

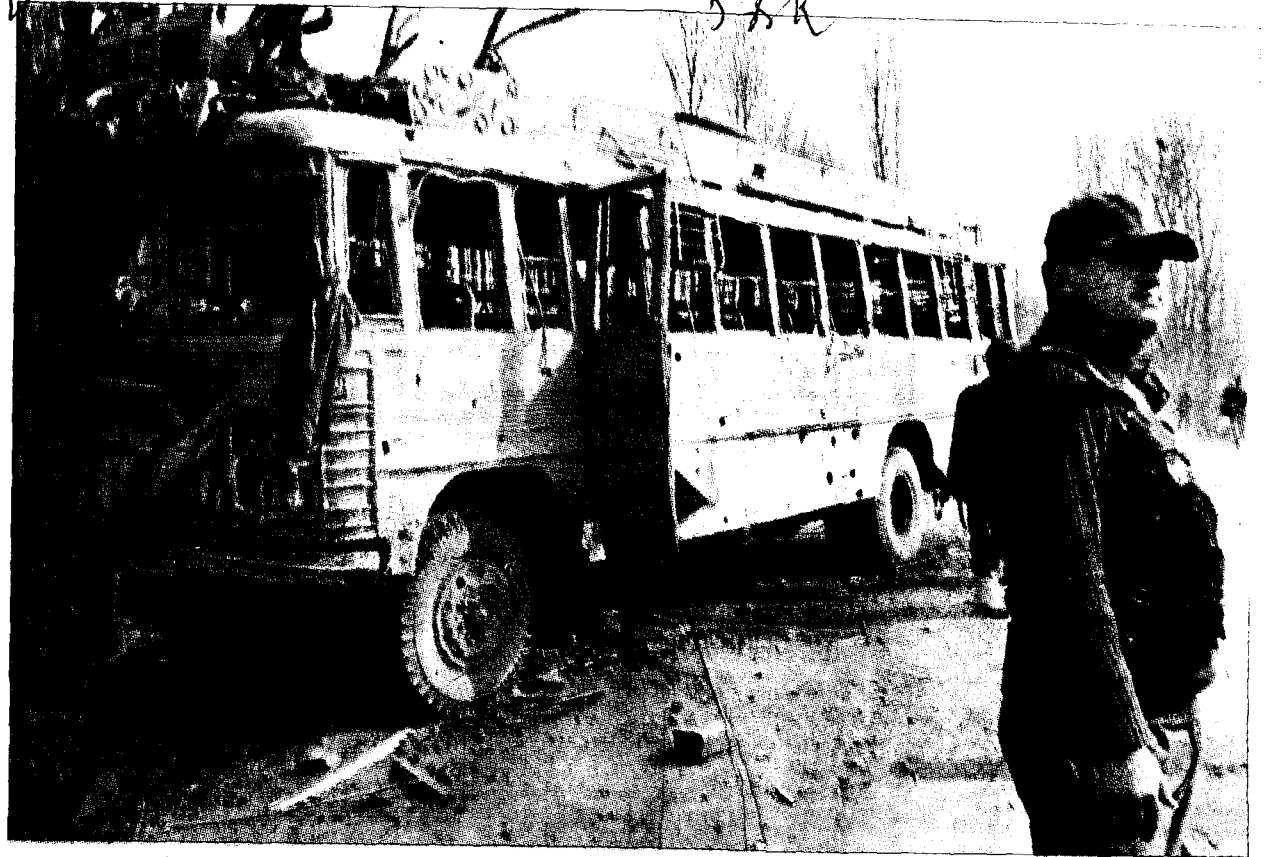
Mine blast ahead of summit

SNS & PTI

JAMMU, Dec. 30. — At least 55 soldiers and three civilians were injured on the Srinagar-Baramullah National Highway after militants triggered a powerful landmine blast near Lawaipora today, less than a week before the scheduled Saarc summit in Islamabad.

Reports said the powerful blast was triggered at around 10.40 a.m. when an Army convoy was passing through Lawaipora. The improvised explosive device was concealed in a shop under construction. Both the shop and a bus (JKB-6011) that was part of the Army convoy were extensively damaged. Most of the soldiers in the bus received splinter injuries. The three civilians wounded in the attack included a woman. Two cabs, a load carrier and a milk supply vehicle were also damaged in the explosion. Most of the injured jawans were treated at Badami Bagh Base Hospital. The convoy was on its way from Chowkibal in Kupwara.

CNS, a local news agency, said they received a call from a Hizbul Mujahideen spokesman claiming re-



A jawan stands guard beside a bus damaged in the blast at Lawaipora, north of Srinagar, on Tuesday. — AFP

sponsibility for the attack which was supposedly carried out in memory of slain Hizbul commander Saif-ur-Rehman. The Hizbul spokesman reportedly threatened more such strikes against security forces.

Troops cordoned off the area and started house to house searches after the bl-

ast. Some youths were also paraded before informers, but it was not immediately known whether anyone was arrested. IGP (Kashmir) Mr K Rajindra Kumar said there were no deaths. The police were probing the attack, he said, but he was clueless about the regiment that was attacked.

By carrying out the blast on the outskirts of Srinagar, the militants have sent out a strong signal that they are in no mood for a ceasefire. Reports had earlier indicated that extremists could go in for a two-month ceasefire.

Hizbul had announced a unilateral ceasefire in 2000.

In another incident at Shopian in south Kashmir, troops cordoned off Kharwara village after they received information about presence of militants in the area.

The militants were also engaged in an encounter, but eventually they managed to flee.

55 soldiers hurt in Srinagar blast

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

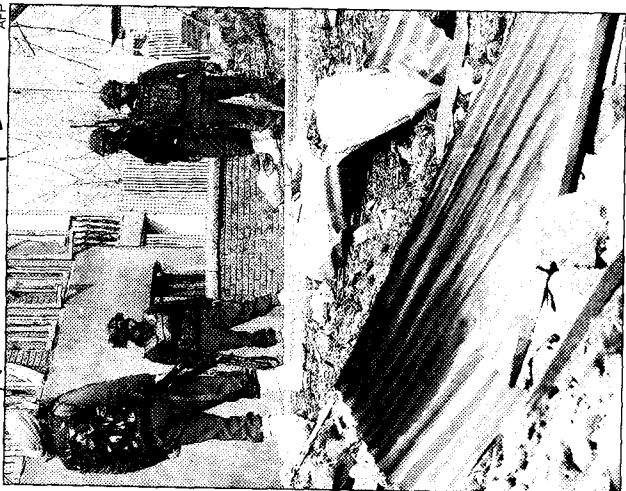
Srinagar: Fifty-five army personnel and three civilians were injured when Hizbul Mujahideen militants triggered an improvised explosive device (IED) at Lawaypora market, on the outskirts of the city, on Tuesday, a defence spokesman said.

He said the militants exploded an IED which was kept in a shop causing injuries to 55 army personnel who were travelling in a bus. Two vehicles, including the bus carrying troops, were damaged in the blast.

The injured were shifted to Base hospital here, while the civilians were shifted to a local hospital, the spokesman said.

Hizbul Mujahideen, a pro-Pakistan militant organisation, claimed responsibility for the blast, according to a local news agency.

In a sudden increase in violence ahead of the Saarc summit in Islamabad, three terrorists



Army soldiers survey the scene of shop fronts, damaged in an explosion in Lawaypora, some 10 kms north of Srinagar, on Tuesday.



An elderly man is questioned by the police after the explosion.

and an equal number of security personnel were killed in three separate incidents in Jammu region on Tuesday. Three soldiers were injured in another encounter.

According to the police control room in Rajouri, the Army, which was on the trail of a group of terrorists in the mountainous forests of Chingus close to the Line of Control, engaged the militants in a gun battle on Tuesday morning. After more than two hours of fierce fighting, the police said, at least three terrorists and one soldier were killed. The slain terrorists, one of whom is a commander, belonged to the Jaish-e-Mohammad group. The troops are conducting searches in

the area.

On receiving information, the police and the Army began a joint operation to flush out terrorists hiding in the mountainous forests of Hari Budha of Poonch district, nearly 210 km north-west of Jammu, on Tuesday afternoon. The terrorists fired at the advancing troops, killing a constable and injuring three soldiers. The cordon around the terrorists has been strengthened and fighting was on when reports last came in.

In a third encounter in Thuru Khrog of mountainous Udhampur district, one security volunteer was killed while a policeman was injured. The terrorists managed to escape.

People want peace, says Mehbooba

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar: The People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, has said that the people of the state wanted peace. She said she was hopeful the leaders of India and Pakistan would announce the reopening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road when they meet at the SAARC summit.

"The peace process has been initiated because of the people of the state. Their faith in PDP has set the ball rolling. Very soon separated families living across the Line of Control and the international border would frequently meet, instead of having to travel long distances, she said.

Bilateral Ties Continue To Swing Between The Hot And The Cold

Pak backtracks on plebiscite

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 19 DECEMBER

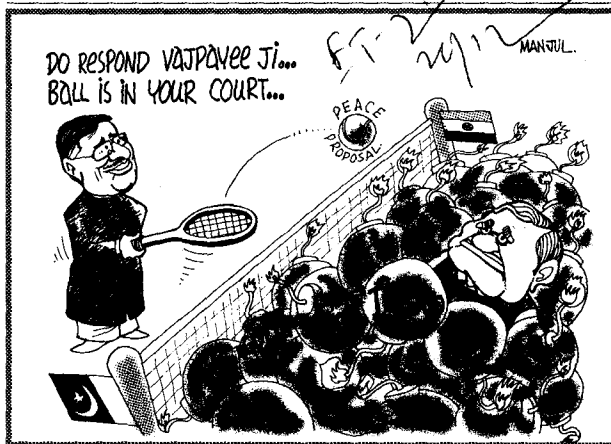
PAKISTAN on Friday went back on President Pervez Musharraf's remarks made on Thursday to claim that it had never dropped the demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir.

President Musharraf, while maintaining that there was a need for flexibility and to move beyond stated positions, had told Reuters on Thursday that Pakistan had left aside the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Kashmir.

Islamabad's backtracking, forced by sharp criticism from political parties as well as hardline groups in Pakistan, came with a clear denial from Pakistani information minister Sheikh Rashid. "He has not dropping the call of plebiscite. He's saying that we can think of certain other things, we have some alternative proposals," Mr Rashid said, according to AFP. He however, declined to outline the alternative proposals contending that Mr Musharraf would raise them with Indian leaders when serious talks are held.

The Pakistan foreign office, which as a matter of routine, reiterates the need for implementation of UN resolutions, put up a brave face by claiming that President Musharraf has been quoted out of context in the interview. Its spokesperson Masood Khan was quoted, according to reports from Islamabad, as having said Mr Musharraf did not state that the resolution of the issue should not be in accordance with UN resolutions. He said Pakistan could neither sideline nor forget the Kashmir issue and would pursue it on every front.

POLITICKLE 3 & K MANJUL



New Delhi, however, refrained from taking any position either on President Musharraf's remarks nor on the subsequent brouhaha that followed, indicating its inclination to watch developments rather than rush to judgement. Prompt responses had come in from several quarters including the US, which had welcomed President Musharraf's proposal.

Analysts here felt that there was a clear element of grandstanding by President Musharraf, induced by a desire to take the centre stage on the eve of the Saarc summit. Some others, however, interpreted it as an indication of the Pakistani leadership moving towards the Shimla agreement. What was, however, interesting was that New Delhi chose to remain silent, unlike other occasions when it would have derived satisfaction from Islamabad's flipflop.

The response in Pakistan, predictably evoked strong reactions ranging from outright indigna-

tion coupled with hostility. Reports indicated that even Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali, who normally reflects the views of the military ruler, had been caught off-guard by the President's comments. Mr Jamali seemed unaware of President Musharraf's interview and insisted on implementation of UN resolutions to find a just and durable solution to the Kashmir issue.

The main Opposition to President Musharraf's comments came from hardline Islamist party Jamat-e-Islami, considered to be patron of Pakistan-based militant groups like Hizbul Mujahideen. Accusing President Musharraf of entering into a bargain deal over Kashmir with India, the Jamat chief, Khazi Hussain Ahmad said the general was pursuing a dangerous policy. Hussain, who is currently leading an agitation for the ouster of President Musharraf, said the Islamist parties would not allow the military ruler reversing Pakistan's Kashmir policy.

India, Pak to resume Samjhauta

New Delhi
19 DECEMBER

INDIA and Pakistan on Friday decided to resume the Samjhauta Express from Attari to Lahore twice a week as also freight services from January 15. The services will be resumed after a gap of two years. This is another step towards improving people-to-people contact and enhancing trade ties between the two countries.

A joint statement issued by the two countries said: "Samjhauta Express and freight services will resume with effect from January 15, 2004 as per the earlier timetable. The fare structure will be announced shortly." The statement was issued at the end of two days' extensive parleys between top railway officials of the two countries. An Indian team of officials will be visiting Pakistan to work out the modalities relating to the fare structure, number and type of coaches. It will also discuss the feasibility of extending the service to Delhi.

The agreement to restore the services after a gap of two years was signed by S.B. Ghosh Dastidar, an additional member (Traffic) of the Railway Board and Muhammad Iqbal Khatri, additional general manager (passenger operations), Pakistan Railways. The fares that existed before the service was suspended would be applicable till the new fare structure was worked out. This was announced by Mr Dastidar and Mr Khatri at a press conference at Rail Bhawan. — PTI

✓ Pak goes 'halfway', awaits response

Pervez drops 19/12 plebiscite stand

DSK

REUTERS AND IMTIAZ GUL

Islamabad, Dec. 18: Pervez Musharraf has offered to drop a 50-year-old demand for a UN-mandated plebiscite over Kashmir and meet India "halfway" in a bid for peace in the subcontinent.

"We are for United Nations Security Council resolutions. However, now we have left that aside," President Musharraf told Reuters in an interview three weeks before the Saarc summit that will be attended by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Musharraf's proposal has opened a new window of opportunity to address one of the world's most dangerous disputes, even if massive hurdles remain on the path to peace.

The Simla Agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Declaration of 1999 implicitly exclude a UN role by speaking of settlements through "bilateral talks". But this is the first time a Pakistani President has openly said that he was willing to forego the demand for a UN referendum.

For more than 50 years, Pakistan has insisted on a plebiscite to allow people in Kashmir to decide between joining India or Pakistan, a position backed by a series of UN Security Council resolutions in the late 1940s. India controls around 45 per cent of Kashmir.

Delhi did not react officially



Musharraf during the interview. (Reuters)

but the cabinet committee on security, which is meeting tomorrow, may discuss the issue. The US welcomed Musharraf's offer, describing it as "constructive".

Pakistani analysts were quick to term Musharraf's initiative "bold" and said it was now India's turn to reciprocate.

If the new proposal gets off the ground, it will also mean that Musharraf has set aside his aversion to the Nawaz Sharif peace formula and is willing to pick up the Lahore thread.

"Musharraf's statement is in fact (a) continuity of what the two countries had agreed in Lahore in 1999 — they should give up the rigid positions on Kashmir," former Pakistan foreign

secretary Niaz A. Naik said.

Masood Mehdi, a Pakistani diplomat, said Vajpayee should now come out with an "imaginative response", which could be in the form of reducing the number of troops in Indian Kashmir.

Former Indian foreign secretary J.N. Dixit said Musharraf's offer marked an "important shift in policy".

Musharraf told Reuters he was prepared to be "bold and flexible" in an attempt to resolve the dispute over Kashmir.

"If we want to resolve this issue, both sides need to talk to each other with flexibility, coming beyond stated positions, meeting halfway somewhere," he said. "We are prepared to rise to the occasion. India has to be flexible also."

Musharraf said Vajpayee should not miss the chance to discuss Kashmir during January's summit, but said he would not be pleading for an audience with the Indian leader.

In Islamabad, Samina Ahmed of the International Crisis Group thinktank said the Pakistani military realised it had to give ground if it was to retain any sympathy abroad. "If they keep on insisting on a plebiscite, it is not going anywhere, and they are also losing ground to India internationally," she said. "In a way, it is a realisation that if they keep on asking for everything they won't get anything." (See Page 6)

THE TELEGRAPH

19 DEC 2004

Separatists held over rights abuse protests

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, December 10

PROTESTS AND arrests rocked the Valley on International Human Rights Day on Wednesday.

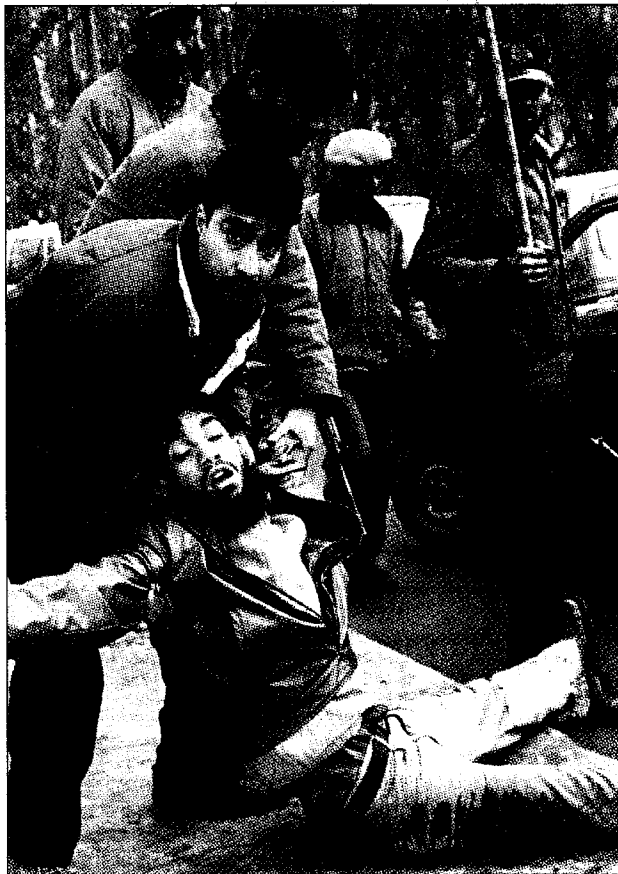
More than 60 protestors were arrested in Srinagar. They included Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani, JKLF chief Yaseen Malik, his deputy Javaid Ahmad Mir, Democratic Liberation Party chief Hashim Quraishi and People's Conference senior leader Ghulam Ahmad Gulzar.

The cops had a tough time at Budshah Chowk, Masumma, Zero Bridge and Raj Bagh, which were the main centres of protests. The demonstrations disrupted normal life in the city and the police lathicharged and lobbed teargas shells to control the situation.

Geelani and his supporters took out a rally near

Zero Bridge to go to the Sonawar headquarters of UN Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) and hand over a memorandum on "human rights violations" by the security forces. Carrying banners and placards, the 200-strong group proceeded just 100 when cops intercepted and beat them up. About 12 activists were wounded.

The Civil Lines area gave the police a tougher time as separatists took to the streets in the morning. There was a clash between the JKLF supporters and the policemen. The police made a lathicharge when JKLF supporters tried to break the cordon. They retaliated with stone-throwing. Front chief Yaseen Malik was arrested. Over 12 activists of Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's Awami Action Committee were also arrested, while some others were injured.



