needs to be treated as one, unless he takes concrete measures to bring down the infrastructure of terror.

THE STATESMAN

10 AUG 2002

# Talks offer to Hurriyat

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 9. The Deputy Prime Minister, and Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, is reported to have indirectly issued an invitation to the "separatist" leaders in Jammu and Kashmir for a dialogue on any "relevant" issue. Mr. Advani indicated this to the "Kashmir Committee", headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani.

After a 45-minute meeting with Mr. Advani this afternoon, the "Kashmir Committee" claimed in a statement that Mr. Advani had "authorised and requested the committee to declare publicly that he would welcome anyone from Jammu and Kashmir with any relevant issue to discuss with him and that no one need wait for a formal invitation."

According to Mr. Jethmalani's statement, Mr. Advani wants the "invitation" to be particularly "communicated to the Hurriyat leaders and to Shri Shabir Shah of the People's Democratic Movement". Though the committee is not very optimistic about an immediate positive response to the "invitation" from the separatist camp, Mr. Jethmalani has opted to interpret Mr. Advani's remarks as an endorsement of the panel's self-assigned agenda.

In its interaction with Mr. Advani, members of the Kashmir Committee are believed to have made the point, once again, that if next month's elections for the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly have to carry conviction, then the exercise must be

held under Governor's rule. The committee publicly lauded the National Conference president, Omar Abdullah's challenge that his party would not mind a spell of Governor's rule provided the All-Party Hurriyat Conference agreed to take part in the elections. The separatist camp has been uncompromising in its demand that the elections be held under the watchful eye of "international observers", a demand the Centre has categorically rejected but Mr. Jethmalani had publicly endorsed. The Jethmalani Committee is said to be of the view that the elections ought to be postponed and the State brought under Governor's rule in order to entice the separatist camp into the electoral fray.

Mr. Jethmalani is believed to have secured a promise from Mr. Advani that even if the jailed Hurriyat leader, Yaseen Malik, is not to be immediately released, he would get the requisite medical attention.

Meanwhile, the Centre's designated "representative" on devolution talks, Arun Jaitley, had a second round of talks with the Jammu and Kashmir Government representative, G.M. Shah, a senior J&K Minister. The two sides are reported to have reached some agreement on the "structure" of the dialogue. It was felt that the Centre should seek the advice of those "experts", who may have personal knowledge and memory of the 1975 Sheikh-Indira Accord (which was negotiated by G. Parthasarthy and Mirza Mohammad Afzal Beg).

1 0 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

# Advani welcomes talks on Kashmir

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 9. — Mr LK Advani today told the Kashmir Committee, headed by Mr Ram Jethmalani, that there was no need for separatists, including Hurriyat leaders and Mr Shabir Shah, to wait for a formal invitation from him to discuss any relevant issue. He said a dialogue had already started with his very statement in the Rajya Sabha.

After a 40-minute "comprehensive" discussion with the Deputy Prime Minister, the Jethmalani committee, in a press statement quoting Mr Advani, said: "He (Mr Advani) authorised and requested the committee to

declare publicly that he would welcome any one from the state who has any relevant issue to discuss with him and that no one need wait for a formal invitation. In particular, he said this may be communicated to Hurriyat leaders and to Mr Shabir Shah."

The committee also appreciated Mr Omar Abdullah's "constructive suggestion of holding elections under Governor's rule" which, the committee felt, would certainly enable many elements to participate in the electoral process.

Mr Abdullah in his press conference yesterday underscored two factors for imposition of Governor's rule. He said "we've no problems with Governor's rule" if "suitable amendments

are made to the Constitution and imposition of Governor's rule is made a mandatory requirement for every state going to the polls".

The second factor Mr Abdullah mentioned was that some Hurriyat leaders might agree to participate in elections under Governor's rule. If they did, he would ask the state to recommend Governor's rule to the Centre.

Mr Jethmalani had recently quoted a Hurriyat leader as saying if the government wanted the Hurriyat to contest, "they would need some time to collect funds, choose candidates, come up with a common election manifesto". However, Mr Abdul Majid Bandedy, Hurriyat bureau spokesman, denied this and said he was quo-

ted out of context.

**Ultras plan to cross over:** More than 2,000-3,000 militants, including those who are under training in camps across the LoC, are waiting to enter the country to disrupt Assembly polls. Maj-Gen Randhir Singh, GOC, 25 Infantry Division, said a large number of ultras have been kept ready by the Pakistani army to cross into J&K. **Change in poll schedule:** There has been a change in the schedule for the second phase of the J&K Assembly polls. Notification for the second phase will be issued on 29 August and not on 31 August as stated earlier. But, the date of polling remains unchanged.

**Editorial: More massacres,**  
page 4

1 AUG 10 2002

THE STATESMAN

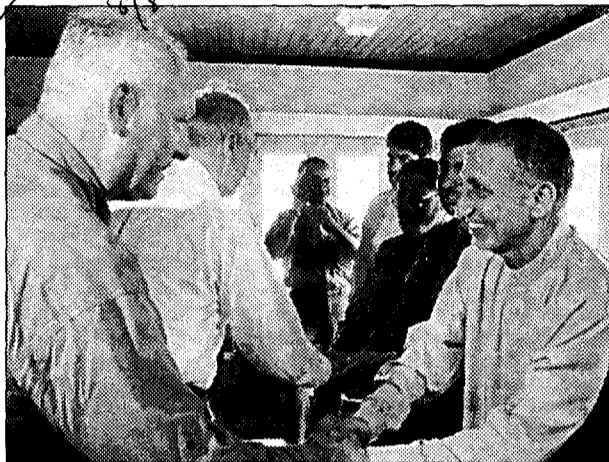
# Kashmir panel calls for postponement of polls

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 7 AUGUST

**T**HE Kashmir Committee headed by noted lawyer and Rajya Sabha MP Ram Jethmalani, on Wednesday, demanded a postponement of elections in Jammu and Kashmir, saying that the killing of the Amarnath pilgrims on Tuesday showed that the time was not yet "ripe" for holding free and fair elections in the state.

The panel, which met for the first time last week and is said to have the blessings of the Centre to engage Kashmiri leaders in a dialogue, also suggested that Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah resign to pave the way for the imposition of President's Rule in the state. By doing so he would be doing a great service to the nation, the committee members agreed at their second meeting here.

Mr Jethmalani told newsmen that the attack on the Amarnath yatis should persuade the



**TWAIN MEET:** All Party Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat (right) with Denmark ambassador Michael Sternberg at the party's headquarters in Srinagar on Wednesday. — AP

Election Commission to rethink the timing of the J&K elections as "it showed that conditions had not become absolutely right for holding elections."

It may be recalled that the Kashmir Committee, at its meet-

ing on Sunday, had taken exception to the "sudden" announcement of polls, alleging that it left little time for the Centre's interlocutors to convince the separatists to come forward and join the electoral process.