REUTERS

A Hurriyat activist is dragged away by a fellow protester as cops lathicharged in Srinagar on Wednesday.

Mufti faces NC fire in House

Arun Joshi
Jammu, December 10

THE OPENING day of the special session of the J&K Legislative Assembly here on Wednesday saw the National Conference members taking up the human rights violations issue in an aggressive manner.

Vociferous National Conference members staged a walkout following Mufti men's failure to give a convincing reply over the issue. They forced the Speaker to adjourn the House to discuss what it called "increased human rights abuses under the Mufti government".

There were uproarious scenes at the House when furious NC members were up on their feet protesting against the Finance Minister Muzaffar Hussein Beigh's misappropriation of funds worth Rs 192 crore. Beigh, when challenged to substantiate his charges, announced that he would bring all the facts and figured in this session itself before the House. His

Separatist plea to UN

- Separatist organisations in J&K urged the United Nations to force India respect human rights of the people of state
- The government has been trampling human rights of the people by not allowing them to decide their future, the J&K Democratic Party said in its memorandum faxed to UN Secretary General Kofi Anan
- The JKLF demanded that world bodies like Amnesty International, Asia Watch and UN reporters be allowed to visit the state

words were greeted by the treasury benches. Beigh's plea for a joint parliamentary probe, however, was drowned in the hue and cry raised by NC members. Listing 'police excesses', they wondered how the Mufti government could claim that the situa-



PTI

National Conference president Omar Abdullah outside the Assembly in Jammu on Wednesday.

tion had improved.

Challenging the NC's contention, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti recalled what had happened during the time when NC ruled the state. "What did the NC do when human rights were abused during their reign? Why did-

n't your conscience prick you at that time?" the chief minister asked. Chief Minister Mufti Sayeed, however, defended the record of his government saying that the PDP government has taken firm steps to see that human rights are not abused.

HP-10
10/12

An uncertain ceasefire

By Pran Chopra

Both New Delhi and Srinagar will have to keep a keener eye open for whatever Pakistan may lob up across the Line of Control.

THANKS TO the efforts of successive emissaries from New Delhi, some welcome developments have taken place in Kashmir. The least that they signify is, first, a further setback for armed militancy, and second that New Delhi and the political opponents of the State's present level of accession to India have broken the wall of silence which separated them. It is not time yet to order any celebrations. However, some hopeful but quiet introspection in New Delhi and the State will help ensure that misunderstandings will not once again close the openings made after months of patient effort. That means neither side should confuse the other's real meaning with what each may find convenient to say for local consumption.

Genuinely, Kashmiri militants broke away some years ago from those who operate from or are controlled by Pakistan. Soon after came considerable re-thinking among the political opponents of the State's accession to India, and those who had its interests at heart moved away from both kinds of militancy. Then followed Kashmir's first honest election in a couple of decades, honest enough to persuade some Kashmiri militants also that the time had come to give up the gun. The vote went clearly in favour of the political process, against the gun, and against accession to Pakistan or secession from India. Equally clearly the vote was won by those who had no quarrel with the accession to India but wanted a review of its extent and nature. And now those who had stood away from that election have also, and for the first time, responded positively to New Delhi's invitations to talks.

They have added some caveats. For example, the statement by a former chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Abdul Ghani Bhatt, that the conglomerate has a "road map" which it will show to some "foreign embassies" first. He tried to make this position look like a threat. But it makes no difference to the po-

sition that New Delhi has clearly and consistently held, that its talks with the Hurriyat or anyone else in or on Kashmir will be purely on a bilateral basis. Nor does it affect the Indian position that the talks and the outcome will be in the context of the Constitution, though that document itself has always been amenable to such changes as may seem desirable to those who are responsible for implementing the outcome. Difficulties will lie elsewhere than in face saving postures. For example, can the Hurriyat demand less than Farooq Abdullah did in what came to be described, perhaps wrongly, as his "autonomy package"? Can New Delhi concede more to the Hurriyat than it denied to the National Conference? What more will the Hurriyat demand by way of its own "healing touch" for Kashmir than Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed could get for his stick and carrot approach to the militants?

That takes one to a more intricate question. Is the Hurriyat interested in a real settlement or only in unsettling the present arrangement between New Delhi and Srinagar, which has so far left the Hurriyat out in the cold and put a Congress-PDP coalition in power? If the latter be the case, the Hurriyat's purpose might only be to make New Delhi hope that it could get a better deal if it changed horses in Srinagar. For helping it serve that purpose, the Hurriyat could tell the people of the State that they were short-changed by the PDP to help its leader, Mr. Sayeed, occupy the throne.

At the least that would persuade the coalition to buy peace with the Hurriyat by bringing it into the Government as a third party. This would give the Hurriyat a chance to play the monkey between two cats when the time comes for the Congress and the

PDP to face up to their agreement to rotate the Chief Minister's post between them.

While keeping a keen eye on this ball, both New Delhi and Srinagar will have to keep a keener one open for whatever Pakistan may lob up across the Line of Control. It has some useful tricks up its sleeve, and in playing each is assisted by American willingness to let Pakistan bleed India so long as Islamabad helps Washington deal with the Al-Qaeda. If Pakistan keeps working ever harder to push terrorists into India across the LoC, there will be no option for India but to chase them harder in Kashmir, whatever that may do to the Congress-PDP coalition in the light of the PDP's commitment to "a healing touch." It is not difficult to imagine how that may affect any new or existing understandings between Srinagar and New Delhi, and what effect that may have on Indo-U.S. relations. Similar can be the consequences if India trips up on the ceasefire Pakistan has offered on the LoC. A genuine ceasefire would be invaluable for the security, safety and welfare of the people on both sides of the Line, and for the people of the two countries as a whole if this first step leads on to a more durable peace in the State. But that calls for much more, and more transparent coordination between the two countries than is visible yet.

For instance, when such a ceasefire was first proposed by India, Pakistan put such conditions for accepting it that the intention appeared to be to scuttle the whole idea. Has it attached them now to its own offer or has it dropped them? Or have they been negotiated out of the way? Or are they quietly waiting round the corner like a dangerous pitfall hiding in the grass? Aside from that possibility, another and a more

dangerous one stares us more boldly in the face.

The announcement of a ceasefire by the Prime Minister of Pakistan was guardedly, and rightly so, welcomed by India the same day, pending a later and more detailed assessment of Pakistan's intentions. Among those whose opinion must, or should, have mattered a lot is Lt. Gen Hari Prasad, Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Command. This is the largest single Indian Army formation and is posted all along the most sensitive sectors of the Pakistan border, particularly the LoC. As such, it is also the most relevant to any ceasefire arrangement. One assumes that either this assessment showed Pakistan's intentions to be satisfactory or it was concluded that for other reasons it would be more useful to accept the announcement publicly.

But on November 24, Gen. Prasad told the press in Srinagar that Pakistan's camps for training terrorists had been moved closer to the LoC so that they may be more quickly pushed into India. If this is so, the ceasefire cannot last long. Once well-armed terrorists hide on the Indian side of the Line, which is more densely populated, they can only be flushed out in heavy exchange of fire, with serious loss of Kashmiri lives. This will force India to disable the camps as best it may, and deal with the intruders on the wing, whatever that may do to the ceasefire agreement or domestic peace in the Valley. That is the real reason why India insists that intrusions from across the Line must stop if there is to be a cease-fire on the LoC.

Fortunately for India, as it faces these conundrums, the past has already flagged policies which have served India well so far and will continue do so in future if they are followed with greater sincerity and efficiency. It is these policies which have brought Kashmiri separatists and domestic militants as far as they have come, and put intruders from Pakistan and Pakistan itself into a more amenable mood.

Hurriyat seeks dual control over J&K

Arun Joshi
Jammu, November 24

THE ALL Parties Hurriyat Conference's "roadmap" for a solution to Kashmir envisages dual control by India and Pakistan over a reunited Kashmir Valley with parts of PoK.

This will be the highlight of the Hurriyat agenda when it holds talks with Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on the Kashmir issue next month. The talks would be unconditional, as clarified by the Centre.

While the Moulvi Abbas Ansari faction of the Hurriyat is mum over the whole issue, saying it would discuss it with the international community before coming to India and Pakistan, informed sources said that the blueprint has been framed in such a fashion that the pro-dialogue separatists gain credibility in the eyes of the people of the Valley.

As per the roadmap, Hindu-dominated Jammu region and Buddhist-dominated Ladakh have been kept for India, and northern territories and places bordering PoK for Pakistan. The rest of the PoK and Kashmir

Valley would form one unit with the dual control of India and Pakistan.

The Hurriyat feels that both Indian and Pakistani currencies should be acceptable in the areas going to Pakistan.

Sources said the Hurriyat leadership drafted the blueprint after seeking a wide-ranging opinion both from within the Kashmir Valley and its sympathisers abroad. It was also encouraged by the mammoth response at the Jamia Masjid last Friday where former Hurriyat Conference chairman Abdul Ghani Bhat announced that the Hurriyat has its own plans for the Kashmir solution. These, he said, the Hurriyat would unfold to the international community.

On the same day, rebel Hurriyat Conference chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani's public meeting in the north Kashmir town of Baramullah drew a poor response.

Observers interpret this as isolation of the hawks and endorsement of the dialogue that the Hurriyat Conference is scheduled to undertake with the Centre.



PEACE AT LAST? A Kashmiri woman buys artificial flowers in Srinagar on Monday. J&K residents cautiously welcomed Pakistan's offer of a ceasefire along the LoC.

AP

Patience & stamina

Vital for J&K negotiations

SE 6
25/11

Now that the impediments to talks between the Centre and the Hurriyat — at least one section of it — appear to have been overcome, those settling down at the negotiating table would do well to constantly remember how difficult it has been to reach where they have. For that alone will give them the patience and stamina that will be critical to keeping the dialogue in motion. The initial reaction in New Delhi to the Hurriyat's declaration that it would respond to a formal invitation for talks has indicated that the Union Government is neither terribly excited at the prospect nor particularly indifferent — it will take things one day at a time. Which is perhaps the only way to go about the task mainly because there is obvious scepticism in both camps.

A special responsibility devolves upon the Government to keep the prospects of a negotiated settlement alive. Both its ministerial and official representatives must never forget that this is no meeting of equals and hence they will have to play the role of a benevolent big brother. The Hurriyat will be desperate to have something to "show" after each round of talks — if only to maintain some credibility in the state and to counter the machinations of the breakaway faction — and the Government must not deny them that pound of flesh. Even if the hawks within its ranks object. New Delhi's strategy will have to be comprehensive, with goals attainable only in the long run. Loss of a pawn now and then will have to be written into the game plan.

Even if progress is made in the talks with the Hurriyat, the Centre will have to keep the Jammu and Kashmir government fully in the picture and do nothing that will appear to dilute the status and clout of Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. The administrative limitations of the chief minister are compensated by his refusing to project himself as the sole voice of the state — unlike his arrogant predecessor — and New Delhi must use the rapport that he and his daughter have built with the common folk to counter the influence of the Hurriyat and its constituents. The need of the hour is statesmanship, this is Atal Behari Vajpayee's — not LK Advani's — date with destiny. For until a high degree of domestic accord is evident, dealing with Pakistan will be pointless.

This, however, is not the hour for publicity-hunting and though the media may fret and fume neither the Government nor the Hurriyat should try and use it to talk to each other, or send out veiled signals. Unlike our TV reporters and presenters, as well as the host of analysts who flock to their studios, the principal negotiators must fully understand that the protracted problem they are seeking to tackle will not be solved in the few minutes that will be earmarked for them on the small screen.

THE STATESMAN

25 NOV 2003

NOV 2003

HEADS TOGETHER

The decision by the All Party Hurriyat Conference to accept the Central government's offer of talks will be widely welcomed. Although it is too early to expect a real breakthrough, a dialogue could eventually create the conditions for peace and stability in Jammu and Kashmir. The All Party Hurriyat Conference, an umbrella alliance of separatist groups, has all along rejected proposals for talks with the Centre's interlocutors. Although the separatist leaders have been carrying out a discreet dialogue with several of New Delhi's emissaries, they had imposed three conditions for formal talks. First, the talks must be with the top political leadership in New Delhi. Second, the talks must be unconditional and not within the framework of the Indian constitution. And finally, the talks must include Pakistan as well. The decision by the Union cabinet to ask the deputy prime minister to initiate talks, and the signal that no conditions would be imposed have paved the way for the first ever direct interface between New Delhi and separatists. The APHC, in turn, seems to have given up the demand for the inclusion of Pakistan in the dialogue. These are welcome developments. The APHC may or may not be representative of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, but it does articulate the sentiments of all those in the Kashmir valley alienated by the policies of the Central government. But, as is obvious, the acceptance of the offer of talks can by no means guarantee the success of a dialogue.

Indeed, there are several factors that could prevent the dialogue from gaining momentum. Most important, there are important separatist leaders who have not endorsed the APHC's decision. The breakaway faction led by the extremist leader, Mr Ali Shah Geelani, has rejected the proposal of talks without Pakistan. Similarly, the pro-independence leader of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Mr Yaseen Malik, stayed away from the meeting that endorsed the pro-talks proposal. It is also clear that Pakistan and its intelligence agencies will seek to subvert the dialogue. Indeed, in the past, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, through direct and indirect threats, was able to prevent the start of a Srinagar-New Delhi bilateral dialogue. What, however, is most critical is that both New Delhi and the separatist leaders do their homework before the first meeting. The stated positions of both sides are well known, but it is in the willingness to arrive at a compromise that politicians from New Delhi and Srinagar will demonstrate their true leadership qualities. Finally, it is essential to ensure that the dialogue does not break down even in the absence of an initial common meeting-ground.

We are ready for unconditional dialogue, says Hurriyat

By Luv Puri

SRINAGAR, NOV. 21. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference today sought public endorsement of its latest stand to hold talks with the Central Government on solving the Jammu and Kashmir issue. The conglomerate stressed that the people of the State should be recognised as the final arbiters of their destiny.

Addressing a religious gathering at the historic Jama Masjid on the last Friday of the holy month of Ramzan here this afternoon, the APHC leader, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, said, "we have accepted the offer to talk with the Central Government unconditionally as the conglomerate always stood for dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue. Let the invitation come from the

Indian Government and we are prepared to talk."

The Mirwaiz repeatedly sought public endorsement of the conglomerate's stand of "talks with the Centre". He said: "We would not compromise on the interests of the people of the State and would make sure that their sacrifices did not go waste. *Inshaallah* (God willing) with the people's support, we would achieve our goal."

Speaking from a prepared note, the Mirwaiz said, "the issue has been raging for the last several decades and it is the people of the State who are suffering. We want to end this pain and we need the support of the masses."

The former chairman of the conglomerate, Abdul Ghani Bhat, said the Hurriyat had a prepared blueprint with it and would present it to the people "whenever the invitation comes."

"The blueprint would help us to start a concrete and fruitful dialogue on the Kashmir issue,"

he said and made a fervent appeal to all separatist group to come together in the larger interests of the State.

The decision of the APHC has evoked sharp reactions from the leaders of the rival Hurriyat led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Mr. Geelani told *The Hindu*: "The people who are accepting the offer to hold talks cannot be described as the representatives of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. They are betraying the trust of the people as by holding talks they have in a way transformed an international problem to a domestic Indian problem. The issue can only be settled through tripartite talks."

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, described the decision of the Hurriyat Conference as another step towards normalisation of the vexed Jammu and Kashmir issue. Calling it a "good beginning", the former Chief Minister and National Conference patron, Farooq Abdullah, welcomed the Hurriyat's decision.

'Coordination group' to meet on Monday

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 21. The Union Government's "coordination group" on Jammu and Kashmir is scheduled to meet here on Monday to take note of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference's decision to accept the offer of a political dialogue. As per the Vajpayee Government's deci-

sion, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, is to initiate the talks with the separatist conglomerate.

At least two members of the coordination group suggested that there should be no difficulty in acceding to the Hurriyat's insistence on a written invitation from the Centre. The group is likely to examine the possibility of getting the Hurriyat leaders to New Delhi early.

The only factor against an early start is that Mr. Advani is preoccupied with the Assembly elections in the four northern States, and then the Parliament Session begins on December 2.

However, preliminary enquires are already being made about the dates convenient to both sides. A note has been taken of the Hurriyat's formulation that the talks should take place without conditions.

The dominant view is that priority should be given to getting the talks underway and that the two sides must begin to acquire a mutual understanding of what can be conceded and what cannot be.

The "coordination group" consists of the Union Home Secretary, the Director of Intelligence Bureau, the Secretary (R&W), the Centre's designated interlocutor, N.N.Vohra, and the Officer on Special Duty in the Prime Minister's Office, A.S. Dullat.

Centre offers Hurriyat talks without riders

Arun Joshi
Jammu, November 20

THE CENTRE is ready for unconditional talks with the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference. And only three top leaders of the secessionist conglomerate — chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari, Umer Farooq and Abdul Ghani Bhat — have been conveyed the same. The leaders have been asked to get ready for talks with Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani next month, informed sources said.

This sudden shift in New Delhi's stand came after the Ansari group did not respond to the invite of the Pak High Commission's Iftar party last week. It has been taken as a manifestation of "adoption of an independent line by the Ansari faction", sources said.

"This was an acid test and the APHC faction stood its ground, which set off rethinking in the North Block that time had come when talks must get underway and there was no need to make big noises about the dialogue process," a source told *Hindustan Times*. "Certain things are understood, there was no need to make things public to botch up the whole effort."

Earlier, Advani had set terms for the talks, saying it would be within the parameters of the Constitution and based on devolution of powers to the state. The Hurriyat had said a no and demanded a proper agenda for the dialogue process to begin.

Rejection of the Iftar invite was one of the major factors that brought in this significant change in the Centre's thinking. The sec-

Pak bans 3 more militant outfits

PAKISTAN ON Thursday banned three more militant outfits, including the Jamat-ul Furqan, a break-away faction of the Jaish-e-Mohammad, blamed for the attack on Indian Parliament, among others, under the Anti-Terrorism Act.

A brief announcement by the interior ministry in Islamabad said the government had proscribed the Hizb-ul Tahreer, Jamat-ul-

Ansar and Jamat-ul Furqan under the provisions of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Of the three, Jamat-ul-Ansar was the renamed outfit of Harkatul Mujahideen, a pro-Taliban organisation led by Fazlur Rehman Khaleel banned last year by President Pervez Musharraf, along with the Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba.

HTC, Islamabad



CRPF jawans on alert outside the Army headquarters in Srinagar after Wednesday's Lashkar attack.

ond reason may have been the mounting pressure from political groups, including Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's PDP, the National Conference, the People's Democratic Front and CPI(M), on Delhi.

Significantly, Delhi is also

conscious of the prism through which the international community has come to see Kashmir: "If the process appears to be in doldrums even after the Deputy PM's announcement, it will become an international joke," a senior government official said.

Vigilance or violence

The attack outside the J&K chief minister's house was a serious security lapse

THERE can be no two views that the terrorist attack outside the J&K Chief Minister's Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's official residence is a despicable act of cowardice in which a number of people were killed and injured. But a very significant basic issue needs to be clarified at the earliest: was the attack actually aimed at the chief minister, or even his residence? The reports convey a confusing message. The director general police, J&K, Gopal Sharma, is reported to have stated that the attack was not aimed at the chief minister, and implied that their target was the BSF party. In fact the chief minister had left more than three hours earlier for Aligarh. Mufti's daughter and PDP president, Mehbooba Mufti, who was in the house at the time of the attack, has also been reported to have said that she did not think that their house was the target.

Incidentally, the chief minister had spent the night in the house after returning from Aligarh with the terrorists holed up in the building next door; and the courage of the father and daughter deserves commendation. The security forces also performed magnificently in rescuing 30 civilians trapped inside the shopping complex where the terrorists had taken refuge. But we cannot ignore the fact that the attack took place at the high-security zone that marks the residence of chief minister of a state that has been under brutal terrorist attacks for 15 years.

The conclusion that there has been a serious breach of security arrangements is therefore inescapable. Access to and on the road along the chief minister's residence ought to have been fully controlled, especially since an attack had taken place two months earlier on Greenway Hotel — 400 yards away. And whether the chief minister wants less security or not should not be the criteria. After all, a successful attack on him/her would have wide-ranging ramifications.

Details about the handling of the incident are sketchy. One would expect security management and training to provide covering fire to the security post so that no attacker would get away after the attack. How did the two escape into another building across the road without being hit by the other guards? Was it a problem of inappropriate weapons, training, or poor reflexes? Or was it simply that this was not possible under the circumstances? But the officers and others, including media persons, also seem to have congregated at the point, a la Tanda, without ensuring that the area was fully sanitised in the face of the two terrorists having escaped into the building next door. We must emphasise that the nation is totally behind the security forces in their arduous task of counter-terrorism. But the government must make the facts available to the public to enable a rational objective judgment to be made about the challenges faced by them.

Dialogue with Hurriyat after Ramzan: Advani

HT Correspondent
On board special IAF
aircraft, November 13

DEPUTY PM L.K. Advani on Thursday said his talks with the Hurriyat would take place after Ramzan and once the elections to the four state assemblies were over.

"The talks will be held in December after Id and the polls are over," Advani told reporters on board the special IAF aircraft en route to Chennai. The Deputy PM, who was recently nominated by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to initiate a dialogue with the Hurriyat, said leaders of the separatist conglomerate were yet to "get back to us".

Advani indicated that the Hurriyat was yet to make up its mind on the Centre's proposal that the talks would involve "decentralisation" of power to J&K. The government is watching what stand the more "pro-Pakistan" faction of the Hurriyat led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani would take in the days to come.

Over the past few days, the Centre's interlocutor for Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, has had two-three rounds of strategy sessions with officials of the Home Ministry and the Intelligence Bureau. These meetings were primarily aimed at devising the strategy to be adopted when Advani holds his meeting with Hurriyat chief Maulana Abbas Ansari.

Sources said they had credible reports to suggest that



KAUSHIK RAMASWAMY/HT

Sheikh Rashid with Hurriyat leaders at an Iftar party in Delhi.

Geelani fails to keep his date with Pak minister

THE IFTAR party hosted by Pakistani high commissioner to India Aziz Ahmed Khan proved to be a non-starter on Thursday.

It lacked the diplomatic or political flavour of past such gatherings, with inclement weather preventing

the pro-Pak rebel Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani from keeping his date with visiting Pak information minister Sheikh Rashid. "His flight couldn't take off, but we're not disappointed," Rashid said.

HTC, New Delhi

another Hurriyat leader, Abdul Ghani Bhat's life "could be in danger". Intelligence reports were discussed at the meetings and Vohra — who will be involved in the substantive talks once Advani begins the dialogue process — is understood to have expressed concern at the future of the negotiations. Vohra expected Pakistan to throw a spanner in the works to derail the proposed talks.

*This weekend
you will have
better things to do
for Timepass.*



Malik's gaffe ✓

Exposes JKLF's secular pretensions

Among separatist outfits in Jammu and Kashmir the JKLF's distinguishing mark was supposed to be that it stood for a secular Kashmiriyat rather than the religious-chauvinist agenda of the *jihadi* ultras. But JKLF leader Yasin Malik's stand that Kashmiri Pandits ought to be allowed back in the Valley provided they gave up any position on the secessionist movement, sounds exceedingly odd in that context. In a secular disposition anyone has the right to express his political views, and minorities cannot be silenced in exchange for the right to survival. Pandits are right to say that accepting Malik's "precondition" would relegate them to the status of second class citizens. Malik may have been trying to address a fundamental flaw in the movement for "self-determination" in the Valley, which can be attained, it appears, only at the cost of purging its minorities — known in today's parlance as ethnic cleansing. He can do so, however, only by sounding blatantly communal. If one were to switch Kashmiri Pandits for Gujarati Muslims, Malik would find Narendra Modi in hearty agreement with him.

In reality Malik or Kashmiriyat wouldn't stand a ghost of a chance if Jammu and Kashmir's remote-controlled separatist movement were to be allowed to succeed. Guns and infrastructural support are channelled to those most willing to obey the dictates of the suppliers and Kashmiriyat doesn't feature high in their list of priorities. Terrorists intercepted while infiltrating into the state are turning out more and more to be Pakistani nationals rather than of Kashmiri origin; if they were to succeed the outcome would be outright annexation by Pakistan. But states based on ethnic origin are a 19th century project, which are looking more and more out-of-date in the 21st century. Gross mistakes aside history is on India's side, not Pakistan's, in the struggle over Kashmir. It is testimony to General Musharraf's misrule that Pakistan's worst political rivals — the PPP, the PML(N) and the MMA — are coming together on a common platform against his dictatorship. It cannot be long before someone utters what is now heresy in that country — what about self-determination inside Pakistan itself? It is a question Malik would do well to ponder.

'I don't claim everything has changed'

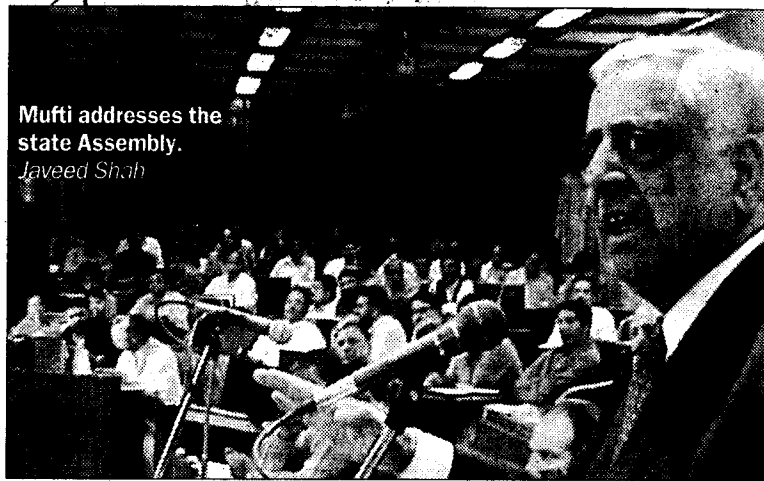
MUZAMIL JALEEL
SRINAGAR, NOVEMBER 4

ENDING the Abdullah grip over power, the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed government had come as a welcome replacement in Jammu and Kashmir a year back. The substantial poll victory on a political agenda that was Kashmir-centric and sympathetic to the separatist cause had helped them to counter even the politics of Hurriyat Conference.

As Mufti became Chief minister, heading a coalition that included Congress, Panthers Party, CPI(M) and a band of independents — who now call themselves People's Democratic Front — it was clear that the road ahead would be long and treacherous.

A year later, Mufti highlights the "sense of security" that his government "managed to bring back" accepting that the return of normalcy is still a dream. "I don't claim everything has changed. I don't claim we have brought normalcy back. But tell me, aren't people out on the streets feeling a sense of security," he told *The Indian Express* recently. "If you compare our one-year with the past, it is certainly far better. The police and the security forces are now much more accountable" Mufti also cites the example of the return of tourists to the Valley — which touched a record number this summer. "If there is an end to militant violence, we will be back in the race for development in no time," he says. "But we cannot wait till total normalcy returns."

Mufti talks of the funds released by the Centre and the job-package announced by the Prime Minister. In



Mufti addresses the state Assembly.
Javeed Shah

Kashmir, however, Mufti and his party are judged more by the deliverance or failure of their political agenda — the promise of an early dialogue process both between the Centre and the separatists as well as between India and Pakistan. This promise was the main focus of PDP's poll manifesto.

"I know how important the dialogue process is. We have said that we want to make Kashmir a bridge between India and Pakistan and we do believe that there is no way other than dialogue to resolve this problem," he said. The recent peace initiative launched by New Delhi inviting the moderate Hurriyat leadership for a dialogue after raising the level of the negotiations to the Deputy Prime Minister level has certainly come as a big help to Mufti and his party. A political morale booster, this offer has provided them with something to defend their poll agenda but the PDP leadership is not entirely happy with the way the process is heading forward. "This peace initiative is a big relief to us.

They (the Centre) have at least conceded to two of our demands — raising the dialogue process to the highest political level and opening up of the Srinagar-Rawalpindi road," a senior PDP leader said. "But it is not enough. We can't go back to our constituency here without delivering. And to make the peace process work, there should have been an open and unconditional invitation to all separatists including local militant groups like Hizbul Mujahideen," he said. "We have left the hardliners (among the separatists) out of the process at the very beginning... how will it work? We should have at least given them a chance to reject the offer — that would have made some sense."

In fact, Mufti and his party had stripped Hurriyat off its agenda when they raised similar issues in their poll campaign. But now they are finding it extremely difficult to manoeuvre between their "separatist-sympathetic politics" and the handicaps of being a ruling mainstream party.

Then there is a cold war going on among the coalition partners — whose political agendas as well constituencies are at variance with each other. Con-

gress being a national party finds it hard to fit in PDP manifesto. Locally also, Congress party's traditional stronghold is Jammu which is extremely opposed to PDP's political agenda. The Panthers Party with just four legislators in the coalition is actually more vocal than the Opposition in their criticism of the Mufti government. The PDF — which has ties within a moderate separatist party — has been aiming at dislodging Mufti's government for several months now.

The highlight of the Mufti government's first year in office — the release of prisoners — had certainly given it a moral high ground. The government take-over of Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences and Muslim Auqaf Trust — bodies run by the National Conference — were generally lauded but the public support would sustain only if the Mufti manages to improve these public institutions.

Proactive rehabilitation measures was another major promise of the government. But little has come out of it except the personal interest his daughter and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti has taken to support victims of violence. One important contribution that the new government made was to expand the ambit of government-run Rehabilitation Council to all the victims of violence. This body earlier supported only the victims of militants alone.

On the development front there have been few achievements but the grudge of the people is that the focus has been the South Kashmir strongholds of PDP or the individual constituencies of few strong ministers. A year of mixed results behind him, Mufti cannot do much himself to change the perception of his government. One issue on which everything in J-K depends is the Indo-Pak peace process. On this count, the CM is entirely dependent on the Centre.

Srinagar BSNL office attacked

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

Srinagar: Militants struck in the heart of Srinagar on the first day of Ramzan on Tuesday, bursting a grenade at the heavily guarded BSNL office, killing one person and injuring about 40 others. The victims were on their way to local mosques.

This was the second attack on the BSNL office in two months. On August 27, militants had made a desperate bid to storm the complex when the entire top leadership of the country, including Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, was in town for the Inter-State Council meeting.

The attack on the BSNL office—which is less than 300 metres from

the chief minister's residence, which was targeted by militants ten days ago—came as the Lashkar-e-Toiba ruled out a ceasefire during the Muslim holy month and asked civilians to stay away from security installations. A local newspaper quoted Lashkar spokesman Abu Huzafa as saying that the outfit would step up its attacks, which would continue until "complete freedom of Kashmir from Indian occupation is achieved".

Kashmir Freedom Force, a hitherto unknown militant organisation, claimed responsibility for the attack.

At Akhnoor, about 25 km from Jammu, a woman and a child were killed and seven other persons were injured when a third militant involved in Monday's attack on the

Shalimar Express fired indiscriminately during a standoff with security forces.

The militant, who was initially holed up in the Akhnoor-Tawi river bank area during the search operations, had managed to sneak into a residential area of the Military Engineering Service, where he opened fire. Two of his accomplices were killed on Monday. The militant was still to be neutralised when reports last came in.

In another attack, militants detonated an IED at Pancharni Nallah in Doda district, killing three jawans and injuring seven others. Elsewhere in the state, two militants and a civilian were killed in two separate incidents while security forces apprehended three ultras.

Hurriyat says no to Advani terms for talks

Chandan Nandy and
Rashid Ahmad
New Delhi/Srinagar, October 24

DEPUTY PRIME Minister L.K. Advani on Friday offered to discuss autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, but the separatist combine rebuffed him, saying it wanted to discuss Kashmir's disputed status instead.

Advani had said in Delhi: "When we can hold talks with Bodo and Naga groups, we can do it with the Hurriyat as well. But we will not compromise on the unity or integrity of the country. Talks can be held on decentralisation."

But the Hurriyat's Maulvi Abbas Ansari faction, to which the offer was made, responded that it didn't want to discuss decentralisation but the Kashmir dispute itself. Abdul Ghani Bhat, former Hurriyat chairman, said: "We seek the resolution of the Kashmir issue. The dialogue should revolve only around that."

Another former Hurriyat chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, was scathing: "The Centre made an unconditional offer for talks on Wednesday. But now we hear Advani wants to talk about decentralisation. Let the government make up its mind whether it wants to talk or not. We make it clear that any dialogue should be aimed at resolving the Kashmir issue."

On Thursday, the Hurriyat had agreed to hold talks with the Centre, though it had insisted on setting the agenda. "(Advani's statement) is quite embarrassing," said a pro-dialogue leader.



Former Hurriyat chairman Umer Farooq at Srinagar on Friday.

"New Delhi should come forward for a sincere dialogue."

In another blow to the Centre's peace efforts, rebel Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani rejected Ansari's request to join the talks. "I can't be party to an exercise that violates the basic concept of our struggle and in which Pakistan is not a party," Geelani, true to his pro-Pakistani position, told *Hindustan Times*.

Clearing the air over the Centre's interlocutor, N.N. Vohra's position, Advani said he would continue to be the government's pointman on Kashmir. "He has worked very hard and done a wonderful job... Let me make it clear that he will continue to be the Centre's pointman."

The Deputy Prime Minister also expressed hope that the US would take steps to hand over to India Dawood Ibrahim, whom Washington recently declared a "global terrorist" holding a Pakistani passport. "We hope Washington will take steps in the right direction for handing over Dawood to India," Advani said.

Hurriyat lukewarm, Geelani livid



APHC chairman Moulvi Abbas Ansari, separatist leader Moulvi Omar Farooq, Farooq Abdul Gani Bhat and Bilal Lone in Srinagar on Thursday. — AFP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, Oct. 23. — A day after the Centre's offer of talks, the Hurriyat, though not averse, found itself reluctant to give a firm response while the fresh peace initiatives received an initial set-back when hard-liner Syed Ali Geelani refused to enter into a dialogue with Mr LK Advani. He said: "Before starting any talks, New Delhi should accept Kashmir as disputed issue and also include Pakistan in the process."

Syed Geelani said the dispute on Kashmir is internationally accepted and it has three parties — India, Pakistan and Kashmiris. He said unless all the three parties sit together and hold discussions this cannot be resolved. Bilateralism, he added, has failed all along and it will not serve any purpose even if practised at the highest level.

However, cautious of the consequences of either over-

whelming acceptance or outright rejection, the Hurriyat executive council failed to take any decision and kept the option open for broader consensus inside as well as outside the amalgam.

The Centre has put the Hurriyat in a spot by accepting its demand to raise the dialogue to a high political level. But in the wake of its recent demoralising split, the Hurriyat is unsure of taking a path in any particular direction.

No clear-cut agenda for the dialogue with the Deputy Prime Minister has been given to the Hurriyat. Resolution of the Kashmir issue is the lone point of the Hurriyat's existence, but the offer of talks does not suggest even an outline of a solution of the larger issue.

Retaining Kashmir is at the core of Indian policy. But some elements in the Hurriyat advocate independence while the breakaway faction strongly aligns with Pakistan. With such

divergent positions, can there be a consensus within or outside the amalgam? Yet the Hurriyat cannot afford to reject outright the Centre's offer after one of its key demands has been accepted. It also realises that it is being monitored by the international community that has been recommending dialogue.

The faction-ridden Hurriyat also needs time to shield itself from further attack from its rivals, as well as the common Kashmiris. Any ineffective reflex response can be suicidal, since it is a matter also of the Hurriyat's own survival. The leaders realise that stray remarks can be damaging, and separatist elements like Syed Ali Shah Geelani can hijack the show by further discrediting it and branding it as an extension of New Delhi.

Some of the militant outfits such as Salauddin's Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the women's reformist group with separatist leanings, Dukhtaran-e-Millat, have already rejected the offer. But the Hurriyat cannot do the same because the audience that it addresses is in favour of dialogue and "not acrimony".

To escape from the quagmire, some Hurriyat leaders stated today that they would pen the agenda and offer options for resolution of the Kashmir issue. Out of seven, today's meeting was attended by only four members of the executive council, chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari, Prof Abdul Ghani Bhatt, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Bilal Lone.

J&K hostage crisis ends

HTC and Agencies
Shopian, October 21

THE 30-HOUR-LONG hostage crisis in Pulwama district of south Kashmir ended on Tuesday with security forces killing the holed up militants hours after rescuing eight civilians in an early morning operation.

It is not clear how many militants have been killed. The security forces launched the final assault in the afternoon, lobbing several mortar shells on the house where the militants were hiding. The house was razed in the mortar attack.

Sources said the hostages, rescued in the early morning operation, had told the officials there were three-four militants holed up in the house. An operation has been launched to retrieve the bodies from the debris of the razed house.

However, unconfirmed reports put the number of militants killed in the operation at two.

Earlier, the security forces lobbed tear gas shells at the house to facilitate the rescue of the civilian hostages, including a local Muslim cleric, at 8.30 am. Once the civilians were evacuated, security forces went on the offensive, resulting in exchange of fire between the two sides. All the eight civilians had been sent in by the security forces on Monday to negotiate the surrender of the militants holed inside the house.

After repeated appeals to the militants to free the hostages and surrender went unheeded, the forces lobbed the shells inside the besieged house on Tuesday morning. The hostage drama began on Monday morning, when security forces surrounded a house in Pulwama,



A jawan on Tuesday takes position near the house at Thiyaran where eight people were held hostage since Monday.

hoping to flush out militants who were hiding inside.

For the entire day, the security personnel used megaphones to negotiate with the militants. The police said the rebels demanded a free passage in exchange for releasing the hostages unharmed. The security forces did not agree to this demand.

Finding themselves trapped, the militants fired on the troops from the house. There was an exchange of fire, but no one was injured.

Meanwhile, 14 civilians were injured when militants hurled a grenade in Kulgam of Anantnag. The grenade was tossed by towards a police party on Tuesday afternoon.

Militants in J&K take 12 hostage

SIP
21/11

Statesman News Service

JAMMU/NEW DELHI, Oct. 20. — At least four Pakistan-sponsored militants took a dozen people hostage at Thruvan village in Pulwama district today when security forces cordoned off a house in which the militants were hiding. The hostages include four villagers who were sent inside by the authorities to ask the militants to surrender. Also among the hostages are four women.