## Hurriyat opts out of J&K polls, seeks mediation

Our Mumbai Bureau  
7 AUGUST

**T**HE Hurriyat Conference will not participate in the elections despite promises that Governor's Rule may be imposed, since the elections have been "called to meet the domestic needs of the Union government," a Hurriyat spokesperson said in Mumbai on Wednesday.

However, the umbrella organisation of separatist parties may take part in elections as part of an international process to resolve Kashmir's problems, Sajjad Ghani Lone, chairman of the Peoples Conference and son of the slain Kashmir separatist leader Abdul Ghani Lone, told reporters. Sounding a different note, the editor of the Srinagar English daily Kashmir Images, Bashir Manzar, said the Indian government had lost the opportunity for a broad-based election participation by hastily pushing for early elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The first round of polling begins on September 15.

"For the first time since the 1987 elections, there was a glimmer of hope that the separatists would participate in the elections but by forcing the pace without proper preparation, the Indian government has lost the opportunity," Manzar said in answer to a question. Rejecting Hurriyat's participation, Sajjad Lone said the elections were a "sham" and designed to continue the Farooq Abdullah government in power in the state.

He said the Kashmir problem can be addressed by "international facilitation" to bring the two main parties — India and Pakistan — and Kashmir people's representatives for a settlement. If direct talks between the two sides were not possible, then arbitration by the "international participation" by two or more neutral countries could be attempted. "Pakistan has to be accepted in the dispute-resolution process. Whether you like it or not, it is a party to the dispute," Lone added. Mr Lone said if finally nothing else works, the only way out would be "international coercion" to force parties to the dispute to come to a settlement.

# European Union asks Hurriyat to contest polls

Masood Hussain  
SRINAGAR 7 AUGUST

**T**HE Hurriyat Conference is under pressure from the international community to contest the Kashmir elections. After US secretary of state Colin Powell, it is the turn of the European Union to advise the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to contest the Assembly polls.

EU's five-member team, which had a detailed meeting with a cross-section of the people including Hurriyat, have asked the latter not to reject the exercise if New Delhi is keen on making them free and fair. The delegation comprising Michal Sternburg (Denmark), E.S. Patos Lozos (Greece), Michael Cuaille (EU Commissioner), Italo Qcchi (Italy) and Signi Ropoaka (first secretary in Denmark High Commission), who arrived here on

Tuesday, had a detailed meeting with chief minister Farooq Abdullah too.

"We have received a good feedback and will present our report to our countries," Michael Sternburg told reporters after their detailed meeting with Hurriyat leaders. He said they dis-

cussed "all the issues" but did not identify any of them other than the elections.

Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said they offered guests the factual position about Kashmir. Elections, he said, came under discussion, apart from other issues like the human rights.

## Forging just for a darshan

Sameer C. Mohindru  
JAMMU 7 AUGUST

**F**ORGERY for a holy cause is permissible, remarked an Amarnath yatri when accosted by a security personnel for not presenting his legal registration card for embarking on the annual pilgrimage. With security personnel unrelenting on Amarnath yatra permits, it is now a row between the two, with some pilgrims forging registrations to converge on the holy cave shrine despite some ending up in temporary lockup.

Yatris keen to undertake the pilgrimage reached here much in advance and when not permitted to go ahead. — PTI

HD-11  
98

## Jethmalani wants J&K polls postponed

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 7.** The Kashmir Committee headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, today demanded postponement of Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir saying the killing of Amarnath pilgrims showed that the conditions in the State were not "ripe" for holding free and fair polls.

It also demanded that for holding free and fair elections. It was essential that Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, should resign and pave the way for the imposition of President's rule.

While condemning the militant attack on pilgrims as "inhuman and beastly", Mr. Jethmalani told reporters that "this itself should persuade the Election Commission that conditions have not become absolutely right for holding of elections."

"If the EC on its own postpones the elections, it will meet a major objection of many elements whose participation would be vital for the future of the State," he said emerging from a meeting attended by *Times of India* editor, Dilip Padgaonkar, former diplomat V. K. Grover and others members.

Mr. Padgaonkar said he had been contacted through e-mail by Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman, Ammanullah Khan, based in Rawalpindi in Pakistan, for a meeting between him and the Committee.

The Committee said it would wait for a formal

intimation from the JKLF chairman and would then fix the place and time for the meeting.

Referring to his meeting with the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Mr. Jethmalani said "I impressed upon the PM that the dialogue process should have been started earlier. As it was not done, it should start now."

Regarding the Committee's view for Governor's rule in the State during the elections process, the former Law Minister said the Committee would appeal to Dr. Farooq Abdullah and if necessary, would meet him to impress that by doing so he would do a great service to the nation.

"If he sacrifices the post ... it will help improve his credibility in the process of holding free and fair elections," Mr. Jethmalani said.

He said the Committee has sought a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani.

Referring to a move by the Committee to invite Hurriyat leaders for a meeting, Mr. Jethmalani said the Committee members would be going to the State as Hurriyat Conference chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, was not keeping well.

When told that many Hurriyat leaders were in jail and were not in a position to participate in the polls, he said it was my personal view that at least Yasin Malik should be released as he was critically ill. "He is critically ill and may die any time. And if he dies the problem would get aggravated," he said. —PTI

8 2007

THE HINDU



9-87  
58K

## 9 Amarnath pilgrims killed

By Shujaat Bukhari

**NUNWAN (PAHALGAM), AUG. 6.** At least nine Amarnath pilgrims, including a young girl, were killed and 50 injured in a militant attack on their highly-fortified base camp here on Tuesday. One militant of the Lashkar-e-Taiba who sneaked into the camp was killed by the security forces. However, the yatra was not suspended.

Three militants descended from a hill-ock and one of them, Abu Qasim, made his way into the camp while his accomplices gave him cover fire. "Qasim, a LeT fidayeen (suicide bomber), was killed," the Director-General of Police, A. K. Suri, said.

Police sources said that later, a note was recovered from Qasim's possession, which said that his body should be buried

in Lidroo village. "They (militants) had selected him by a draw of lots as all the three wanted to be martyred. His AK 47 had a sticker of Cassette Library, Lahore, which had *Ya Allah Madad* written on it," said a senior police officer.

The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, G. C. Saxena, the Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, the Union Minister of State for Defence, Chaman Lal Gupta, the Minister of State for Home, Khalid Najib Suhrawardy, the Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry, Ashok Bhandari, Mr. Suri and other senior officials visited the site.

Eyewitnesses said a blast shook the camp around 5.15 a.m. "We heard a blast and didn't know what it was... but when it was followed by heavy firing, all of us ran for our lives" said Savita, a pilgrim from Gujarat.

The personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force retaliated and a gunbattle ensued, which, according to an injured pilgrim, Radhay Sham, said continued for 45 minutes. The SSP, Anantnag, Ghulam Hassan Bhat, was the first to reach the camp. The injured were shifted to medical aid camps in Nunwan and later to the Civil Hospital in Pahalgam. "Fifty persons were brought in, of whom four were dead and the rest had either bullet or splinter injuries," said a doctor, in-charge of a medical camp. Twentyfive persons were discharged after first aid, 12 were admitted in Pahalgam and 14 were rushed to Srinagar. Four pilgrims died on the way to hospital and one died in a Srinagar hospital. In spite of the attack the yatra was not suspended and the pilgrims continued their journey from Jammu.

17 AUG 2002

## Farooq questions relevance of Kashmir panel

9 8x  
D3x  
10-1  
By Shujaat Bukhari 16/8

**SRINAGAR AUG.15.** The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, today questioned the "relevance" of the Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, who is scheduled to begin the first round of talks with the separatist leaders in Srinagar tomorrow. He also accused New Delhi of creating a "strange atmosphere with the refrain of free and free elections in Jammu and Kashmir".

In an emotional speech after unfurling the Tricolour on Independence Day at the highly-fortified Bakhshi Stadium here, Dr. Abdullah minced no words in targeting New Delhi for "not understanding" the Kashmir problems.

Though he started his 45-minute long address with his "favourite" subject of Pakistan bashing and said "the people who had been sent to dig our graves are now training their guns on their own masters", he also came down heavily on the multi-track initiatives launched for resolving the Kashmir tangle.

He welcomed the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee's speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort in which he conceded that New Delhi had committed mistakes on Kashmir. Dr. Abdullah said, "the biggest ever blunder was in 1953 (when Sheikh Abdullah was de-throned) yet another in 1984, I do not know how many more mistakes are on way and it will be late when they (New Delhi) come to their senses".

He accused New Delhi of creating "a strange atmosphere with the refrain of free and fair elections, which is totally unwarranted". "The Congress leaders who used to fill the ballot boxes are alive and the irony is that they are demanding Governor's rule now".

Questioning the relevance of the Kashmir Committee, he said, "now men like Mr. Jethmalani are talking to separatists and asking for Governor's rule. I ask him to first remove Narendra Modi and then talk about Kashmir. Where were you all these years? These people never entered Kashmir's political firmament over the last six years". "What is the agenda of the talks you are holding?"

Dr. Abdullah asked the Central leaders, "you shed tears and make a beeline to the spot when people die at Qasim Nagar or Kaluchak but where were you for the last six years when Kashmiris were dying for India. Did you remember those who died for this country. We understand all of this?" "You cannot make this nation strong by sowing the seeds of hatred between different communities".

# Kashmir elections

It is not too late to ensure Hurriyat participation

The government hasn't been able to cobble together a coherent Kashmir policy yet, going by the complicated *pahle aap, pahle aap* type of minuet it appears to be conducting vis-a-vis the Hurriyat. Assuming that Pakistan-backed ultras will be doing their best to disrupt forthcoming elections, government too must ensure that the effort involved in holding elections is not in vain by giving them a representative character. That would mean involving moderate elements of the Hurriyat, in which case some overtures to them will be necessary; it is not enough to announce they can drop in and meet LK Advani in Delhi whenever they wish. Hurriyat leaders are a scared lot after the murder of Abdul Ghani Lone, to whom Farooq Abdullah's government would not accord security — an illustration of what can go wrong if the National Conference is allowed to run the whole show. For which reason elections ought to be held under President's rule in Kashmir rather than under the aegis of the NC, but here too a similar minuet is evidence. Vajpayee announced in Lucknow that the Centre was considering it, but went back on it under NC pressure; the Centre's latest offering is that it could be considered if the Hurriyat decides to participate.

What complicates matters is the BJP's bigotry, leading the Centre to go back on its promise of offering Farooq Abdullah the Vice-Presidency and moving him out of the way in Srinagar. That plan came unstuck after Abdul Kalam became the presidential candidate; having a Muslim as both President and Vice-President was considered too much for a Hindu-supremacist party to stomach. What is done cannot be undone, but it is all the more necessary to put dithering aside and make serious efforts to make at least some sections of the Hurriyat participate. The present crop of Hurriyat leaders commands support only in some pockets of Jammu and Kashmir, and the NC will carry the elections anyway. Since they will be the focus of international attention this time around, it is a good opportunity to demonstrate that separatists are not deeply rooted in the state. If, on the other hand, the Hurriyat finally slams the door, the Centre can turn around and say the organisation's leaders are chicken, unlikely to prove their legitimacy at the hustings. However there is some way to go to ensure that they cannot claim that doors were shut in their faces.

1 5 1 1 1 1

# Kashmiri Pandits seek reservation of seats

New Delhi

14 AUGUST

ALLEGING discrimination by the Indian polity and Election Commission, displaced Kashmiri Pandits on Wednesday held a demonstration here and demanded creation of three "constituencies in exile" for representation of the community in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

The people, belonging to various Pandit organisations, said the forthcoming elections in the state without their representation would be "meaningless" for them. "The J&K constitution has reserved 24 seats for the people of Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK) but there is no provision for seat reservation for Kashmiri Pandits forced out of the Valley," Ramesh Raina, general secretary of Kashmiri Samiti, said, alleging this was "discrimination of worst type". He also criticised the EC, saying while the Commission had time to tour relief camps in Gujarat, "it did not bother to visit camps of Kashmiri migrants in Jammu & Delhi."

Mr Raina demanded that three constituencies in exile be created for Kashmiri Pandits, two at Jammu and one at Delhi, so that the community could be represented in the state assembly. The All India Kashmiri Pandit Conference (AIKPC) president H N Jattu alleged large-scale manipulations in the electoral roll, resulting in deletion of thousands of eligible voters of the community. —PTI

1 5 1972

The Economic Times

# J&K polls a farce, says Musharraf

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 14 AUGUST

**I**N a clear contradiction of the US position on Jammu and Kashmir, Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf dismissed the forthcoming elections in the state as "farfical." He said on Wednesday Pakistan should not be held responsible for failure of the polls there.

General Musharraf, addressing the domestic audience on the occasion of Pakistan's Independence Day, added that India was using the elections as a "mask" to justify its occupation of the territory. The Pakistani President's claims, however, were clearly at variance with the premium that US secretary of state Colin Powell had put on the electoral exercise only recently when he visited

the sub-continent. Mr Powell had not only welcomed the poll process in Jammu and Kashmir but also had called for freeing of political prisoners to ensure their participation.

Mr Powell had also said international observers be made a part of the election process —



MUSHARRAF

this stance was outright rejected by India. The EU as well as other countries had followed the US in lauding the holding of elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

President Musharraf has squarely rejected the views taken by the US and other members of the international community. He also used the Hurriyat's refusal to participate in the J&K elections in support of his stance that these elections were not "legitimate" by any standards.

15 AUG 2002

The Economic Times

'PARTICIPATION IN POLLS A CLOSED CHAPTER'

# Hurriyat ready for talks with Jethmalani panel

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 12. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference said today that its participation in the coming elections was a "closed chapter" but it was ready to talk to the Kashmir Committee, headed by the former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani.