Securitymen told the villagers, who entered the house around 10.30 a.m., to assure the militants that no harm would be done to them if they laid down arms. There was an initial exchange of fire between security forces and the militants that stopped after some time, according to reports.

This is perhaps the first time that negotiators, including the *imam* of a local mosque, have been taken hostage. Sources in Srinagar said that villagers were almost always sent as negotiators to avoid collateral damage. Apparently there was some communication between the security forces and the militants, an interaction that revealed that some of the militants inside the house were foreigners. The four militants and the 12 hostages are still in the house. There have been no casualties.

The police, Army and the CRPF are conducting a joint operation. The deputy commissioner of Pulwama has reached the spot and is monitoring the developments. The stand-off continues and there has been no firing since early morning.

Security forces say they are showing restraint to avoid any civilian casualty. Efforts are on to rescue the villagers. Sources said the militants were reluctant to release the hostages and said they were ready to die but would not surrender, adds PTI.

Reinforcements from the Army have already reached the village and the cordon around the house has been tightened further.

THE STATESMAN 21 OCT 2003

19/10
 9 4 5
 Security forces gun down two holed-up militants at Alijaan Complex
Srinagar stand-off ends



STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Oct. 18. — The 24-hour long siege of Alijaan Complex ended with the security forces gunning down the two militants holed up in the building opposite chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's residence in a crack operation this morning. Two BSF jawans were killed and 17 other security and police personnel including three senior officers injured in the day-long stand-off. Two photojournalists had sustained splinter injuries yesterday.

Amid heavy exchange of fire, security forces managed to kill the first militant around 6.15 a.m. today in a second floor bathroom. The second ultra was shot when he was coming down to the ground floor firing indiscriminately. Two Nepalese labourers trapped inside the complex came out safely after the encounter ended. Immediately after the militants were killed, security forces searched the entire shopping complex thoroughly. Two AK assault rifles, some magazines and half-a-dozen live grenades were recovered from the slain ultras.

DGP Mr Gopal Sharma described the operation as clean. "Though security forces and police suffered casualties, all the 25 civilians trapped inside the complex were rescued. We could have neutralised the two militants yesterday but wanted to avoid civilian casualties and causing damage to the shopping complex. The last batch of trapped persons to be rescued late last evening from a computer training centre on the third floor of the complex were six boys and a girl. They had to be brought down using ropes," he said.

The security men, who took part in the operation, confessed having

a hard time neutralising the militants. According to them, the ultras had the strategic advantage of camping at the second floor of the shopping complex. Though the forces could reach the ground floor yesterday afternoon, it was proving difficult for them to climb to the first floor with the militants continuously showering grenades and bullets on them.

Last night, a militant had come fierce exchange, which lasted a

Police remove the body of a slain militant in Srinagar on Saturday. — PTI

down to the ground floor and after shooting at a security man immediately retreated. The exchange of fire resumed on the wee hours today. The securitymen finally managed to access the third floor using ladders and opened fire. Amid a fierce exchange, they managed to kill the first militant in a bathroom. The other militant engaged the security forces in a fierce exchange, which lasted a

terday. When the ultra started moving towards the ground floor, he was finally gunned down. Chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was present at his residence along with his other family members when the operation came to an end. Mufti returned last evening and spend the night at his residence, which was the actual target of the ultras yesterday.

MUFTI HARDELL

JAMMU, Oct. 18. — Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has urged the Secretary General of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr Dennis Marshall to plan a future parliamentary conference of the organisation in Kashmir. Interacting with a four-member delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association led by Mr Marshall that called on him in Srinagar, the chief minister said the summer capital of the state has excellent climate and state-of-the-art facilities for organising international conferences. And, organising annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association meet here will help in boosting convention tourism in the state. — SNS

CLUELESS!

NEW DELHI, Oct. 18. — The five-dayen attack at the official residence of the J&K chief minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, in Srinagar yesterday sent alarm bells ringing in New Delhi. Leaders of Mufti's main coalition partner, Congress, in Delhi were also equally concerned. But many Congress members in Mufti's Cabinet were unaware of the attack. The attack began around 10 a.m. yesterday and Mr Manohar Lal Khattar, Congress leader and deputy chief minister in the state government, was inundated with phone calls from Delhi. The Congress chief, Ms Sonia Gandhi, had instructed Ms Ambika Soni to get the details about the incident. But Mr Sharma had no clue. Mr Sharma was upset that he was not informed about the incident. — SNS

Fidayeen attack on Mufti Sayeed's residence

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, October 17

MILITANTS ON Friday launched an unsuccessful *fidayeen* attack on J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's official residence on high-security Maulana Azad Road.

They lobbed a hand-grenade and fired heavily on the paramilitary personnel standing guard at the CM's residence, killing two of them and injuring three. After an abortive bid to break into the CM's house, they took shelter in a shopping complex close by.

Late in the evening, the security forces stormed the shopping complex. The operation began minutes after seven computer students, trapped on the top floor of the building, were evacuated with the help of a rope ladder.

Heavy exchange of fire was on between the militants and security forces when last reports came

I wasn't scared, says Mehbooba

"I WASN'T scared! We've got used to such shootings and explosions. We've learnt to take them in our stride," said Mehbooba Mufti, CM Mufti Mohd Sayeed's daughter who was home when the militants struck.

"The blast and the shooting were like the ones I'd heard when the Greenway Hotel was attacked," she added. Mehbooba said she was dressing to go to the party office at about 10 a.m. when an explosion preceded gunshots.

The security forces have surrounded the multi-storey building, and occupied its ground floor to flush out the militants.

Earlier, during their attempt to enter the CM's building premises, five more jawans, besides two po-

"When the shooting began, I was told BSF men posted outside our house had been attacked. By this time the guards posted at our home too started shooting and the noise was getting louder," she added.

She then switched on the TV to know what was happening outside. To her surprise, she said, some TV channels were reporting that her father had been safely transported out of the house in a bullet-proof car.

HTC, Srinagar

licemen, were injured when the militants opened fire. Mufti was not at home when the incident took place.

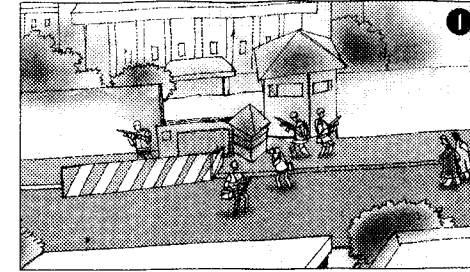
He had left for Aligarh Muslim University to attend a function three hours earlier. However, his

daughter and PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, besides other members of his family, was inside. The police said they were all safe and had been evacuated to Nehru Guest House at Chasma Shahi. Mufti cut short his visit and returned in the evening. He, too, has shifted to the guest house.

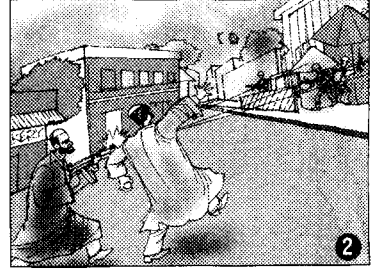
Meanwhile, militant outfit al-Mansooreen has claimed responsibility for the attack and said the CM was the target. A spokesperson of the outfit said over phone that two members of the group's *fidayeen* squad — Abu Maa'd and Abu Khubaib — were involved in the attack.

The police said the militants were wearing *phirans* (a Kashmiri long gown) when they appeared at the rear gate near the CM's house. They were hiding the arms and ammunition under their robes. Two photojournalists — Rafiq Maqbool of AP and Syed Muzzaffar of the local Urdu daily *Afaq* — were injured.

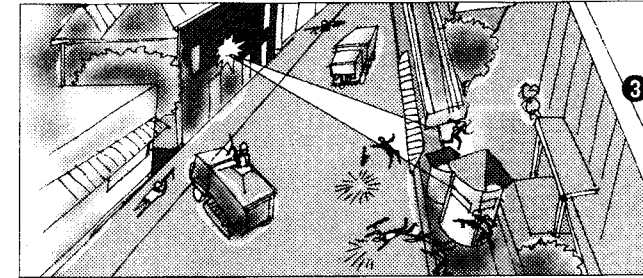
Militants come knocking with blazing guns



1
9.58 a.m.: Two *fidayeen* with arms and grenades under their *phirans*, approach CM Mufti Mohd Sayeed's house on Maulana Azad Road



2
10 a.m.: They hurl a hand grenade, fire at securitymen. Two BSF men killed.



3
10.10 a.m.: Securitymen return fire. Militants take shelter in Ali Jan shopping complex opposite CM's house. Several civilians trapped

11.30 a.m.: Army takes over operation

10 p.m.: All civilians inside complex evacuated, encounter still on

Graphic: Jayanto

17 killed in J&K violence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

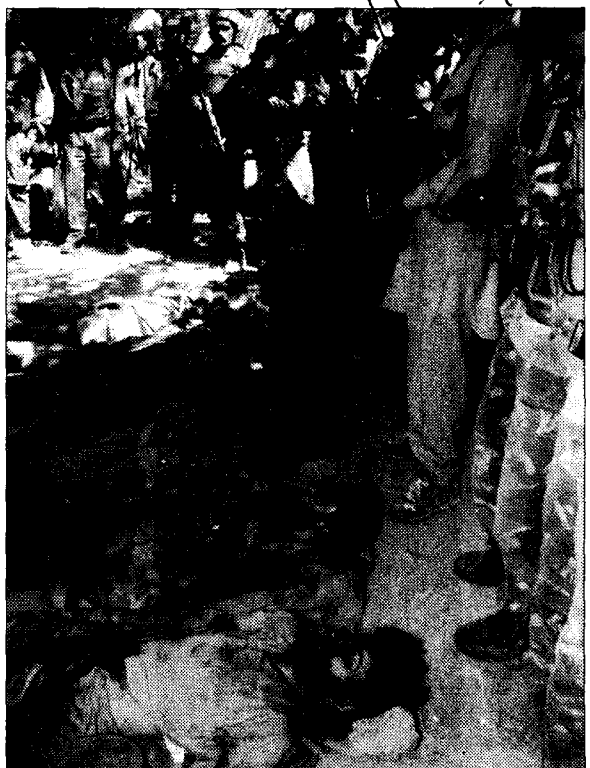
JAMMU, Sept. 20. — Security forces killed six ultras, including two district commanders of Harkat-ul-Mujhadeen and Jaish-e-Mohammed, in an encounter at Harmeen, Shopian in Pulwama district of south Kashmir. In another incident, BSF and J&K Police busted a Jaish-e-Mohammad hideout and recovered an underground arms dump at Qamarwari in Jammu. In other militancy-related incidents in the state, 11 persons, including two soldiers, were killed in the last 24 hours.

IGP Mr K Rajendra Kumar said security forces launched an operation in Harmeen village following specific information that top militants were holding a meeting there. Three soldiers were wounded in the ensuing encounter, during which 6 militants were shot dead. A spokesman of the Harkat-ul-Mujhadeen

confirmed the deaths to a local news agency

In another encounter between security forces and ultras at Tirkundi Gali in Rajouri district, three ultras and two security force personnel were killed. A large quantity of arms and ammunition were recovered from the militants.

A defence spokesman said troops of 3 Rashtriya Rifles killed an advisor of the Harkat-ul-Mujhadeen at Churnar in Kupwara. Police said security forces killed a militant of Lashkar-e-Taibya at Lashkoot Behak in Bandipora. In yet another encounter, a Hizb militant was killed at Panzipora in Baramulla district. Ultras killed a tailor named Javid Ahmad Najar in Lasipora, Pulwama, after dragging him from his house. Police recovered the body of Mohammed Sakhi Khatana from Batapora Kulgam. He was kidnapped on 17 September.



Bodies of the militants killed in an encounter with Rashtriya Rifles at Harmeen in Shopian on Saturday. — PTI

Battalions for J&K counter-insurgents

T-1 TIMES NEWS NETWORK M9

New Delhi: The army is gearing up to raise Territorial Army battalions comprising surrendered militants (Ikhwanis) in Jammu and Kashmir as part of the plan to boost the morale of counter-insurgents following the killings of their leaders like Kuka Parray.

"The proposal is in the final stages now. It is likely to be cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) soon," said vice-chief of the army Lt-Gen Shantonu Choudhary on Tuesday.

The TA battalions would provide the Ikhwanis with a legal framework to take part in counter-insurgency operations, apart from providing them a regular income and continuity of employment, he said.

The Ikhwanis had played a vital role in turning the terrorist tide in the mid-1990s but are now under increasing threat from terrorists angry with them for switching sides.

Lt-Gen Choudhary said the surrender rate of militants in Jammu and Kashmir had come down in recent times since their ranks were now dominated by foreign mercenaries, most of them Pakistanis. //

THE TELEGRAPH

17 SEP 2003



APRIL 18, 2003: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, here with J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed, offers his "hand of friendship" to Pakistan at a rally in Srinagar. Less than five months later, the hand returns empty.



"We seek peaceful resolution of all disputes and differences, especially the core dispute over J&K. We desire tension-free and cooperative relations with India. We, on our part, will demonstrate all our seriousness."

Pervez Musharraf
 May 3, 2003

India-Pakistan peace process

Biting the hand of friendship

Insecure that Delhi was engaging Kashmir, Pakistan has stalled the peace process by stepping up violence and sidelining the Hurriyat's moderates

Aditya Sinha
 New Delhi

THE PEACE process between India and Pakistan has ground to a halt. The initiative by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee in Srinagar on April 18, where he extended a "hand of friendship", has pretty much been buried in Kashmir, where violence has increased and an attempt by New Delhi to engage the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference has been undermined. India obviously blames Pakistan for souring Vajpayee's "third and final" chance at peace.

India had tried to keep the process alive despite the June 28 and July 22 attacks on army camps (a Brigadier lost his life in the second one), and despite the series of violence that includes the Mumbai blasts, for which deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani blamed the Pak-based Lashkar-e-Toiba. But with August seeing over 300 incidents in J&K (up from about 250 in June and in July), the Government seems to have lost its patience. The new mantra is Vajpayee's statement in Jammu on August 29, that though India wanted a meaningful dialogue, it would not be possible if terrorism continued.

Pessimism about SAARC

And there's little faith that the January 2004 SAARC summit — which both Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf will attend — will yield anything. "Whether it is New York, Timbuktu, Islamabad or New Delhi, there is no bilateral dialogue possible till Pakistan stops cross-border terrorism," says Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha (see full interview on page 16).

"What do they do when they meet?" asks former Foreign Secretary Salman Haider. "India had talked of a step-by-step approach," a top Government official points out. "I think we've gotten back off the first step. The two countries can't even get flights started or let their postmaster-generals meet."

It is clear now that if Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali responded to the peace initiative, it was done not out of change of mindset. "I don't believe Vajpayee's initiative was for show," says Haider. "But the process has been painfully slow. The High Commissioners are back — big deal. There's a bus, but we can't get trains running or agree upon flights. Each of these minor things have been magnified. It is indicative not of substance of the talks, but that attitudes remain entrenched and suspicious."

A Home Ministry official

points out that the peace initiative had forced Pakistan to respond, and that violence had come down for a bit over three months. "More importantly, Kashmiris began talking of peace, and the Hurriyat was talking of a settlement with Delhi," he says. "In fact, we missed a good chance to engage the Hurriyat during those three to four months."

Pakistan insecure

It appears one of the events to set off alarm bells in Pakistan was the arrival of the four centrist Hurriyat leaders in Delhi in early August to quietly sound out the Government. No surprise, then, the four — Chairman Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Bilal Lone — were last week outmaneuvered by the avowedly pro-Pakistan former Jamaat-e-Islami chief Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

"Pakistan doesn't want a dialogue between New Delhi and Kashmir, because it then loses its primacy," says the government official. "They feel that if Kashmiris are to be talked to, it should be after an Indo-Pak dialogue. This is what this latest tug-of-war is about."

Pakistan apparently got into action by splitting the Hurriyat and bullying the smaller groups in the conglomerate into supporting Geelani. All Hurriyat constituents in PoK have reportedly also been told to fall behind Geelani, and now the Pakistani's effort is at getting Bilal Lone (son of assassinated leader Abdul Ghani Lone) and Ansari kicked out of the Hurriyat.

To their credit, the four centrists are sticking together — that's basically how Ansari, a Shia leader (another irritant for Pakistan), got elected Chairman in July. But with Geelani's return to centre-stage, there is a palpable threat to them — the Lone brothers had held Geelani personally responsible for their father's murder.

Mufti likes turmoil

More worryingly, none of the Hurriyat moderates trust Chief Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed. Mufti is responsible for releasing Geelani and his cohorts (such as Ashraf Sehrai on the eve of the Jamaat's Majlis-e-Shura). "The turmoil suits Mufti," says the Government official. "He competes with the Hurriyat moderates for their political space."

Then, Pakistan is attempting to split the moderates. It has already pulled JKLF leader Yasin Malik onto its own side, exploiting his sulk over not being elected Hurriyat chairman, even though he has little in common in Geelani (he wants independence, Geelani

wants Pakistan). It is also trying to entice the Mirwaiz, though there is little chance of success after Geelani's July accusation that the Mirwaiz was busy honeymooning in Paris.

Pressures on Pervez

But why should Pakistan want mess up India's moves in Kashmir and obstruct the peace process? "Musharraf's under a lot of pressure," says a senior intelligence official. "There's the pressure of the jihadis, the pressure of the Americans, the pressure at home, and the pressure in Afghanistan. So Musharraf is trying to throw the dialogue ball back in our court by saying that India didn't talk, so he is helpless at controlling the violence."

Musharraf tells the Americans he has no control over the jihadis, but India's security apparatus picked up a lot of chatter from Pakistan in August, telling cadres to step up the violence. The jihadis are only to be kept to put up a good fight against India, and it diverts from Musharraf's troubles in retaining his post as Army chief — a deadlock has meant he has not been able to address the National Assembly since last October. The resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan has worsened things for the Americans there, and put further pressure on him.

But is the peace process completely dead? "Both sides have been careful not to let a downturn become too pronounced," points out Haider. "The Mumbai blasts were handled so that there was no halt in the process. Options must not be foreclosed by negative developments."

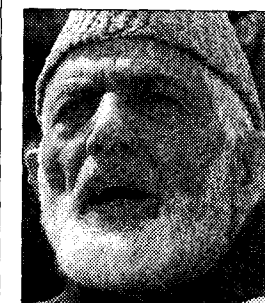
Last opportunity

Though there doesn't seem to be much hope that the SAARC summit, four months from now, will deliver anything substantial, Haider hopes for a scenario where the spadework for the summit may jumpstart the peace process. "It is in both Vajpayee's and Musharraf's interests to be seen to be anxious for an advancement," he says. "Both will realise that this is for them an opportunity that may not materialise again."

The hope rests on quiet backdoor moves by the two High Commissioners, Shiv Shanker Menon and Aziz Ahmed Khan. "Both are highly capable," says Haider. "Both should try to envision how negotiations can take place, and what kind of approach would make neither side feel the other is getting his way."

It is also clear, however, that looming elections do not make things difficult. And if there is one thing that can be predicted, it's that more violence is on the way in J&K.

The Tug of War



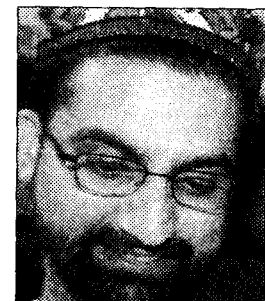
SYED ALI SHAH GEELANI

Pakistan's all-weather proxy in the Valley; likes to incite violence.



MOULVI ABBAS ANSARI

Shia Chairman of the Hurriyat; a moderate whom Pak wants out.



MIRWAIZ OMAR FAROOQ

The young chief priest is Kashmir's best bet. Cut up with Geelani.



BILAL LONE

When father Abdul Ghani Lone was killed, he blamed Geelani.

Kuka Parray shot in third weekend hit

Dance of death on bloody Saturday

MUKHTAR AHMAD AND
SEEMA GUHA

Srinagar/New Delhi, Sept. 13: Kuka Parray, the father of the counter-insurgency movement in Kashmir, was killed in an audacious militant strike on the third blood-splattered Saturday in the state in a row.

Mohammad Youssuf Parray aka Kuka Parray was on his way to a school compound for a cricket match, where he was to be the chief guest, when militants ambushed his vehicle in Hajan village, 40 km from Srinagar.

In a rash of attacks, three army jawans and a major were killed in an early morning *fidayeen* strike on an army camp near the Line of Control in Kupwara and two civilians died in a mine blast on the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway.

"Kuka Parray was the symbol of counter-insurgency, his death is a major blow to the security forces in their fight against terror. It will raise the morale of militants who had tried unsuccessfully to get him several times," a senior bureaucrat in Delhi acknowledged. Police in Srinagar described the killing as a serious setback.

Just over two weeks ago, Parray's close associate, Javed Ahmad Shah, was killed in a suicide strike in Srinagar while Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, his cabinet colleagues and sever-



WHO IS KUKA PARRAY?

- Resident of Hajan village in Baramulla
- Kashmiri folk singer; joins JKLF in early 1990
- Surrenders in early 1995; forms dreaded counter-insurgency outfit Ikhwan-ul-Muslemoon that targets top pro-Pakistan militants
- Becomes first surrendered militant to get people's mandate in 1996 Assembly elections
- Forms J&K Awami League in 1996
- Loses from Sonawari in 2002

al chief ministers were in town.

"The militants first hurled a hand-grenade on the vehicle and later sprayed bullets from their automatic weapons," a senior police officer said. "The attack was so swift that the police guards of Parray could not return the fire."

The police were aware Parray would be targeted after Javed was killed as militants are trying to disprove Delhi's claim that normality is returning under chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

The counter-insurgent and seven others were critically injured and taken to the hospital in the nearby army camp. Parray and two of his associates died

even as efforts were on to rush them to Srinagar. His body was taken to his Hajan home.

Parray and Javed were credited with "turning around the situation in the Valley at the height of militancy". Police officers in Srinagar privately admit that without the two, the 1996 elections — held after a gap of seven years — would not have been possible.

The Kashmiri folk singer, who made a living out of performing at weddings before becoming a militant, left the separatist ranks in 1995 and founded his pro-India militant outfit, Ikhwan-ul-Muslemoon.

Parray's death will hit the morale of the Ikhwanis — the surrendered militants who flocked to him for protection and helped the security forces — and seriously affect the flow of information on militants at a time when violence has renewed.

Tension gripped Hajan after the attack on Parray at the main *chowk*. Senior state officials, including Kashmir divisional commissioner Parvez Dewan, who were inside the cricket ground, were escorted to Srinagar. The al-Nasiree and the Kashmir Freedom Force have claimed responsibility for Parray's killing.

Today was the third violent Saturday in a row — Gazi Baba, the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief in the Valley, was gunned down on August 30 and a car bomb in Srinagar killed seven on September 6. (Picture on P 6)

THE TELEGRAPH

14 SEP 2003

Militants strike it rich in Valley

JAMMU, Sept. 13. — Militants today carried out a string of attacks in J&K, killing 27 people, including the father of counter-insurgency Kuka Parray and four Army personnel, and injuring 25.

Parray, a former state legislator, was returning home in the afternoon after witnessing a cricket match when militants threw grenades and fired automatic weapons on his vehicle. Parray and his two associates, Ali Md and Md Akram, were killed on the spot.

Parray was once a member of the banned Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen. Two militant outfits — Al-Nasiree and J&K Freedom Force — claimed responsibility for his killing.

At Bangus in the Handwara sector, militants carried out a *fidayeen* attack on an Army camp close to the LoC, killing three jawans and an officer. A Quick Reaction Team of the Army soon engaged the ultras in an encounter and killed one of them.

The Army foiled an infiltration bid and killed two militants in Tanghdhar sector.

— SNS/PTI

THE STATESMAN

14 SEP 2003

Pressure on Hurriyat factions to patch up

H BULA DEVI
STATESMAN NEW SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 13. — Pressure is building up from across the border for the two factions of the recently-split Hurriyat to mount a patch-up bid. The groups are believed to be facing "compulsions" to re-think their differences.

The leaders and the second rank cadres of the constituent parties, at their individual level, are now working on options in the hope that a version of the Hurriyat could be put in place in which ideologies may differ, but the aim remains the same.

Though the main strategists are unsure of how far they would succeed in bringing the two groups together, the section led by the hard-liner and rebel leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, is trying to rope in more leaders from the other faction. However, Mr Geelani is likely to close his door to Maulana Abbas Ansari and Bilal Lone, sources said.

Speaking to this correspondent from his Hyderpura residence, Mr Geelani said a patch up with certain elements in the Ansari faction is impossible since the fight is one

of principle and not personality.

The four-member interim committee led by Massarat Alam of the Geelani faction may meet on Monday, for the first time since the split, with the week's progress report.

For the time being, instead of using its clout to eject the Ansari-led group from the Hurriyat's long-standing Rambagh headquarters, the Geelani section has opened another office at Alam's residence in Srinagar.

Sources close to the Geelani faction said even though initially it may appear highly unlikely, the leaders of the two factions could be compelled to come under one umbrella. There would be several influencing factors, the chief being pressure from Pakistan.

The leaders of both groups, moreover, are aware that speaking from different platforms would impact their credibility since each of them wield some muscle only in their own little pockets. Unity alone would ensure strength.

It is also widely accepted that the Hurriyat in its previous form survived essentially because its stand harmonised with public sentiment, it had little "performance" to flaunt.

Even earlier, the way in which leaders were speaking in different voices had brought trouble. Therefore, a section of the people also want the Hurriyat to remain unified.

Mr Geelani said that channels of negotiations will be opened with JKLF leader Mr Yasin Malik. Ironically, there was a time when Mr Geelani and Mr Malik were strongly opposed to one another. The relations between Mr Geelani and Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhatt were also strained, though they had not severed formal connection.

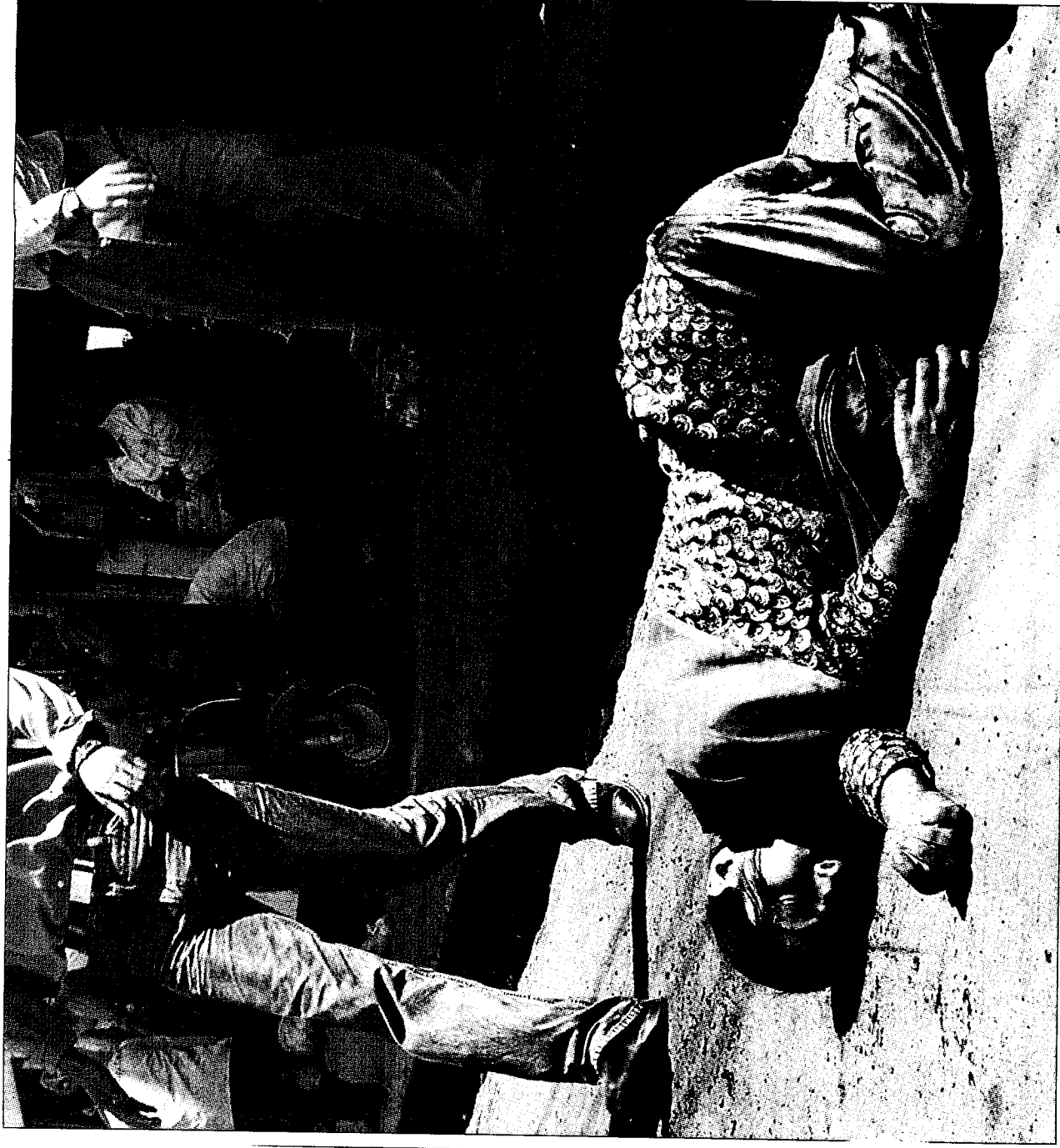
A section in the Geelani faction is also looking into the constitution of the Hurriyat for a loophole to exploit. As per its existing constitution, the executive council elects the chairman. Efforts are on to amend the constitution so that the king-making authority is vested in the general council where Mr Geelani's writ runs strong.

Sonia plea to Advani: Mrs Sonia Gandhi has urged the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, to provide Central assistance to the Jammu and Kashmir government for its plan to rehabilitate the Kashmiri Pandits.

THE STATESMAN

14 SEP 2003

Kashmir card against US request



SUJAN DUTTA

12/9
9-1

New Delhi, Sept. 11: India is making an acceptance of Washington's request for troops to Iraq conditional to US support on Kashmir.

India cannot afford to send troops to Iraq because the army is deeply committed in Kashmir, official sources said here today.

Delhi has also rejected a suggestion from the US to spare troops for Liberia.

"Against the backdrop of Kashmir, we cannot send troops to pacify Iraq. It is not only a question of UN mandate. There are attacks (in Kashmir) almost every day," the sources said.

The US assistant secretary of state, Christina Rocca, is currently in Delhi, meeting functionaries in pursuance of Washington's request.

A spiralling of violence in Kashmir over the past month has contributed to the shift in the Indian stand elucidated in a decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) in July. The CCS had said it was not possible to send troops in the absence of an "explicit UN mandate".

The change in the Indian stand comes even as the US is circulating a draft resolution in the UN Security Council envisaging a larger role in Iraq for the world body.

After authorising secretary of state Colin Powell to move a new resolution in the Security Council, proposing a multinational UN force under US command, President George W. Bush spoke to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Diplomatic circles speculated that a renewed request for troops might have been made during the conversation.

"Our relations with the US

have not been hampered in any way despite having said no (to troops for Iraq) so far," the sources said.

"We cannot afford to send the troops, given the situation in the north-western sector."

This posture is markedly different from either a principled stand against sending troops in aid of the Anglo-American invasion or one that requires a UN appeal.

It leaves Delhi with the option to say 'no' again even if there is a categorical appeal from the UN for a multinational reinforcement of the occupying powers.

By May, following the US request, the Indian army had projected scenarios involving a possible deployment of a fully reinforced division of 17,000 troops or a brigade-plus deployment of 5,000 troops.

India's reluctance to immediately accede to Washington's request for troops is also a comment on the level of militarisation in Kashmir. Three corps headquarters (14, 15 and 16) are based in the state. The Valley-based 15 corps and the Jammu-headquartered 16 corps have dual responsibilities of managing the Line of Control and counter-insurgency. A conservative estimate of the size of a corps is 50,000 troops.

Exact figures on the numbers of Indian troops in Kashmir are not officially available and, when quoted, are invariably disputed.

The main reason, India says, for the insurgency is Pakistan's backing and, unless Washington bears down on Islamabad to de-link Pakistani support to the militants, the army cannot have troops to commit for international missions such as the one in Iraq.

Hurriyat Conference splits

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Sept. 7. — Kashmir's largest separatist conglomerate All Party Hurriyat Conference split today after 12 hardline, pro-Geelani members passed a no-confidence motion and removed the moderate chairman Maulvi Mohammed Abbas Ansari from his post. The rebels constituted a five-member ad-hoc body to run the affairs of the 23-party alliance till a new chairman was elected.

A meeting of 12 Hurriyat members was held at the residence of hardline leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani which was presided over by Anjuman-e-Shaire-Shian leader Aga Syed Hassan. The meet passed by voice vote the no-confidence motion against Maulvi Ansari. Apart from Hassan, those who participated included Muslim League's Ghulam Nabi

Encounter on in Kathua

JAMMU, Sept. 7. — Even as two more columns of Sikh regiment were sent to Kathua on the sixth day of the encounter with the holed-up militants, five terrorists struck in a nearby locality, kidnapping one Thakur Hans Raj, and triggering speculation that some of the ultras had managed to slip away. Inquiries were on to ascertain whether the five kidnappers were part of the group locked in the stand-off near Ghatti. — SNS

Sumji, People's Conference's Dr Ghulam Mohammed Hubbi and Ghulam Ahmad Gulzar, Democratic People's Movement's Firdous Ahmad Shah and Mohammed Shafi Reshi, Muslim League's Masarat Alam, Kashmir

Mass Movement's Ms Farida Behanji, National Front's Nayeem Khan, Khawateen-e-Mar-kaz's Ms Yasmeena and Democratic Peoples' League's Ghulam Ahmad Khan Sopori. Later, the ad-hoc committee was formed with Masarat Alam as convenor. The leaders reposed full faith in Geelani and asked all Hurriyat members to strengthen the alliance.

Reacting to the development, Maulvi Ansari downplayed the rebels' move and said: "They are nobody to pass the resolution to seek my ouster. Besides, six members do not represent the general council. A handful of members cannot trample the Hurriyat executive council which is the supreme decision making body". The Hurriyat executive council would meet shortly to initiate disciplinary action against them, he said.

8 killed in J&K blasts

5-10 29
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Sept. 6. — Seven people, including two soldiers, were killed and over 30 seriously injured, including a brigadier and a captain, near Fruit Mandi at Parimpora bypass on the Srinagar-Uri highway in an explosion in Srinagar this morning.

Mr K Rajindra, IGP, Kashmir range, said the militants had planted an Improvised Explosive Device in a car that was parked at the main gate of the Fruit Mandi. When an army convoy passed by it at 9.45 a.m. the ultras detonated the IED through a remote control. In the blast four civilians died on the spot while three others succumbed to their injuries at the SMHS hospital.

A Brigadier and a captain were injured in the blast. The brigadier has been identified as AC Chopra. All the injured have been shifted to various hospitals for treatment. The slain civilians have been identified as Md Ayub Pharu, Md Ramzan Dar, Javeed Iqbal, Ajaz Ahmad, Hilal

Ahmad and Salam Sheikh, and Syed Masroor.

Lt.Col.Mukhtar Singh, the defence spokesman of the Badamibagh based 15-corps said all the jawans and officers have been removed to 92-base hospital where their condition is said to be out of danger.

Several vehicles were damaged in the blast. The car in which the IED was planted was blown into pieces and some of its parts fell in the adjacent locality. At the time of the explosion the market was busy with people buying vegetables and fruits.

The Army uses the Srinagar-Uri road every day to take men and machinery to the LoC. And the Army's road opening party carries out a security check every day before allowing convoys to pass through.

In another incident a landmine exploded in Banihal, Doda, when a bus passed over it around 11.45 a.m.

An Armyman was killed and four, including two officers, injured in a day-long encounter in the Dogripora forests in Rafia-



The wreckage of an Army vehicle at the blast site in Parimpora, Srinagar, on Saturday. — PTI

bad. Helicopters were used to remove the injured.

The Hizbul Mujahideen has claimed responsibility for the car blast in Srinagar and the explosion in Doda. A man claiming to be the spokesman of the seven terrorists holed in Jammu.

Jammu battle without last bullet

BINOO JOSHI

Jammu, Sept. 4: More than 50 hours after the longest encounter in the region began in the jungles of Ghatti village in Kathua district, the targeted militants continued to be elusive.

The army today launched a massive search of the jungles in the Jammu region to assess the results of its fight with the seven armed militants who had infiltrated from across the International Border between Monday night and early Tuesday.

More than 1,500 soldiers tipped through the thick foliage and 8-9 feet high maize crop, scanning the thicket, alert against both snakes and explosives that the militants might have laid as a trap.

"It is a challenging task and only those who are conducting the searches under such unforgiving environment can tell you what it means," an army officer at the spot said.

The day began with the gunbattle picking up intensity after slowing down overnight. Guns, rocket launchers and grenades

have been booming in Ghatti for the past two days after local police and members of the village defence committee chased the militants into the forests.

The exchange of fire lasted till noon when the militants stopped retaliating. Soldiers launched search operations during the prolonged lull that followed.

"It is very difficult at this stage to say as to what might have happened," inspector-general of police P.L. Gupta said. "Now our priority is to get the bodies of the militants and till that time, from our point of view, searches are on."

He, however, warned that "the last bullet has not been fired yet, I would say this much". Gupta has been keeping a close watch over the developments from Jammu since the encounter started on Tuesday.

For the villagers, the gunbattle has been no less than a mini war. Elderly Chajju Ram told reporters that he felt "we would have to live with this kind of terrorism".

His fears were founded on the

began on Tuesday afternoon, the army had not expected an intense and prolonged exchange. As both sides got down to guns and grenades, the militants apparently took the army by surprise by putting up the long fight.

Ghatti is also militants' route to the mountains of Doda, where they have their hideouts in the caves and among the high ridges.