The Hurriyat chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, told reporters that the general council, which met here, "endorsed our decision to talk and asked us to start talking". On August 10, the Hurriyat executive had met to fashion out a response to the latest olive branch extended to it by the Centre. The meeting ended inconclusively and decided to convene the general council meet for the same.

Mr. Bhat said: "We will talk to the Jethmalani committee because it is a non-governmental group. We didn't talk to K.C. Pant because he was New Delhi's official interlocutor on Kashmir."

The Hurriyat chairman underlined certain conditions for the talks — tripartite talks involving India, Pakistan and the Hurriyat, non-participation of the Hurriyat in the elections and meaningful talks. "We thought we should not shy away from talking and the Hurriyat would strive for the betterment of India and Pakistan. Although we have not received any formal invitation, we are ready to talk. We are not initiating anything but are only responding to the move by Jethmalani". On participation in the elections, he said "it is a closed chapter".

On the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani's decision authorising Mr. Jethmalani to hold talks

with separatists, the Hurriyat chief said that at the moment they would focus on what the Kashmir Committee chief would talk about and not who authorised him.

The Hurriyat's response to the talks offer comes in the wake of the Shabir Shah-led Democratic Freedom Party's decision to enter into negotiations with Mr. Jethmalani. The party, however, demanded the release of senior separatists like Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Yasin Malik and Mushtaq-ul-Islam. The DFP has maintained that dialogue should precede participation in elections.

## 'Kashmir panel should visit Pak.'

PTI reports:

Welcoming Mr. Advani's offer for unconditional talks with the separatists, Mr. Shah said the Kashmir Committee members should visit Pakistan to pave the way for resolving the vexed Kashmir issue. "We welcome the unconditional talks offer by New Delhi and urge the Government to take steps for ensuring meaningfulness of these initiatives. The Kashmir Committee should visit Pakistan and the DFP representatives should also be allowed to visit Pakistan to pave the way for resolving the Kashmir issue," Mr. Shah said in a statement after a day-long meeting of the executive body of the party.

Urging the Centre not to ignore Pakistan while making efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue, the statement said the participation of Islamabad was pivotal to any purposeful and durable talks or negotiations.

# After Hurriyat, Shabir says no to elections

9.8.13 ✓  
12/8  
Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Aug. 11. — After the All-Party Hurriyat Conference announced yesterday that it would stay away from the Assembly polls, Mr Shabir Shah's Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party today said it would not contest the elections.

Addressing journalists at Srinagar after the end of the party's plenary session, JKDFP spokesman Syed Saleem Geelani said his party would not take part in the polls because the democratic exercise should be aimed at solving the Kashmir issue and not at running the administration.

The JKDFP is, however, willing for talks with the Kashmir Committee, authorised by Mr LK Advani to hold talks with Kashmiri separatists, Mr Geelani said. He said all detained separatists, including Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Yasin Malik, should be released before talks began.

New Delhi had hoped that the JKDFP would contest the polls and the PMO had opened communication channels to persuade party leaders.

The spokesman said the party has passed four resolutions reiterating that the Kashmir issue can be solved only by meaningful negotiations.

"We welcome the formation of the Kashmir Committee and have received an invitation from Mr Ram Jethmalani for talks."

"We are willing to talk to Mr Jethmalani ... But before talks there is a need for a conducive atmosphere which can be created by setting free all detainees."

The spokesman said the party had unanimously resolved that Kashmiri Pandits living in exile should be brought back to the Valley. The JKDFP has also passed a resolution urging all separatist leaders and parties to unite and jointly resolve the Kashmir issue.

**Warning against joining Army:** The Lashkar-e-Taiyaba has warned Kashmiris against joining the Army and ordered those who have joined to return or face severe action.

In a recent statement, a Lashkar spokesman urged militants groups in the state to unite and fight the "enemy, especially the special operations group".

The spokesman said a meeting of the organisation was held recently in which the chief commander, Abu Umer, and commanders, Abrar, Usman and Abdullah, took part.

**Pandits frown on J&K elections,**  
page 6

12 AUG 2013

## Centre opposes pre-1953 status for J&K

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 11.** The Centre has rejected outright the National Conference Government's proposal for discussion on reverting back to the pre-1953 status of Jammu and Kashmir, but expressed willingness to consider the requirement for additional powers to fight terrorism and to provide better governance.

"The emphasis of the State is that dilution of its powers, which has taken place since 1954, must be reviewed," Home Ministry sources said on the ongoing talks between the Centre's interlocutor, Arun Jaitley, and the ruling National Conference (NC) representative, G.M. Shah.

The pre-1953 status envisaged exclusion of the jurisdiction of the Election Commission, the Supreme Court and the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) over the State. It also termed the Governor as 'Sadr-e-Riyasat' and the Chief Minister as Prime Minister.

The Centre's unequivocal message during the two-rounds of talks with the NC representative was that "do not go into history".

"The Centre says tell us where in governance of the State do you feel shortage of power. We are willing to look into these areas," the sources said. The State

was still in the process of pointing out the specific nature of powers it required in addition to those available now.

The sources said the State wanted to use the "occasion to send a signal to the Kashmiri people that we are still negotiating on this". They did not elaborate whether "this" meant the pre-1953 status or the devolution of powers.

During the three-hour long second-round meeting between Mr. Jaitley and Mr. Shah on Friday, the latter explained the legal, political and constitutional aspects of the State Government's demand for greater autonomy, a resolution on which

was passed by the Assembly in July 2000. Terming the approach of the Centre's interlocutor as "positive", Mr. Shah said, "I have explained to him the need for the autonomy to the State as this will definitely strengthen the Centre-State relations besides meeting the aspirations of the people." The third round of talks would be held in the last week of August at Srinagar.

Mr. Shah said both sides had stressed the need for adopting a positive approach in the talks so that these could lead to an amicable resolution of the issue that had been on back-burner for the last two years. — PTI

THE HINDU

11 AUG 2002



# A vision for Kashmir

By Amitabh Mattoo

*What is needed is for the Prime Minister himself, on Independence Day, a month before the first phase of polling, to outline a non-partisan national vision for Jammu and Kashmir.*

119-10  
12/8

**I**N A little over a month from now, the first phase of polling will begin in Jammu and Kashmir. As of now, no political party in the State, other than the ruling National Conference, seems to be enthused by the elections. If this trend prevails, there is serious danger of a low voter turnout, and this would, whether we like it or not, erode the credibility of the polls. However, even at this late stage, it may be possible to create the conditions under which all those who do not participate in the electoral process will find themselves isolated from the bulk of the people in Kashmir.

But this requires the immediate articulation of a clear vision for Jammu and Kashmir by the top political leadership of this country. And the obvious choice is the Prime Minister on August 15, from the ramparts of the Red Fort.

The coming elections to the Assembly have, for better or for worse, acquired a special importance. The international community, especially but not only the United States, believes that elections could be a decisive step towards restoring peace in Jammu and Kashmir. Reports indicate that officials from both the U.S. and the European Union countries have been urging separatists to demonstrate their strength by participating in the elections. New Delhi has also signalled that it will not resume its dialogue with Islamabad until elections in Jammu and Kashmir are held in an atmosphere free of violence, suggesting thereby that an escalation of violence in the run-up to the elections would demonstrate bad faith on the part of Pakistan.

Moreover, there is some evidence that in the Kashmir Valley too, especially in the rural areas, there was, until a few weeks ago, a groundswell in favour of elections. And while it is almost certain that there will be no officially mandated international observers, there is no doubt that this is one election that

will invite unprecedented media scrutiny. As one foreign journalist pointed out recently: "The Assembly election will invite at least as much attention as the Agra Summit last year."

And yet, the reality today is that the announcement of the polling schedule by the Election Commission has not generated much enthusiasm among the Opposition parties in the State.

Indeed, even many of the pro-India political parties have expressed strong reservations about the elections, while most of the separatists have already declared that they will not participate in the polls. Many Opposition leaders had hoped that a period of Governor's Rule would ensure that the electoral contest was not one-sided, but becomes a so-called "level playing field".

In addition, many moderate separatist leaders had been asserting that a dialogue, and the announcement of a few confidence-building measures by New Delhi before the announcement of the polls would make it easier for them to enter the electoral fray without losing credibility with the people. Conversely, if the Opposition parties, including the separatists, do not take part in the elections, the NC is likely to sweep the elections without much of a contest.

However, it is likely that, under these circumstances, the polling percentage will be very low and threaten to reduce the elections to a farce. Even the NC, under the untainted leadership of Omar Abdullah, is unlikely to be satisfied with such a result.

Is there a way out? Clearly, the polls cannot now be postponed and

the decision on whether or not to have Governor's Rule during the electoral campaign is one that only the NC leadership can take. But it should be still possible, with political decisiveness and imagination, to stimulate public opinion in Jammu and Kashmir in favour of participation.

If this happens, all those who decide to stay away from the polls will risk political marginalisation and

lose the chance of shaping the future of the State. But this cannot possibly be achieved by Track II dialogues, quasi-official committees or special envoys. What is needed is for the Prime Minister himself, on Independence Day, a month before the first phase of polling, to outline a non-partisan national vision for Jammu and Kashmir.

But in order for such a vision to really connect with the people of the State, it must be embedded in what are the six essential "Ds" of a thoughtful Kashmir policy: Democracy, Dialogue, Devolution, Development, De-internment and Disarmament. These need some elaboration.

First, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, needs to reiterate that the Centre is committed to sustaining real democracy in Jammu and Kashmir, in letter and spirit. And not only will the coming elections be the first step towards that goal, with the world media being able to attest to their fairness, but this will be followed by steps to ensure that democracy is truly institutionalised up to the grassroots level. Second, Mr. Vajpayee needs to clearly indicate that the Centre will undertake a dialogue with elected representatives within the

framework of *insaniyat* and that this dialogue will be unconditional and seek to address the cumulative grievances of the people of the State. Third, the Prime Minister must promise that the demand for devolution of powers of the State will be taken up with a seriousness that goes beyond the mere appointment of special envoys.

He must also signal that there is a growing realisation within the country that separatist tendencies grow when people feel disconnected from the structures of power; devolution, in turn, ensures greater participation and accountability and a greater stake in political normalcy and economic stability.

Fourth, the Prime Minister must offer the people of Jammu and Kashmir a new phase of development and reconstruction. In particular, he must address the approximately 200,000 unemployed educated young men and women of the State and he must pledge to create a host of new opportunities for them, including ensuring that the private and the public sector undertake special recruitment drives in the State. Fifth, Mr. Vajpayee should signal that all those from the State interned in jails, without trial for many years, will be released within days if they are not being held for any serious criminal offence. Finally, he must articulate a vision of a weapons-free Jammu and Kashmir if Pakistan stops sponsoring violence.

The Prime Minister must promise to ensure that the State returns to what it was: a non-violent society where even the sight of a gun would terrify the most hardened. Much of what is stated above is drawn from the statements Mr. Vajpayee has made on Kashmir over the past two years. But the various strands need to be brought together in a composite policy.

Indeed, if the Prime Minister does outline such a vision, it could electrify Jammu and Kashmir, and the results would be evident even beyond the coming elections.

## Cong. demands Governor's rule in J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 6.** The Congress today demanded the imposition of Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir for free and fair election. This demand was communicated to the Government this afternoon by a Congress delegation which met the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and senior members of the Cabinet.

Briefing mediapersons after the meeting, the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, said: "Our purpose in seeing the Prime Minister was to impress upon him the fact that in the interest of free and fair elections, for which the Government is committed to, it is essential to have Governor's rule in J&K."

The delegation said there was need to hold the elections under a credible administration so that people of the State felt confident enough to participate in the electoral process.

The Prime Minister is said to have told the delegation of the Government's commitment to holding a free and fair election. Official sources said, he also informed it that all assistance was being given to the Election Commission to conduct the polls.

About Governor's rule in J&K in anticipation of the elections, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, told reporters after the meeting that it was for the State Government to take a decision. Besides Mr. Advani, the Union Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, were present at the meeting with the Congress leaders.

# Attack meant to disrupt pilgrimage, polls: Advani

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 6.** Blaming the little-known "Al- Mansuriyan", a militant outfit sponsored by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, for the attack on Amarnath pilgrims near Pahalgam this morning, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, said today that the objective of the "enemy" was to disrupt the Amarnath Yatra and the coming Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The objective of the enemy is two-fold: to disrupt the yatra and the coming elections. But we are determined to see that the yatra continues and the Assembly elections are held on schedule," Mr. Advani told reporters.

Asked if today's militant strike indicated that the level of violence was going to further escalate as polls drew near, he said: "This is part of the continuing confrontation between us and the enemy."

The Al-Mansurian was floated after the LeT was banned. A person claiming to be associated with the organisation called up the BBC office in Srinagar and owned responsibility for the attack, Mr. Advani said.

On the reports that the attack was launched by a single "fedayeen" militant, Mr. Advani said there were three or four different versions which gave rise to suspicion that the militant was not alone. The pattern of heavy firing, explosion of grenades and the intensity of the attack indicated that more militants were involved in the strike but the security forces were able to kill one.

The Deputy Prime Minister

said he would get a detailed report from the high-level team sent to Pahalgam to assess the situation. The team comprised the Minister of State for Defence, Chaman Lal Gupta, and the Special Secretary in the Home Ministry, Ashok Bhandari.

Mr. Advani said that security was being further tightened to ensure the safety of the pilgrims and added that fresh batches of pilgrims were leaving for the holy cave. "In fact, some of the yatri who returned today to the base camp had expressed satisfaction with the security arrangements. But we are going to further strengthen the measures," he said.