The army believes that the group of seven militants was out to attempt a big strike to avenge last weekend's killing of Gazi Baba, the Jaish-e-Mohammad operations chief in Kashmir, as it infiltrated into India immediately after the militant leader's death.

Earlier, on Tuesday, police had expressed similar fears after trying to trap the militants in a cordon. Four policemen were wounded in the ensuing exchange of fire.

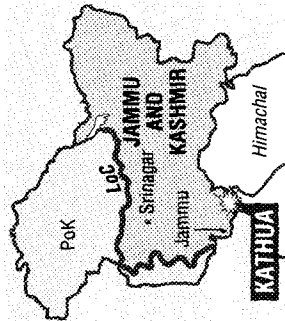
A string of gunbattles and bombings has echoed across Jammu and Kashmir since the day after a radio message attributed to the Jaish, exhorting its gunmen to "inflict sorrow and

death" on those celebrating Baba's killing, was intercepted.

Poonch attack foiled

The army's sentries at the brigade headquarters in Kam-sar area of Poonch town early on Thursday killed two *fidayeen*, who tried to enter the camp by exploding grenades and firing with their assault rifles.

An army spokesman said the militants attacked the camp at 5 am. One of the militants was killed on the spot and the other was chased and killed when he rushed to the houses nearby. A young woman was killed and three children were injured in the crossfire.



general feeling that the militants had succeeded in disrupting life in the village and spreading a scare among the residents.

Yet, they pitched in to help the army by carrying water for the soldiers and, at times, helping them ferry boxes of ammunition to the fighting frontlines spread over a stretch of more than 2 sq km.

The *kandi* or the rugged terrain of Ghatti, just 10 km from the International Border with Pakistan, however, is no stranger to such gunbattles. But never before has one lasted for more than two or three hours.

When the latest encounter

Ammo for J&K seized in Kolkata

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 3

A TRUCKLOAD of ammunition, apparently meant for Kashmiri militants, was found in a truck parked in the city on Wednesday.

About 25,000 foreign-made 7.62 cartridges, used in AK-47 rifles, had arrived from the North-east, the West Port police said after the seizure at Dhobitalao near Hide Road.

The ammunition was in 49 olive green bags and strapped to a false ceiling above the driver's seat. The police are still looking for the driver and two Kashmiri militants who were reportedly in the city.

It is the biggest haul ever by the city police and suggests that the city is being used as a transit point by militants. The truck, carrying bamboo, had reached the city on August 6. After offloading, it remained parked with hundreds of other vehicles. "It seems the gang was waiting for another consignment of goods to give them an excuse to proceed," said detective chief Soumen Mitra.

Cops have traced the truck's route to the North-east, though it could have started from beyond — possibly Bangladesh. "We are yet to come to any definite conclusion," police commissioner Sujay Chakrabarty said.

Cops suspect Kashmiri ultras originally brought it from the Dhaka-

Encounter in Jammu



SECURITY FORCES were fighting fierce gunbattles with Lashkar-e-Tayyeba militants Jammu's Kathua forests for the second day on Wednesday. One soldier was killed and four others were injured while trying to flush out the ultras holed up in Ghati, near Kathua. Elsewhere in J&K, seven militants and two securitymen were killed.

Details on Page 4

based Al-Hamza Shipping Company, some of whose officials are close to Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants. The consignment was on its way to the Amir Shah faction of the Hizb. "The arms were probably smuggled from Cox's Bazar to Dawki in Meghalaya, from where they were sent to Kolkata by truck," an officer said.

See also Kolkata Live

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 SEP 2003

Gazi Baba's ghosts strike back in J&K

■ JAMMU | 5 of Doda family killed, Kathua encounter on 9/8



Securitymen near the bus which was attacked on Srinagar-Jammu road on Tuesday. Javeed Shah

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU, SEPTEMBER 2

MILITANTS killed five members of a family to plunge a wedding into mourning in Doda district while police and security personnel gunned down five militants commanders of different outfits in Poonch district today.

Late this evening, militants and police were locked

in a fierce encounter in the otherwise peaceful Kathua district. Army troops rushed to the spot after holed up militants injured two policemen and two village defence committee members.

Earlier, militants struck in Banihal tehsil of Doda district and killed five members of a family, including a village sarpanch at Chambalwas. The dead were identified as sarpanch Khadim Hussain, his brothers Rafiq Ahmed, a

power lineman, Farid Ahmed, a revenue department patwari, besides a class IX student Imran Ali and sister-in-law Fatah Begum.

Khadim and his brothers, who had migrated to Jammu following militant threats, returned to their native village in connection with the marriage of their sister Khusnud which was fixed for Wednesday. Khadim's daughter Tahira

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

BSF foils bid to storm camp near Dal Lake tourist hangout

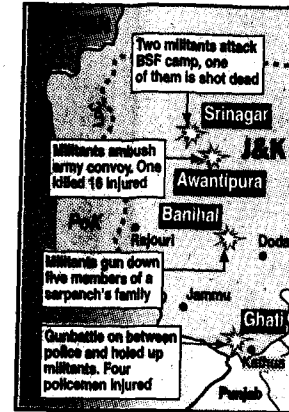
■ VALLEY | Landmine goes off on Srinagar-Jammu road

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, SEPTEMBER 2

WITHIN 48 hours of the encounter that finally led to the killing of Jaish commander Gazi Baba, security agencies were back on their toes.

The morning began with two suicide attackers trying to storm into a Border Security Force camp at Nishat right on the banks of the Dal lake. This was an area full of tourists, both domestic and foreign, until the lake and the boulevard skirting it was closed because of the Prime Minister's high-profile visit last week.

The BSF managed to foil the attack and killed one of the attackers while the other escaped. "Two militants of the Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit dressed in Army fatigues attempted to sneak into the our 57 Battalion headquarters at around 3 am. A sentry noticed the militants when they were trying to cut the barbed wire.



IE Map/B.K. SHARMA

When challenged, they hurled grenades and opened heavy fire but they could not enter the campus," a senior BSF officer said.

One attacker was gunned down, the other slipped into the dark.

The slain militant was later identified as Irfan, a Jaish member from Bahawalpur in Pakistan. One AK rifle, eight magazines and three hand-grenades were recovered from him.

The BSF claims it had intercepted radio messages

revealing Jaish plans to strike in a big way to avenge the killing of their commander Gazi Baba.

Jaish's apparent call for "revenge" for Gazi Baba's killing is being taken very seriously here: the J&K Police are reviewing security arrangements of all VIPs under their protection.

Officers of the Special Security Group—a commando wing of the police that protects Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed—along with other police officers today surveyed the entire area around Mufti's official residence at the Maulana Azad Road.

Personnel were posted on rooftops of almost every multi-storey building. Mufti, who decided to come and live inside the town rather than put up in the secluded Gupkar road, has in fact made the security establishment nervous as his residence is deemed to be a potential site for an attack.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Terror reminders since PM set the peace ball rolling

- Apr 30: Six army men killed in Doda
- May 7: Army major killed in ambush in Rajouri
- May 10: Militants kill 4 near Srinagar
- May 12: Two CRPF jawans killed in militant attack
- May 19: Militants massacre 6 in Rajouri
- May 26: Five of a family killed in Rajouri
- Jun 28: 12 jawans killed in attack on army camp
- Jul 4: J&K minister escapes militant attack
- Jul 6: Five killed in terrorist strike in Rajouri
- Jul 12: Six killed in militant attack
- Jul 19: 14 injured in blast, Pulwama
- Jul 21: Five killed in twin blasts near Valahno Devi
- Jul 22: Brigadier and 7 jawans killed in army camp attack, Tande
- Jul 22: Six pilgrims killed near Katra
- Aug 7: Two BSF men killed in Srinagar attack
- Aug 10: Militants attack BSF bunkers near Srinagar
- Aug 13: Four killed, 36 injured in blasts in Shopian
- Aug 16: Grenade attack injures 19 in Srinagar
- Aug 28: Militants attack Greenways Hotel in Srinagar
- Aug 30: BSF guns down Gazi Baba

BSF plays intercepts to prove Ghazi is dead

Press Trust of India
Srinagar, September 1

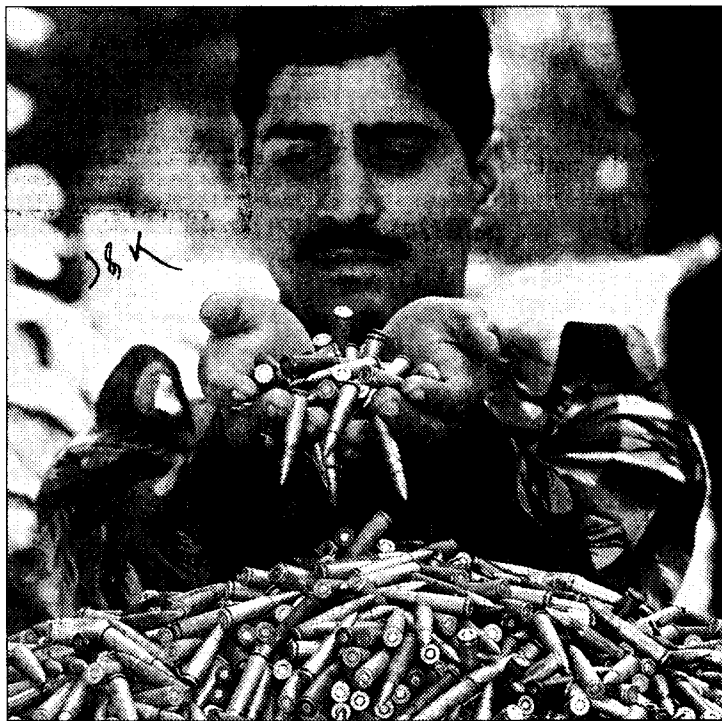
THE BSF on Monday played a radio intercept in which Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) has admitted that Ghazi Baba, its chief commander in Kashmir, has been killed and threatened to avenge his killing by launching strikes at security forces in J&K.

Speaking in fluent Urdu in the radio broadcast, played before journalists by BSF Director General Ajai Raj Sharma, the speaker said, "The beat of our hearts, the crown of our heads, our beloved commander Ghazi Baba and his deputy have left (for heavenly abode)... May God accept their sacrifice."

The speaker asked the Jaish cadres not to be demoralised by the loss of Ghazi Baba and asked them to "inflict sorrow and grief on those who are happy on his killing". Sharma, who was here to visit the jawans and officers injured in the encounter on August 30, said this should put to rest the controversy surrounding the identity of the slain militant.

Describing the killing of Ghazi Baba as one of the biggest achievements of BSF, Sharma said the slain militant's wife had given a statement identifying his body.

"We have done careful cross-checks on his identity and only then we came to conclude that it was him. But if anybody has any evidence contrary to it, we have an open mind on it," he said. Among other things that have been helpful in proving the identity of Ghazi Baba were the prominent mark on his eyebrow, eye-tests, the dental structure and



MORE THAN A HANDFUL: A soldier holds bullets seized from a camp near the Pakistan border in Tanghdar, 160 km from Srinagar, on Monday.

the testimony of a BSF source who had seen the militant during his lifetime, Sharma said. The BSF chief said the force had been targeting the mastermind of the Parliament attack for the past few months and had expected the breakthrough to come early.

"We had zeroed in on him several times but missed him narrowly," he admitted. He said the militants had the capability of carrying out revenge attacks, but the BSF was ready to meet the challenge. In a word of caution to his jawans, Sharma said, "No securi-

ty force, after making a big achievement, should sit tight and think nothing else will happen... They (Jaish members) are capable of doing it (striking) and we expect them to do it."

Meanwhile, in J&K, seven people, including three security personnel and a militant, were killed and three injured in encounters in Baramulla and Kupwara.

One securityman was killed and another injured in an encounter with militants at Dardapora-Kreeri in Baramulla district on Monday.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 SEP 2003

2 SEP 2003

Gazi Baba killed in encounter: BSF

By Luv Puri

JAMMU, AUG. 30. In what is being claimed as one of the biggest successes for the security agencies in Kashmir, Shah Nawaz Khan, also known as Gazi Baba, a Pakistani terrorist and the mastermind behind the December 13, 2001 attack on Parliament, and the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and several other *fidayeen* (suicide) attacks in the State, was killed in an encounter today.

The Border Security Force said that the chief commander (operations) of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, Gazi Baba, was killed, along with his accomplices, in Noorbagh, a residential area in Srinagar. In



A television image of the body of Shahnawaz Khan alias Gazi Baba. — PTI

the operation, a BSF jawan, Balbir Singh, was killed and eight others, including three officers, were injured.

The BSF's claim is based on a specific radio intercept caught on the frequency used by Gazi Baba and the identification of his body by a local resident. The Inspector-General of BSF (Kashmir range), Vijay Raman, said: "It is a big setback to the militant activities in Kashmir as many of our sources have confirmed his identification". The bodies of two of his accomplices had been recovered and the search was on to find the other bodies, he added.

Jaish denies claim

According to a UNI report, the Jaish has claimed that Gazi Baba was not among the militants killed today. A spokesman of the outfit said that the BSF claim was "totally false and baseless." He also contradicted the claim that there were only

five militants in the truck. "There were seven militants inside the house when the BSF cordoned off the area. Four of them were able to break the cordon and reach their hideout," he said. He, however, did not say if Gazi was among those who escaped.

After the Parliament attack, Gazi Baba became a cult figure in the militant ranks. He was earlier in the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen but later joined the Jaish. Known as the "chief strategist" of the Jaish in security circles, Gazi Baba was also allegedly involved in the massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pandits in Wandhama area on the outskirts of Srinagar city in 1998.

His involvement in the Parliament attack came to light during the interrogation of Mohammad Ashraf, a Kashmiri youth who had allegedly provided shelter and logistic support to the terrorists involved in the attack. A hunt was launched in south Kashmir to track down Gazi Baba but all efforts failed. He also used names such as Jehadi, Shehbaz Khan, Abu Hijrat and the well known, "Doctor", which came to the fore during the hijacking of an Indian Airlines aircraft to Kandahar in 1999. He was also reportedly involved in the kidnapping of six foreigners in Pahalgam in 1995.

Today's encounter was not an easy one for the security forces. After the hideout was traced in Srinagar, at 3.30 a.m., an operation was launched by the 60 and 193 Battalions of the BSF and the hideout was stormed. In the first assault, two BSF officers were injured and trapped in the first floor of the house. In order to rescue them and the residents of the house and those in the nearby areas, an operation was launched. The militants hiding in the upper floor of the house were engaged and the injured were rescued. After more reinforcements of the Rashtriya Rifles and the Special Operations Groups reached the area, massive firing started. After an 11-hour encounter, the security agencies killed the militants around noon. The house was shelled and brought down.

Accused in jails can identify body, says Minister: Page 10

Explosives seized

By Devesh K. Pandey

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. An abandoned bag containing 21 kg of high-quality gelatine explosive sticks, reportedly smuggled in from Mumbai, was seized by the Crime Branch of the Delhi police at the New Delhi railway station today, even as three persons, including a woman, travelling in an Ambassador car gave the police the slip after they were intercepted near the high-security Vijay Chowk while driving around in suspicious circumstances.

The occupants of the car, bearing a Jammu and Kashmir registration number, were being questioned by police, when the driver suddenly drove the vehicle away. Immediately, the police control room was alerted and the description of the occupants flashed to all the police stations. The incident took place around 7 a.m. Later around 10.15 a.m., a police team on a routine patrol at the New Delhi railway station spot-

ted a blue bag under a bench on Platform No. 6/7. When no one came forward to claim it, police opened the bag and found about 150 eight-inch-long sticks.

Realising that they were explosives, the police immediately alerted their seniors. The railway station compound was cordoned off and an extensive search operation was launched to trace the owner of the bag.

Two JeM militants gunned down

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. Two Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) terrorists were gunned down by the Delhi Police in an encounter late tonight. The Joint Commissioner of Police (Special Cell), Neeraj Kumar, told UNI that the two terrorists were trying to flee when they were intercepted by a police party. As they refused to stop and fired at the police, the encounter ensued and the two were shot dead.

Centre not averse to Hurriyat talks

Aloke Tikku in Srinagar

Aug. 28. — A day after Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee offered talks to those who shun violence and extreme positions, Mr LK Advani took the initiative further, declaring that the Centre would consider meeting Hurriyat leaders if they wanted a formal meeting. But he warned Islamabad that terrorist attacks like the ones in Srinagar and Mumbai could adversely affect the peace process.

"Although we have nominated Mr Vohra for holding talks with separatist groups in the Valley, if they (Hurriyat) still want to have a formal dialogue with the Centre to begin with, it can be considered," Mr Advani said, suggesting that like others, Hurriyat too may still have to hold negotiations with its interlocutor, Mr Vohra. The Hurriyat has not met him and insisted on talks only with the Centre to resolve the Kashmir issue.

But as things stand, the government does not see any reason to formally invite the Hurriyat leadership for talks. Mr

Advani declined to comment on the invitation. There were, however, indications that the Deputy Prime Minister had softened its stand. Mr Advani said: "The Centre has an open mind about meeting the Hurriyat Conference... we will think about it."

Officials here attribute the softening in the Centre's stand to the change in the Hurriyat leadership and chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's belief that the Hurriyat should be engaged in a dialogue. An official indicated the Centre would like to meet the Hurriyat leaders before formal talks begin with Islamabad.

Peace talks with Islamabad, however, will depend on Pakistan's conduct till the year-end. And the two major incidents over the last week — the twin blasts in Mumbai and yesterday's attack at Srinagar's central telegraph office that ended after security forces fired a mortar at the hotel where the militants had taken refuge — were not going to help anyone.

The Deputy Prime Minister said he was "sure that our neighbour would be conscious that

Quid pro quo

NEW DELHI, Aug. 28. — Reciprocating India's gesture of releasing Munir, Pakistan has decided to release Ranjith Kumar, the Indian boy who has been languishing in a Pakistani jail for the past six years. He will be sent to India on 30 August. MEA spokesman said.

There is evidence of sincerity on part of our neighbour. Only then can the peace talks be held in conducive atmosphere. This is no way to create a conducive climate," he later said.

Mr Vajpayee had spoken of the need for a conducive atmosphere when he made the "historic talks offer" at a Srinagar rally. Asked if the Centre would consider another ceasefire — on the pattern of the Ramzan ceasefire a few years ago — Mr Advani said there was no such proposal.

NEW DELHI, Aug. 28. — India blamed Pakistan's "negative approach" and its attempts to bring in "extraneous issues" as the reasons why technical talks on lifting the 20-month suspension of bilateral civil aviation ties were stalled. Officials failed to reach an agreement on resuming airlinks at the end of two days of technical-level talks in Rawalpindi today.

"An agreement could easily have been reached. It is regretted that this did not happen because of Pakistan's negative approach and its attempts to bring in extraneous issues," an MEA spokesman said. According to MEA officials, an agreement was within reach and discussions on resumption of point-to-point services were constructive and positive. There were discussions on the possibility of additional frequencies and places to be covered, but, officials said, the accord could not be signed because Pakistan was not prepared to resume the facility of overflights.

Pakistan insisted on India giving an "abiding commitment" in the form of guarantees that India will not unilaterally ban overflights, as it had after the attack on its Parliament in 2001. It was widely expected that India would not provide the guarantees Pakistan sought, with New Delhi's position being that point-to-point links and overflight rights have to be restored simultaneously.