Earlier, Mr. Advani told a meeting of the BJP parliamentary party that the Government would review and strengthen the security arrangements for the yatra. The meeting expressed shock and dismay over the militant strike.

The Congress president, So-

nia Gandhi, condemned the killings of innocent pilgrims and asked the Government to be more vigilant. "The Congress president has expressed her deep shock and anguish over the barbaric and inhuman incident. She has condemned this cowardly act in strongest words," the party spokesman, Satyabrata Chaturvedi, told reporters here.

In a related development, the Foreign Office spokesperson said while pledges had been made to fight terrorism, the promises were still to be kept. She maintained that the network of terrorism was active despite the efforts of the international community. There should be no let-up in the efforts to put pressure on Pakistan to end its support to terrorism. No cause, she stressed, could be used as an alibi to support acts of terrorism. India, she added, would deal resolutely with those who threatened its security.

## Pak. denies charge

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

**ISLAMABAD, AUG. 6.** Pakistan has rejected "with contempt" the reported allegation by India that it was behind the terrorist attack on the Amarnath pilgrims at the base camp today.

A statement by the Pakistan Foreign Office said, "the Government condemns the terrorist attack on Hindu pilgrims in the Indian occupied Kashmir which led to many deaths and a large number of injured. We also reject with contempt the remarks made by I.D. Swami, Minister of State for Home, implicating Pakistan in the attack." The Press Secretary to the Pakistan President, Rashid Quereshi, said the charge was totally baseless and was meant to defame Pakistan. "In the past, when such charges were levelled against us we have asked for evidence and New Delhi has never given any".

## Hurriyat's yes for talks, no to elections

98  
234

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 5.** The Hurriyat Conference today said it had "no problems" in holding talks with the Kashmir Committee headed by the former Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, even as it ruled out participation in the coming Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir.

"My good wishes are with them and I have no problems in holding talks with them as they are renowned intellectuals of the country and the initiative is purely in their individual capacity and the Government has nothing to do with it," the Hurriyat Conference chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, told PTI here.

The Kashmir Committee was formed yesterday with Mr. Jethmalani as its chairman and the Supreme Court advocate, Ashok Bhan, as its convenor.

The other members of the committee are the former Law Minister, Shanti Bushan, the *Times of India* Editor, Dileep Padgaonkar, the freelance journalist, Jawid Laiq, the retired IFS officer, V.K. Grover, the eminent lawyer, Fali Nariman, and

the *Asian Age* Editor, M.J. Akbar.

However, Mr. Nariman and Mr. Akbar could not attend the committee's meeting yesterday.

While Mr. Jethmalani told reporters yesterday that the Hurriyat had said it did not have enough time for arranging the logistics, Mr. Bhat rejected any proposal to take part in the polls, saying "this is an irrelevant exercise. We have made it clear that we will not participate in the polls and the issue no longer exists for us."

The Hurriyat chairman said he was aware of the formation of the committee and added, "we will co-operate with them in finding an everlasting solution to the problem."

"I think sensible people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir should join together and move together for resolving the issue which has been eating into the vitals of both the countries," Bhat said.

He said both the countries should realise that they had to shun the beaten tracks of the past and work for a better tomorrow by engaging in a fruitful dialogue.

10 AUG 2002

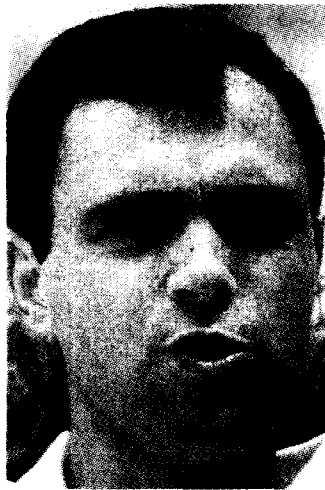
# Not for Governor's rule: Omar

By Shujaat Bukhari

**SRINAGAR, AUG. 3.** The Minister of State for External Affairs and National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, has no objection even if all the polling staff are brought from outside but is not ready to accept Governor's rule in Jammu and Kashmir.

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, Mr Abdullah, in fact, said that he was disappointed that the separatists were not taking part in the coming elections.

He said the elections had assumed importance because the international community had accepted India's stand on Kashmir and even agreed that the Shimla agreement could be the basis for any dialogue between India and Pakistan. For the resumption of dialogue with Pakistan, a reduction in violence



was absolutely necessary, he said.

Mr. Abdullah said his party was open to any offer for a tie-up in the elections.

**Details on Page 9**

4 AUG 2002

# Jethmalani panel to hold talks on Kashmir

By Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 3.** In yet another attempt to broaden the peace process and electoral exercise in Jammu and Kashmir, the Centre is believed to have blessed the formation of a "Kashmir Committee" which will start a dialogue with the separatist groups in the Valley. The former Union Law Minister, Ram Jethmalani, will be the chairman of this committee.

Besides Mr. Jethmalani, the other members in the committee are Shanti Bhushan and Fali Nariman, both among the most respected Supreme Court lawyers; Dilip Padgoankar and M. J. Akbar, media personalities; Virender Grover, a former Indian Foreign Service officer, and Ashok Bhan, who is known to have excellent rapport with a number of separatist leaders. Mr. Bhan will be the convener of the committee. The first meeting of the Kashmir Committee is scheduled for tomorrow.

The Jethmalani Committee would supplement the process being initiated by another former Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, who has been named the Centre's representative on the "devolution of powers" dialogue with the Jammu and Kashmir Government. Recently, Mr. Jethmalani had been to Srinagar and had engaged various civic groups in a dialogue; the tone and tenor of his speech during the Rajya Sabha debate last week on Jammu and Kashmir was widely appreciated in the Kashmir Valley.

What adds bite to the Jethmalani Committee is that the panel is believed to have the blessings of both the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Lal Kishan Advani, who, since his elevation as Deputy Prime Minister, is known to have dropped his opposition to a dialogue with the separatist groups. The Committee is also believed to have the "blessings" of Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat, chairman of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, and Shabir Shah, most prominent "separatist" voice outside the

Hurriyat. Apart from opening a dialogue with the separatist groups, the Committee would strive for "democratic decency," meaning broadening of the political space, ending cross-border infiltration and a "genuine electoral exercise." This "track-II" initiative has been in the making for some time, and was supposed to have been concretised at least a month ago; however, the differing perceptions between the PMO and the Home Ministry held up its formal launch.

There is a sense of impatience among the "track-II" people that an inflexible election timetable for the State Assembly has left them little time for achieving any breakthrough. In fact, this frustration was reflected in a statement Mr. Jethmalani issued today from Mumbai.

He warned the Government against "holding elections without securing assurance of participation by the elements, which in the past have boycotted them. This will be totally counter-productive."

In a gesture that should please the Hurriyat, Mr. Jethmalani took the Chief Election Commissioner, J. M. Lyngdoh, to task for rejecting outright any role for international observers in the Kashmir elections. "Article 324 of the Constitution does not enable the Election Commission to make comments on international affairs and certainly does not authorise the making of abrasive and undiplomatic statements of the kind made by him." Mr. Jethmalani also used words which should be music to the ears of the Hurriyat leaders: "We have to be grateful to the Americans, Western powers and other friendly countries who are helping to solve the Kashmir problem. Mr. Lyngdoh must mind his own business."

More interestingly, Mr. Jethmalani went out of his way to praise Mr. Advani "for his statesmanlike and refreshing speech in the Rajya Sabha," and interpreted his reply to the debate as indicating that "he was making a public pledge of the holding of a sincere dialogue" (with the separatist groups).

HURRIYAT REJECTS ELECTIONS AS A SOLUTION

# J&K goes to polls in four phases

25/8  
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 2. — The Election Commission today announced the dates for elections in Jammu and Kashmir. The 87-member Assembly will go to polls, beginning 16 September, in four phases. The last phase will be on 8 October. Counting will begin on 10 October and results announced by 12 October. The model code of conduct comes into force today.

At a press conference, Chief Election Commissioner Mr JM Lyngdoh said the elections will be "good and credible". He said the EC was taking the polls more seriously than any in the recent past.

The election dates have been fixed for 16 and 24 September and 1 and 8 October. Notifications for these days' polls will be issued on 22 and 31 August and on 6 and 13 September. Nomination deadlines, in the same order, are 29 August and 7, 13 and 20 September. Scrutiny of nominations will on 31 August.

About 8,000 EVMs will be kept in readiness for the polls. There will be around 7,000 polling booths. The electorate is 56 lakh. On elections being held under Governor's rule, Mr Lyngdoh said Governor's rule is good only when the Governor is good.

But separatist groups rejected the polls saying it can't solve the Kashmir problem. In Jammu, the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference convened a meeting of its special executive committee. Hurriyat chairman Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat said the polls were no answer to Kashmir's problems.

On the issue of "foreign observers", the CEC said he had objections to the term itself if it meant monitoring in any official institutional capacity. The Commission's position put at rest the questions

raised by US secretary of state General Colin Powell on poll monitors. He, in fact, was quite severe in his rejection.

"We are the most respectable Election Commission in the world," he said, adding, "We have more authority than any other Election Commission in any other country. ... No other commission is superior to this. ... In this day and age, there is no question of a White Man coming to observe what the Native is doing. The White Man does not determine what the Coloured Man does and whether he is doing it right or wrong."

He said no distinction will be made between Indian and foreign journalists in terms of access to polling booths. Foreign diplomats can visit in their individual capacity. The CEC said "one or two" persons from the Election Commissions of UK, Australia and Canada "could come in their individual capacity, but not as observers".

Voters' slips will act as additional proof of identity during the elections. The slips will be issued over the next 10 days and have been generated with a household as a base unit. Voters will have to produce photo ID-cards or voters' slips prescribed by the EC.

The EC said that a "special revision" of electoral rolls had to be carried from April to May this year as many "dead voters" names appeared in the list.

In Patna, Mr George Fernandes said India will not tolerate any outside interference in the J&K election process. The defence minister said India was not averse to the embassies and foreign media doing their own exercises on evaluating the situation, "but we will never allow our sovereignty to be compromised at any cost", adds SNS.

J&K ELECTIONS	
Phase I	16 September
No. of seats	26
Districts	Kupwara, Baramulla, Leh, Kargil, Rajouri, Poonch
Phase II	24 September
No. of seats	28
Districts	Srinagar, Badgam, Jammu
Phase III	1 October
No. of seats	27
Districts	Pulwama, Anantnag, Kathua, Udhampur
Phase IV	8 October
No. of seats	6
Districts	Doda

For migrants from the Valley, special polling stations will be set up at six places in Jammu (Gandhinagar, Janipur, Muthi, Chandrabhaga (Canal Road), Agricultural Complex (Gole Puli, Talab Tilo) and Nagrota), in Delhi (Tis Hazari courts and office of the resident commissioner, Jammu and Kashmir) and at a migrant camp in Udhampur. Counting of votes in all seats will begin on 10 October. The election process will be completed on 12 October

5 AUG 2002

# Advani slams door on observers in J&K

## 'RSS proposal dangerous'

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 1. — Mr LK Advani today ruled out foreign observers monitoring the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly polls. He told the Rajya Sabha that the state was an integral part of India and the country didn't "need a certificate from outsiders". He also rejected the RSS proposal that J&K be divided into three states and the National Conference's demand for pre-1953 status.

The Deputy Prime Minister, however, said foreign diplomats posted here, India-based NGOs and individuals could visit the state during the elections. He had a telephonic talk with the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister before he came to Parliament to reply to a short-duration discussion on the situation in the state.

He told Dr Farooq Abdullah that all members of the House want the polls to be held in free and fair manner. Dr Abdullah said that except foreign observers, all were welcome to see the elections.

Mr Advani told the House that the Kashmir issue was on the international agenda to the extent that Pakistan, after having made proxy war against India part of its policy, was indulging in cross-border terrorism and was bent on creating disturbances in the state. No foreign power, including the USA, had a role to play in resolving the problem.



**SOLDIERS OF PEACE:** Buddhist monks from Japan cross into Pakistan from India at the Wagah checkpoint on Thursday. They will start their peace march from Taxila, 35 km west of Islamabad, on 6 August and terminate their journey at Sanchi in October. — AFP

"Foreign countries have no role to play. It's our internal problem. If there's an international dimension to the problem, it's cross-border terrorism being unleashed by Pakistan."

He said the USA now understood India's position better than ever before, but perhaps remnants of the Cold War era made it slightly more inclined towards Pakistan.

Noting that infiltration and cross-border terrorism were continuing unabated, Mr Advani said: "Pakistan has failed to reconcile with India as a secular state, having the largest Mus-

lim population in the world. It rancours in Pakistan's psyche and they can't swallow the situation."

As for the RSS proposal, he said it was fraught with dangerous consequences and was rejected by the government immediately. On the NC's demand for pre-1953 status, he said the autonomy paper made no reference to what the party wanted, but simply talked about the the state's status immediately after Independence. The Centre is, however, willing to discuss devolution of power to Jammu and Kashmir.

Mr Advani stressed the need to devolve power to the states because the administration had become centralised over the years.

While Sarkaria Commission and Inter-state Council are looking into this aspect, the Centre has taken a special initiative for Jammu and Kashmir by appointing former Union law minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, as interlocutor.

The dialogue, he said, would be "sincere and authentic" and the problem is likely to be resolved within the constitutional framework.

## Kashmir a global issue: Musharraf

Press Trust of India

COLOMBO, Aug. 1. — Gen. Pervez Musharraf today accused India of "hypocrisy" in saying that Kashmir was not an international issue, when world powers were already trying to resolve it.