"Its (Pakistan's) argument that there was need to guarantee that such facilities would not be disrupted in future was clearly an excuse," an official said. "It has sought no guarantees that there would be no disruption in future of the Delhi-Lahore bus or any other services between the two countries. Picking on overflights clearly indicates some other intention."

A brief joint statement issued at the end of the talks at Rawalpindi said the discussions helped the two sides to understand "each other's respective positions" and paved the way for the next round of talks, the dates for which would be announced after "consultation".

'J&K POLL A MANDATE FOR PEACE'

Doors open to all who reject militancy: PM

By Vinay Kumar

SRINAGAR, AUG. 27. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said that the Centre's doors were open to all those who rejected militancy and extreme positions and "wish to play a constructive role in taking Jammu and Kashmir forward on the high road of peace and rapid development".

Inaugurating a two-day Inter-State Council meeting here, Mr. Vajpayee assured the people and the Jammu and Kashmir Government of "maximum help in consolidating the recent gains." He vowed to further intensify "our sincere efforts to advance the dialogue process".

Lauding the people of the State for showing their faith in democracy in the face of grave threats, Mr. Vajpayee said the Assembly elections last October would go down "as one of the finest victories for the ballot, in its battle against the bullet, in world history".

"Above everything else, it (Assembly election) was a mandate for peace. It was a mandate

against cross-border terrorism, which the people of this State have suffered for over a decade and paid a heavy price," he told the Chief Ministers and Central Ministers here. It is for the first time that the Inter-State Council is meeting outside Delhi. The symbolism of holding the meet in Srinagar was not lost as the Congress-PDP Government of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed rolled out the red carpet for the high-power meet amid albeit an elaborate security blanket all over the city.

'Heartening changes'

Welcoming the recent change in situation in Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister said: "How heartening it is to know that the 'shikaras' are once again sailing with tourists on the famous Dal Lake in front of this convention centre. How reassuring it is to know that the hope of normality is returning to the Kashmir Valley."

It is Mr. Vajpayee's second visit to the Valley in less than four months. He had addressed a massive public rally here on

April 18 where he extended the hand of friendship to Pakistan.

In his inaugural address, the Prime Minister did not make any specific reference either to the Hurriyat Conference or to any other separatist organisation but reiterated his Government's stated position of holding dialogue with those who abjure violence. The meeting of the Council took place even as militant organisations and the Hurriyat gave a call for general strike in the city.

Referring to the Inter-State Council's agenda, Mr. Vajpayee urged the Chief Ministers to help ensure that after 13 long years the discussion on the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations on Centre-State relations came to a final and consensual conclusion at the Srinagar meeting. Elaborating, he said the dynamics of social, economic and political forces in India had changed significantly since the Sarkaria Commission submitted its report. "Centre-State relations have improved and a sense of partnership has emerged."

A facilitator: Page 12

BSF jawan killed as militants try to storm BSNL office in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, AUG. 27. A BSF jawan was killed and nine persons, including a BSF DIG, were injured as heavily-armed militants made an attempt to storm the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. building here, this evening, official sources said.

A BSF constable died of injuries in hospital where he and eight others were moved after militants hurled a grenade at security personnel in a bid to storm the BSNL building around 7 p.m.

The DIG of BSF, Desh Raj, who was also in-

jured, has been rushed to Soura Medical Institute, the sources said.

Two militants belonging to the Al-Mansoor outfit lobbed a grenade near the main gate of the building in their bid to gain entry, but took shelter in a nearby hotel when faced with retaliatory fire from security forces deployed there.

As the securitymen took position outside the hotel, they exchanged fire with the militants, who were holed up in the building, which houses the offices of several local dailies. — PTI

Centre stage at Srinagar

It's time to consider fresh initiatives to
keep the Kashmir process going

FOUR months after he announced his peace initiative from there, Prime Minister Vajpayee would be in Srinagar again. The cynics may argue that little progress has been achieved down that road, at least in terms of India-Pakistan relations. But this slow pace by itself may not be a bad thing as long as the pace is also steady. The holding of the Inter-State Council meeting at Srinagar, and that for the first time outside the Capital, does in itself send out many positive signals within and outside the country, not the least being a reaffirmation of J&K as a key Indian state with its leadership being an important component of national policy-making.

At the same time, there is a perceptible weakening, if not actual fractures, in the cohesion of the All Party Hurriyat Conference that deserves notice. The political face of the separatist agenda had lost out many years ago when the jihad had to rely heavily on foreign fighters, undermining its political legitimacy. But the real dent in the Hurriyat's position to speak for separatism and its accompanying violence came last year when the people over-

whelmingly voted in the state elections, in effect rejecting that ideology and the political stance that sought to boycott the elections. Events since then have progressively and surely created further dents in the support for the type of ideology that the Hurriyat had promoted for years.

The Hurriyat as a political umbrella for separatism may now be sliding toward oblivion because of the fact that it appears to have lost the citizen's confidence. Just for this reason there is need for the Centre to handle the conglomeration carefully. There is also a need to strengthen the benefits that could accrue to the Hurriyat in a variety of ways if it were to allow itself to be nudged toward the mainstream. Democracy in the real sense is heavily dependent not just on the rule by majority but the interventions of a constructive opposition. Our priority task ahead essentially revolves around removing the sense of grievances and alienation of the people. The Hurriyat should be invited to join in that process. If this requires talking to them at the political level, the invitation should be duly extended — preferably at Srinagar.

28K
110-1

Hurriyat ready for talks

By Our Staff Reporter 23/8

JAMMU, AUG. 22. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference chairman, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, today expressed his willingness to hold talks with the Central Government for finding a peaceful solution to the Jammu and Kashmir issue and said that the Hurriyat would not insist on its condition of a trilateral dialogue by including Pakistan.

In an interview to the *The Hindu* today, Mr. Ansari said "the conglomerate has made a change in its policy by not stressing on the inclusion of Pakistan in the dialogue process." Pakistan as a party to the dispute could be involved in the dialogue process at a later stage.

"We are prepared to talk with a fresh approach and with an open mind. Let the Centre come out with a proposal and we are prepared to talk," he said.

"A dialogue can start between the conglomerate and the Central Government at one level and, later, we can hold a dialogue with Pakistan. On the third plane, India and Pakistan can talk on the issue."

Appreciating the "vision" of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in realising the chang-

ing situation in the world, Mr. Ansari said, "the Prime Minister clearly stated that both countries have to realise the changing world order and hinted at the American aggression on Iraq. I think it was a statement coming from a person with deep understanding and sensitivity. This approach certainly needs to be carried forward. We welcome this kind of spirit."

The Hurriyat chairman also welcomed the statement of the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, insisting on the inclusion of every section of society in the dialogue process.

On the talks with the Centre's interlocutor, N.N. Vohra, he said, "I will not talk to him. I want the initiative coming from the Prime Minister. For instance, the former Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, in 1974 took a personal initiative and only at a later stage officials were involved. The Vohra initiative does not take us anywhere."

Asked about the reasons for the change in the Hurriyat's policy, he said "we realised that the three parties to the dispute — India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir — cannot sit at the same table. We have to go in stages and be flexible."

92-6 Kashmir calling

The rush for cellphones symbolises the desire of people here to live normal, productive lives

CELLPHONE connectivity — something that is taken so much for granted in the rest of India — has just come to Jammu and Kashmir. It marks another significant step towards normalcy in the state. Those queues of people jostling to figure in the list of the lucky 5,000 who will become cellphone owners in the initial phase, tell a story of ordinary people who wish nothing more than to lead productive lives after years of existing in the penumbra of the battle-zone. They know that in today's world the cellphone has the potential of transforming not just inter-personal communication but business and professional prospects. Not surprisingly, therefore, it is the young who are the most enthused by the new device. As one man told this newspaper rather poignantly, "How long should we remain backward?"

What we have here, then, is a mini-revolution not just in telecommunications but in expectations in a region that has high levels of education and significant natural resources. The cellphone could have a multiplier effect in the state by helping to synergise that prosperity and literacy and overcome the obstacles posed by a difficult terrain. Ultimately, it is the healing touch

fuelled by people's own enterprise, rather than any state intervention, that will prove sustainable; ultimately, the only way to end militancy is by addressing popular alienation. Improving telecom connectivity could be an important element in this vital, complex process.

In the aftermath of the attack on Parliament in December 2001, the NDA government took the controversial decision to ban the use of Internet and withdraw STD and ISD facilities in the state. This was done, ostensibly, to shore up security. But whether the measure did in fact have the effect it was meant to have is an open question. While terrorist outfits continued to have access to sophisticated means of communication, innocent citizens were deprived of the means to communicate to family and friends outside the state and the country. Fortunately the ban was withdrawn before the state went to the polls last year to the general relief of all. While security in the state cannot be compromised, there are ways to ensure that this is done in a manner that does not infringe on the rights of the common man and woman to live a normal life with all the amenities of modernity.

Questions over action against police official in J&K

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI, AUG. 13. Political laurels, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, is starting to discover, can rapidly transform themselves into tiaras of thorns.

Last month, the Jammu and Kashmir Government announced its intention to terminate the services of the Superintendent of Police, Farooq Khan, a highly-decorated officer who set up the first anti-terrorist operations group in the State. The Government charged Mr. Khan with having played a key role in the elimination of five innocent persons at Panchalathan, near Anantnag, and with claiming that "they were terrorists responsible for the March 2000 massacre of Sikh villagers at Chattisinghpora".

The State Government also said that Mr. Khan was responsible for "tampering with the DNA tests" conducted to establish the identity of the five dead persons. The action was part of a series of well-advertised human rights initiatives, including the disbanding of the Special Operations Group, which was led at its inception by Mr. Khan.

State Government officials, however, have not been quite so enthusiastic about making public documents, now obtained by *The Hindu*, which show it has stumbled on a series of tripwires. The Union Government, without whose approval Mr. Khan's services cannot be terminated, believes that the Jammu and Kashmir Government does not have the evidence to justify its course of action. The Central Bureau of Investigation, which is already investigating the cases for which Mr. Khan is facing action, is angry over what it sees as the State's efforts to poach on its turf. Worst of all, the Army is incensed over the affair which, it believes, could have serious consequences for the troops engaged in counter-terrorist operations.

A Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet Sub-Committee recommended action against Mr. Khan on the basis of the Justice G.A. Kuchhai Commission of Inquiry, which was set up by the erstwhile National Conference regime to investigate an "attempt to tamper with DNA tests" on the five killed at Panchalathan. Justice Kuchhai's report does seem to hold Mr. Khan responsible for the affair, although he was removed as Anantnag police chief soon af-

ter the Panchalathan killings and was under suspension when the DNA tests were conducted. Yet, Union Home Ministry officials point out that it is far from clear if the Commission's observations constitute a judicial finding. The report asserts that Mr. Khan "might have managed behind the scene that blood samples so collected turned fake by indirect means".

Indeed, the State Government's own General Administration Department felt that this triple-layered supposition was not adequate to base legal action on. N.R. Gupta, who was the Department's chief then, wrote a confidential official note pointing out that the "Commission has not been able to pin-point responsibility on a particular individual or group of individuals". Justice Kuchhai's findings, Mr. Gupta continued, were made "on the basis of presumption", and did not seem "conclusive and cogent". For reasons that are still unclear, the Justice Kuchhai Commission did not issue notice to Mr. Khan, a necessary condition precedent for any commission of inquiry making adverse mention of any individual. As such, the Superintendent of Police did not have the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses or discuss documents. While the Cabinet Sub-Committee simply ignored Mr. Gupta's memorandum, Union Home Ministry sources told *The Hindu* that they, however, need hard evidence before taking action.

The CBI, famously prickly about any outside interference, is also pointing to the law. Before demitting office, the National Conference regime had handed over a large set of Panchalathan-related cases to the CBI. On December 19 last year, the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Government issued another notification, handing over investigations relating to the tampering of evidence to that organisation as well. CBI sources say that they see the DNA tampering charges as being part of a continuum, beginning with alleged attempts to destroy the bodies of the five killed in Panchalathan. "This is our case", a CBI official says, "the State Government has no business fiddling with it". The State Vigilance Commission, which the Cabinet Sub-Committee said would investigate the DNA tampering, has meanwhile written to the Government, saying that it is only empowered to

handle cases under the Prevention of Corruption Act cases.

Interestingly, there are some signs that the State Government could be barking up the wrong tree. The first information report on the killings at Panchalathan was filed by 7 Rashtriya Rifles, which stated that five unidentified terrorists were killed in the course of a cordon-and-search operation. Significantly, the FIR makes no mention of police participation in the operation, evidence for which exists only in a noting made by an Assistant Sub-Inspector in his *Roznamcha*, or police station diary. This noting, legal experts say, is of little evidentiary value compared to the FIR, and suggests the police at best played a secondary or supportive role in the encounter. Justice Kuchhai chose not to use his powers to compel the Army officials concerned to appear before him. Indeed, none of the several investigations into the matter has recorded evidence from Army personnel who were present during the encounter.

What concerns the Army, however, is that the Cabinet Sub-Committee seems to have endorsed, without evidence, rumours fuelled by secessionist elements that it was in some way responsible for the Chattisinghpora killings. Paragraph 5 of the sub-committee report claims that the motive of the Panchalathan operation was "to mislead the Government and the public opinion at large that the killing of the 36 Sikh in Chatti Singhpora had been executed by foreign militants".

Army officials expressed outrage at the Cabinet's turn of phrase, and also dismissed claims by the relatives of the victims that they were kidnapped before being killed in a fake encounter. "Such claims are always made every time an encounter takes place," a senior 16 Corps official told *The Hindu*, "but please note that investigation after investigation has found not a shred of evidence".

Investigation of the Panchalathan affair was first promoted by the National Conference regime, hoping to contain the erosion of its political base in southern Kashmir.

Absence of evidence meant that its efforts went nowhere, and the People's Democratic Party was able to cash in instead. Now, it seems, events could just be headed towards completing a full circle.

Kargil Council for Greater Ladakh

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR, Aug. 9. — Opposing the demand for Union Territory status for Ladakh and the trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, the Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council said the Ladakh Union Territory Front's (LUTF) demand for UT status was confined to Leh district only. The council has put forth the demand for a Greater Ladakh which would include Gilgit, Skardu and Baltistan.

An Autonomous Hill Development Council delegation met Centre's interlocutor on J&K Mr NN Vohra on Thursday. The council said any solution to the Kashmir problem should be taken into account the wishes of the people of all three regions of the state. Mr Vohra is on a week long visit to Leh and Kargil to meet representatives of various political, social and religious organisations.

The delegation demanded that a special grant of Rs 35 crore from the Centre to set up infrastructure of the newly-constituted Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council.

The BJP delegation also met Mr Vohra and opposed any division of the

state and also the demand for Union Territory status for Ladakh. Members said civil air services to Kargil should be started immediately and funds. The team demanded funds from the Centre for the construction of the Zojila tunnel.

A 3-member National Conference delegation endorsed the demand for restoration of pre-1953 autonomy to the state. The team opposed any division of the state and the demand for Union Territory status for Ladakh. NC members suggested that talks be held with Pakistan to resolve the J&K problem and that the LoC be converted into an international border.

2 killed in Mendhar

Militants gunned down two persons in Mendhar, Poonch, yesterday. In another incident, residents of NS Pura village in Akhnoor nabbed a teenaged boy moving about suspiciously yesterday, officials said.

Security forces today foiled militants' plan to trigger powerful blasts by detecting explosive devices at two crowded bus stands in Kupwara and Sopore. Following reports of heavy movement of militants in Poonch, the

JAMAAT CHIEF TO TOE INDEPENDENT LINE

SRINAGAR, Aug. 9. — Newly-elected chief Jamaat-i-Islami chief Amir Nazir Ahmad Kashani today said he would not toe the lines of Syed Ali Shah Geelani and his predecessor Ghulam Mohammad Bhat. "I will follow the party's constitution."

Mr Kashani said: "There are no personality cults in Jamaat ... "Yes, if somebody says I am inclined towards Said-ud-din sahib (the founder of JI in the state), that is acceptable." The Jamaat chief said he would try to bridge differences within the organisation. He parried questions over sending the Jaamat representative to Hurriyat Conference and declined to comment on People's Conference's controversy. — SNS

DM has imposed night curfew in the region for a period of two months, officials said today. The curfew would remain in force between 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. till 16 August and four hours for the rest of the period.

Hurriyat divided over talks with Ram

MUFTI ISLAH

SRINAGAR, AUGUST 5

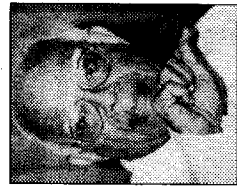
THE Hurriyat Conference is divided over the holding of talks with the Ram Jethmalani-led Kashmir Committee even as three senior leaders are camping in Delhi to restart the stalled dialogue with him.

Two important constituents of the conglomerate's decision-making executive — the JKLF and Jamaat-e-Islami — are dead against the resumption of talks. JKLF chairman Yasin Malik has even described Jethmalani as "inconsistent" for "wavering" on the agenda of holding talks on Kashmir.

"When Jethmalani met Hurriyat the first time, he gave the impression that he was talking about Kashmiris' aspirations. His statements in the press said he was referring to auton-



'Does the Jethmalani-led Kashmir Committee have any backing from the NDA Government? A dialogue with him is a waste of time. I don't think our leadership has kept ear to the ground'



talking to Jethmalani. Sources said senior leaders like Mohammad Azam Inqilabi, Fazal Haq Qureshi, Nayeem Ahmad Khan and others are pressuring the Hurriyat top brass to restructure and expand the executive so that the views of the general council and working committee are also counted while taking final decisions.

"The three executives — Ansari, Prof Bhat and Mirwaiz Umer — have hijacked the Hurriyat. They did not bother to take the views of the general council on the issue of talks with Ram (Jethmalani). They have violated the Hurriyat constitution," said a senior leader.

"Does the Jethmalani-led Kashmir Committee have any backing from the NDA Government? A dialogue with him is meaningless and a waste of time. I don't think our leadership has kept its ear to the ground," said a JKLF leader.

omy...and at another point, he talked about Hurriyat's participation in Assembly polls," said Yasin.

His deputy and JKLF vice-chairman Bashir Ahmad Bhat shares his view. He said resumption of the dialogue with Jethmalani is "meaningless because he (Ram) changes his stand at the drop of a hat".

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani said "people are wasting time... Jethmalani's agenda is no secret now. What can one get out of a meeting with a person who persuaded Hurriyat leaders to partici-

Most of the 25 parties comprising the conglomerate's general council are also questioning the wisdom of

ate in previous elections."

Sources said Bashir Ahmad Tota of People's League — another constituent of the executive — is also against the dialogue. The sources added that while Tota has rushed to Delhi, the other three leaders — Hurriyat chairman Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Prof Abdul Gani Bhat — have refused to give him audience and ignored him.

New face of J&K militancy

Four years later, Kargil is a forgotten story

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 26

THE OBSERVANCE of Kargil Vijay Diwas on Saturday was confined to wreath-laying ceremonies at cantonments across the country. It went unobserved, officially, at the national capital, where neither the political nor the military leadership showed up to commemorate India's most recent military triumph four years ago.