"There is a hypocrisy in this attitude. They just juggle around with the semantics of words like mediator, facilitator and interlocutor, but the reality... is Kashmir has been internationalised," Gen. Musharraf told journalists.

"Whatever word they use to refer to the role played by world powers — facilitator or interlocutor, the fact is Kashmir is an international issue and a "dangerous flashpoint" in the region."

His remarks came when asked about India's rejection of US secretary of state Mr Colin Powell's observation that Kashmir was on the international agenda. "What are Colin Powell or (Britain's foreign secretary) Jack Straw doing and what are world powers doing, except talking of Kashmir?", he asked.

In an opening statement before taking questions, he said relations between Pakistan and India were at their "lowest", and reiterated that while Pakistan

## Capt killed in fidayeen attack

JAMMU, Aug. 1. — An Army captain and four *fidayeen* of Lashkar-e-Taiyaba were killed when the militants exploded grenades and fired while storming into the DC Colony at Rajouri late last night.

Along the LoC, Pakistani troops fired heavy artillery and mortar shells in Machil, Keran and Karnah sectors of Kupwara last night, killing one and injuring four.

The Army and special operations group of the state police cordoned the area. In the encounter Captain Reddy was killed. Lt Col Bhanwar Rathore, PRO, 16 Corps, said. The encounter started around 7.30 p.m. yesterday and continued till today. — SNS

did not want war and would not initiate one, it would not compromise on its "honour and dignity" in the name of peace.

"Avoidance of war will not be at the cost of our honour and dignity. We hope good sense will prevail and de-escalation takes place," he said.

110-10  
2/8

# Political space in J&K

By V.R. Raghavan

*What is required are time and circumstances which would allow the political opposition in Jammu and Kashmir to make an important transition.*

THE U.S. Secretary of State, Colin Powell's visit to India and Pakistan has led to more developments than meet the eye at first sight. He has also thrown up straws in the wind which indicate the directions of future U.S. attitudes on the Jammu and Kashmir issue. His visit was built on the need to ensure that Indian and Pakistani leaders stay the course regarding the promises they made to keep peace and not go to war. There were enough insights from Mr. Powell on how the U.S. would respond in future to heightened tensions between the two states. He has also done some skilful work in creating new linkages for Pakistan on Jammu and Kashmir. This puts the onus on New Delhi to speed up its policy plans for the State in the coming months.

Mr. Powell has squarely placed the coming elections as the central condition to be met if a dialogue is to begin between Islamabad and New Delhi. His observation that such a dialogue can only commence after the Assembly election is clearly intended to make the electoral process the essential milestone to be crossed by both India and Pakistan. Mr. Powell's statement to journalists travelling with him that efforts to resolve the conflict between the two countries were on a "plateau" is meaningful. It should be interpreted as reflecting a U.S. belief, that both India and Pakistan would be expected to make the special effort required. It would be imprudent therefore for either to view itself as being backed by the U.S.

The linkage between the successful completion of the Kashmir elections and the commencement of an India-Pakistan dialogue places a special responsibility on Pervez Musharraf. He must ensure that the jihadis do not sabotage the elections. If the militant groups initiate, or support, or claim responsibility for terrorist acts in the State, Gen. Musharraf

would find his demand for a dialogue discredited. This also makes redundant the claim by the Pakistani President that elections in Jammu and Kashmir are being imposed by New Delhi on an unwilling populace. The meaning of the carefully crafted 'Powellism' that infiltration — whether marginally reduced or otherwise — is continuing from Pakistan, makes the relationship with the coming elections even more compelling. New Delhi would no doubt be pleased at this linkage having been established. Any celebration on this slight tilting of scales in its favour would, however, be premature.

India has been cleverly linked to another set of conditionalities by the Powell visit. That India should work on fair and free elections — a phrase taken from the oft-repeated Indian lexicon — and allow independent observers to be present during the exercise is meant to serve two purposes. It places a value judgment on the extent of fairness and transparency of the electoral process anticipated. It also makes stronger the claims of candidates and parties in the State, for a pre-election dispensation that will ensure such conditions. There is a groundswell of doubt and anxiety in the State on free and fair elections. It is based on doubts about the ability or willingness of the National Conference Government to provide political space to individuals and groups who wish to contest against the ruling party. Those willing to stand up and be counted in the election fray have a persuasive argument. It is based on their having renounced violence after years of armed struggle. It is based on their not having had the time and oppor-

tunity to work the political waters for a very long time. It is reinforced by the alleged use by the NC of money, muscle and other means to keep them politically marginalised. The need for political space for a fair electoral opportunity is therefore likely to be a catch phrase in the coming months.

What is required are time and circumstances which would allow the political opposition in Jammu and Kashmir to make an important transition. It is a challenging transition from being a marginalised entity to a meaningful political alternative. That is what the State's populace desires and is the crux of the "fair and free" electoral process. This is a greater requirement than swamping the area with security forces to keep order, and protect voters and seekers of votes. This widespread desire translates into demands for Governor's Rule, for elimination of money and muscle power, and for guarantees of safety from security forces' excesses.

Some may argue that such demands are no more than a cover for seeking conditions that will obtain assured electoral victory for the Opposition. This belief fails to take into account the odds stacked against those who have chosen ballots over bullets. A fair opportunity to contest, and to win or lose credibly, is the minimum that should be expected from New Delhi. Creating the necessary political space in the State will be the essential precondition for redressing the alienation of the population. It is useful to remember that closing up the political space had led to the problem in the first place. When political space was fenced off it had opened up the space for a mil-

itary struggle.

An important insight into the future U.S. policy on India and Pakistan is provided by the Powell visit. Going by his public statements in Islamabad, the Secretary of State did not mince words commenting on the need for Pakistan to do more on terrorism. Mr. Powell, however, also made it clear in private conversations that Gen. Musharraf seemed to have gone a very long distance in the war against terrorism whether in or outside India. He is reported have said that Gen. Musharraf was most positive and forceful in his commitment to end all infiltration. Mr. Powell also stated that the U.S. is in for the long haul in the region including Afghanistan. This clearly lays out the U.S. need for Pakistan and its leader. There are therefore limits to the pressure Gen. Musharraf can be brought under, by India's military mobilisation or ostracism. The building up of a crisis of the kind witnessed in May-June this year is not going to be countenanced with equanimity by the U.S. or other powers. Certainly, the use or misuse of a crisis with nuclear undertones will no longer obtain gains for either India or Pakistan.

Mr. Powell's visit has placed a special responsibility on Pakistan for keeping the militants and terrorists out of the electoral exercise in Jammu and Kashmir. New Delhi is also under obligation to make the elections a viable medium for allowing the people to make their voice heard through free elections. The two Governments have, however, placed their military forces on war alert, whose defining rationale is the election in Jammu and Kashmir. The elections offer a post-September 11 opportunity of a momentous kind, after those of Lahore and Agra had been aborted. It remains to be seen how Islamabad and New Delhi will seize the new moment and opportunity for peace.

2 AUG 2002

INDU