This is the second year that the Kargil anniversary has been officially shouldered, in complete contrast to the first anniversary in 2000, which was marked by fanfare. Besides high-profile wreath-laying and an exhibition at India Gate, there was a ceremony for lighting candle in Parliament to commemorate the sacrifices of the soldiers at the Kargil Heights. But a bigger disappointment, regret analysts, is that the significance of Kargil as a wake-up call has been lost on decision-makers, as well.

The review of national security forced upon the nation by Kargil, has not lived up to its promise. The post of Chief of the Defence Staff, central to the intended revamp of the national security apparatus, is nowhere on the horizon. Institutional arrangements have still not been made with respect to another critical office, that of the National Security Adviser.

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, July 26

WHAT BEGAN as essentially an indigenous popular uprising, the separatist movement in Kashmir has undergone phenomenal changes. Many old militant groups have become defunct, and some new groups, mostly with radical Islamic views, have emerged. These groups, indeed, are in the forefront, shifting the ideological emphasis of their struggle from a nationalistic to an Islamic one.

The struggle for "azadi" is now a chaste jihadi movement, and fidayeen attacks are its essential components. To these "Mujahideen" jihad is not just a means to an end but an end in itself. "He who dies in the course of jihad will be blessed by Allah", they say. This high degree of motivation has given birth to hardcore fanatics, who thoughtlessly take the battle to the security force camps to achieve "martyrdom". The fidayeen attack on the Army's Brigade head-

quarters at Akhnoor in Jammu on Tuesday is a grim reminder.

Even as an unknown militant group, Ashohada, claimed responsibility for the attack, the security force authorities believe it could be a front name of the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.

It was, indeed, this outfit that introduced fidayeen strikes in Kashmir militancy, with a deadly attack on the BSF's sector headquarters at Bandipora on July 13, 1999. Since then, 59 such attacks have been carried out by the LeT on the security forces across the state and has left over 350 jawans dead and 450 injured.

What must have baffled analysts is that the latest fidayeen strike came at a time when an atmosphere of reconciliation and rapprochement seemed to be dawning on the Indo-Pak horizons. The visit of Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Leader of the Opposition and chief of Pakistan's Jamaat-ul Ulema Islami, to Delhi and his soft, sweet talk with Indian lead-

PAK OVERTURES

- Foreign secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan must begin soon to resolve all outstanding issues, including Kashmir
- Talks at a much lower level than that of the foreign secretary as proposed by India would serve no purpose
- We are prepared for talks on a bilateral or trilateral level and the delay is not from our side



P. M. Khasuri
'Awaiting talks'



REMEMBRANCE: Harbhajan Kaur weeps for her son, Capt Satnam Singh Parmar, in Jalandhar on Saturday.

ers - more particularly with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and VHP leaders - was seen in this backdrop. While the Maulana earned accolades from the Indian audience for his mellifluous talk, on his home turf, he annoyed many people. "The attack is a rebuff to Maulana Fazl", says advocate Mir Mohammad Assadullah.

Senior security and police authorities have apprehensions that such a strike could be mounted in the Valley, too. "We have taken every precaution", says a security official, "and vigil around security formations have been intensified".

Hizbul Mujahideen, which is the only indigenous mili-

Wounds of the mind are hard to heal

Partha Maitra
Srinagar, July 26

MILITANCY IN Kashmir has also hit the womb. And the unborn child suffers the pangs felt by its mother even before she goes into labour. Nearly every home in Kashmir has a tragic tale and the trauma takes its toll on pregnant women. And more often than not, the child is born deformed or mentally retarded.

Safia (name changed) saw her husband being dragged out of the house by militants in the dead of night and her brother went missing one day. She was three months pregnant then. Safia pressed into acute manic depressive and developed suicidal tendencies. And she gave birth to a spastic child. A year later, the gloom has not lifted. But she takes her son every day to the mental-physio Rehabilitation Centre (CRC) in Srinagar.

Statistics at the CRC are grim. Case histories of 65 percent mothers with mentally-retarded children indicate pre-natal stress. And in most cases, the mothers were in a state of shock or suffering from severe depression or high pressure. Kausar, a special educator at the CRC, said marriages within relatives account for the remaining cases of mental retardation among newborns in J&K.

Youth tortured in police custody often end up as nervous wrecks. "We receive several stress disorder cases and these include those who had picked up the gun or are simply innocent," said a doctor.

'They (Hurriyat) want a signal from PM...there is a thaw'

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister MUFTI MOHAMMED SAYEED is optimistic about the latest peace initiative. On a visit to the Capital this week, during which he met Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, he spoke to NEERJA CHOWDHURY at the newly renovated J&K House. Excerpts from the interview:

TALKING WITH Mufti Mohammed Sayeed

■ **The new Hurriyat chief has called for dialogue on the lines of the Indira-Sheikh talks. How do you see this latest stand of the Hurriyat?**

This is a change. They want to talk to the Government of India. Their utterances say that. They have already said, give up the gun, give peace a chance, and now they are ready for talks. It is now a question of working out the modalities. Only the format (of the talks) has to be decided. I am sure the Prime Minister will take note of that.

■ **Will the Prime Minister meet them?**

Zaroori nahin hai, but they (the Hurriyat) want a signal. Do you think they are not in touch? It is essential that something happens at the level of the Prime Minister. I think there will be a movement forward on this front.

■ **Do you welcome it?**

Of course I welcome it. It has been our main thrust before and after the elections. The Congress, our partner, is also for it. It was the Congress which had held talks with Sheikh Saheb, with Longowal, and in Assam. I spoke to Soniaji and to Manmohan Singh. It has been the Congress stand that the Government should talk to all sections. We want to address the internal dimension (of the problem). *Kuch na kuch initiative hoga.*

■ **By the PM?**

I think so.

■ **What do you attribute this change (in the Hurriyat) to?**

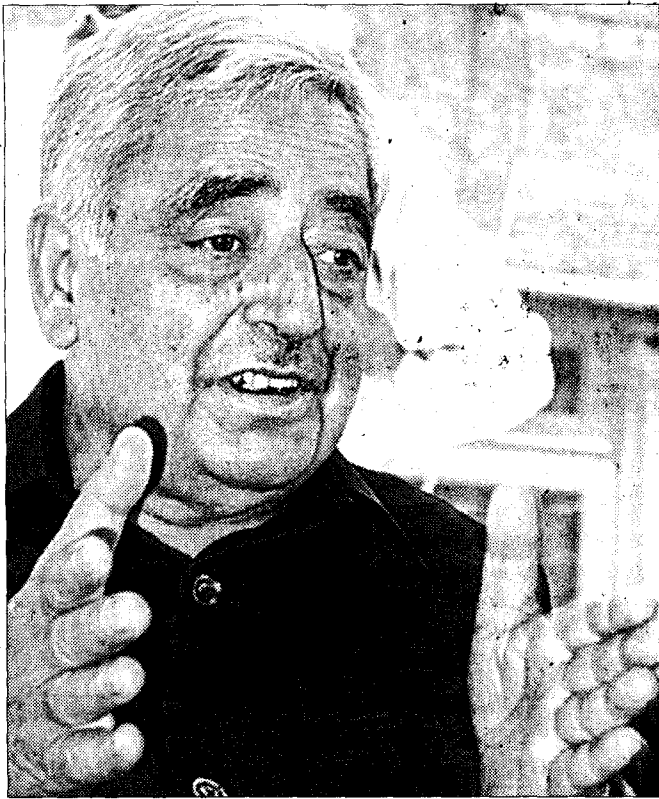
This is a realistic approach. There is a change in the situation, in people's thinking. There is a thaw. The peace process is going on. It is a favourable situation. Strike when the iron is hot. The Indo-Pak normalisation is going on slow and steady. It was a Kashmiri boy who first got a visa to go to Pakistan on the bus

“ **The Hurriyat are willing to talk, and we have to address the internal dimension of the problem. With Pakistan, we will have country to country talks...No, I am not for third party mediation. Both countries are competent to address their disputes. There is no need for a headmaster. It is a non-issue** ”

to Lahore last week.

■ **And on the other side there is baby Noor Fatima...**

That's something great. I don't know whose idea it was that she should come to India for



“ **This is the first time such a large trade delegation has come from Pak. Then there is the initiative of Maulana Fazlur Rahman jisne wahan neend haram kar dee thee. All this cannot go on without the consent of the Pak authorities. But there is little hype... At least we are not groping in the dark. Movement ho raha hai** ”

treatment. She could have gone to London. The Pakistanis have a fascination for Europe. Obviously *Idhar ka raasta dikhaya signal daene ke liye.*

This is the first time that such a large trade delegation has come from Pakistan. Then there is the initiative of Maulana Fazlur Rahman, *jisne wahan neend haram kar dee thee.* All this cannot go on without the consent of the authorities there (in Pakistan). But there is little hype this time. Both countries have realised that we must approach it step by step. The Prime Minister said in Srinagar that we have to take note of what happened in Iraq. In other words, *Aapas maen rishte theek karo.* And that has a big implication for Kashmir. Our task is made easier. You can't get very far with only statements, people see what is happening around them.

■ **Are you in touch with the Hurriyat leaders?**

Not directly. There's been no one-to-one meeting. But I am aware of their thinking.

■ **Are you hopeful about the latest initiative?**

At least we are not groping in the dark. *Movement ho raha hai.*

■ **What is the role of the National Conference?**

I feel they are still not reconciled to the change of guard, having lost the elections. They say something one day, another thing the next day. Political parties have to accept the people's verdict. After all, no one has the monopoly of power.

■ **How do you see their decision to pull out of the NDA?**

I travelled to all the districts. Unspent money was there. The Central money had not been utilised. Diversion of funds was taking place. You know Rs 5.5 crores was spent on this house (J&K House on Prithviraj Road, New Delhi). The earlier house *puranae zamane ka thaa,* it could have been a heritage house. Rs 25 crores had been envisaged for the CM's house in Srinagar, and Rs 1.25 had been spent on it. I said stop it.

It is only when the Centre saw that here was a government responsive and starting to implement schemes, and had made people accountable, that it decided to give us the financial package. *Pehle bhi koi kaam nahin hua hai.* We fully utilised the funds that were there.

■ **Omar Abdullah has called for third party mediation?**

According to me, it is positioning on their part. As I said, the Hurriyat are willing to talk, and we have to address the internal dimension of the problem. With Pakistan, we will have country to country talks.

■ **Are you for third party mediation. Hurriyat chief Maulana Abbas Ansari talked about the possibility of mediation by Iran or Nelson Mandela?**

No, I am not for third party mediation. Both countries are competent to address their disputes. There is no need for a headmaster. It is a non-issue.

■ **What is responsible for the winds of change blowing in Kashmir?**

Kashmir has bled much. The momentum for the change has been created by the people. People are the fountainhead of everything. They desire peace, it is their paramount concern today. They want peace with dignity, and they want dialogue. The Prime Minister's initiative has helped.

■ **And you are the beneficiary of it?**

I had been saying for some time that the mood was changing. I told you about it before the elections. But none of you took me seriously then.

■ **A lot of people are suddenly going to Kashmir?**

Yes, the Prime Minister came, Sonia Gandhi came. Three hundred MPs have come in the last month for various committee meetings. The Inter State Council was held there. Bollywood is coming. *Kisi ka seminar hai aur kisi ki conference.* Tourists are coming in large numbers from everywhere. I feel *apni khoyi hui cheeze jo pyari hoti hai, usko koi pa laeta hai, tho bahut khushi hoti hai.* That is the reaction of the tourist. He gets the feeling, this is my land and I am safe here, and there is no end to his happiness. That gives me pleasure.

Sometimes it's embarrassing for me. People say, *Mufti saheb kamaal ho gaya.* But I know there are so many other factors possible for it.

■ **You forgot to mention the President's visit?**

Jawab nahin thaa unka. You know he walked two-and-a-half km to Vaishno Devi, interacting with the yatis on the way. Everywhere he told people to have a vision and not get stuck in small things. At one school he told his whole story, how as a child he would wake up at 4 am and

“ **They (NC) are trying to recover lost ground. But the question is one of credibility. I don't think people take them seriously. They are the ones who used to say what is this Hurriyat, what is this Pakistan, and aar paar ki ladai hone do. Whenever the Govt would take a peace initiative, they'd react sharply** ”

work, how his mother would save small quantities of kerosene for him to study, how he became a vegetarian because vegetarian food was Rs 30 per month and non-veg food cost Rs 50 which he could not afford. At the Women's College, and at the schools he visited, at the end of the programme, the students sang the national anthem.

■ **Is this a new thing?**

Yes, the national anthem would be played at the functions of the army and the police but at the people's level I saw it after a long time. I liked it.

■ **What are you doing about the generation of employment?**

Our education infrastructure has really deteriorated. We have now made English compulsory from Class I. Admissions to schools will be made at the age of 4, not 6. We have 11,000 primary schools and we are appointing teachers to teach English. We are opening new schools and upgrading existing ones. We are giving importance to education. Secondly there was a freeze on the appointment of doctors, engineers and agricultural graduates. We are appointing them on contract. Then there are the self employment schemes. But the instant and multiplier effect is of tourism. It affects hotels, houseboats, taxis, ponywallahs, shopkeepers. With tourists coming, it is changing the climate in the state.

■ **Eyebrows were raised when Yasin Malik was arrested on the day that the Hurriyat chief made soft noises about talks?**

I am told that that the Supreme Court insisted on his presence. It was a technical reason and not in anybody's hands.

■ **What next, Mufti Saheb?**

The way I see the *mahaul* developing, I would like to bring paradise back to Kashmir.

Terror strike with poison in tail

9-8 28K

PTI 2877

**BINOO JOSHI AND
SUJAN DUTTA**

Jammu/New Delhi, July 22: Militants struck twice at an army camp today, killing a brigadier more than seven hours after the first attack at dawn claimed seven soldiers and beguiled senior officers into believing that the worst was over.

Besides the slain brigadier, three generals were among the injured in the second attack when the third *fidayeen* crept up on his target — a group of senior officers inspecting the attack site — and blew himself up.

The suicide attacks on the camp at Tanda, near Akhnoor, began at 5.30 this morning when two militants stormed the army's electrical and mechanical engineering unit, 30 km from Jammu, hurling grenades and firing wildly.

Seven soldiers, part of the unit that mans the Akhnoor sector, were killed in the exchange of fire that lasted more than three hours before the two *fidayeen* were shot dead.

The sector is particularly strategic. This is where a piece of Pakistan juts into Indian territory. Of late, the army has been reporting infiltration here.

The second attack, around 1.15 pm, came as the officers were being given a briefing on the militant strike. Reports suggest that the militant was a patient assassin who hid in the tall elephant grass to claim bigger "kills" than jawans.

Brigadier V.K. Govil, head of the electrical and mechanical engineers branch in the northern army command, died on the way to hospital after the militant, strapped with grenades, blew himself up on the officers. Among those injured were Lt

Gen. Hari Prasad, the northern army commander, Lt Gen. T.P.S. Brar, commander of the 16 Corps and Maj. Gen. Khanna, major general, general services, of the northern army command.

By any standard, the casualties are one of the biggest military reversals for any armed force anywhere in the world even during war. The officers injured or killed are some of the most experienced in the army. Lt Gen. Hari Prasad was director-general, infantry, before being posted as northern army commander earlier this year. Regional army commanders are equivalent in rank to the vice-chief of army staff.

Why so many officers should have been at the same spot at the same time in the troubled state is not known. Standard operating procedures dictate commanders should travel separately.

Asked why the officers were bunched up, officials in army headquarters said: "Our senior officers also lead from the front and encourage jawans."

Security agencies claimed that the Lashkar-e-Toiba was behind the attack and the lesser-known militant outfit, al Shuhda Brigade, which claimed responsibility, was a shadow group of the Lashkar.

The attack was carried out to protest visiting Pakistani Opposition leader Fazl-ur Rehman's remarks that the Line of Control should be converted into a permanent border and the Kashmir issue should be resolved within the framework of the Simla Agreement, a handwritten press release faxed by the outfit to the PTI office in Jammu said.

Al Shuhda Brigade wants to make Rehman realise that his statements would have no bearing on jihad in Kashmir, the outfit said.



WHAT DANGER LURKS BEHIND? Security personnel patrol the Amarnath route on Tuesday. (PTI)

The army has cut off all routes leading to Akhnoor as it suspects there are more suicide attackers hiding in the area. There are also intercepts that several militant groups have recently infiltrated from across the border.

Defence minister George Fernandes will reach the site of the attack tomorrow morning for an on-the-spot study of the situation. British foreign secretary Jack Straw telephoned his Indi-

an counterpart Yashwant Sinha to condemn the attacks, the foreign ministry said.

The twin attacks, the biggest since the June 28 strike on the army's Sunjwan camp on the outskirts of Jammu, killed more than a dozen soldiers, came as authorities were taking stock of the situation after yesterday's late-evening assault killed seven Vaishno Devi pilgrims.

Today, Union minister of state for home Swami Chinmayanand, Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and senior police officers visited Banganga, where the militants had killed the pilgrims.

The chief minister described these attacks as an expression of the frustration of the militants and told reporters that security will be strengthened along the pilgrimage route. Several towns in Jammu observed a complete

shutdown to protest against the attack on the devotees.

The pilgrims, however, resumed their journey chanting hymns. "Come what may, we will go for the pilgrimage," said Kharatti Lal, a resident of Jalandhar, Punjab.

"*Jai Mata Dai*," shouted others, hailing the Goddess Vaishno Devi, as they continued their trek to the shrine.

■ See Page 6

Pilgrims' as target

The fresh bout of violence in Jammu is a bid to derail significant normalcy in J&K

JULY is a month of anxiety in Jammu and Kashmir, not just for the administrators in charge of the Amarnath yatra, but for the state and Central governments. The pattern of terrorist violence in the state clearly suggests that terrorists seize every opportunity to target the pilgrim and that this is not, by any means, a casual strategy. It is important for the Indian state and citizens to understand the cold-blooded rationale behind such acts, so that they can respond to them more effectively.

First, pilgrims are easy targets. Since pilgrimages to the Vaishno Devi temple and the Amarnath shrine involve such large numbers, it is virtually impossible to secure the safety of each and every participant. Monday's strike, for instance, took place just outside the facility where meals were being provided to devotees and, around this same time last year, there was a grenade attack on a taxi carrying pilgrims in Anantnag. For the terrorists, therefore, "success" is almost assured. Second, it is an effective way of creating communal polarisation, something that terrorist outfits like the Lashkar-e-Toiba constantly attempt to do because every strike then has the multiplier effect of causing tension not just in the immediate area but in other parts of the country as well. Third, such attacks help to drive a wedge between the Jammu region and the Valley,

which is again an outcome that is considered eminently desirable by these desperate men. What gives an added incentive to such a project is the fact that the Centre and state governments have both been working to ensure that the dividends of peace are reaching the people and nothing illustrates this better than the current season, which saw an unprecedented influx of tourists to the state.

It is, therefore, very much a contest of wills that is being played out in J&K. The will of terrorist outfits — many of which are based across the border — to create widespread mayhem and further their nefarious cause, and the will of the Indian state to defeat this project, even as it does its utmost to protect the citizen. The response of both state and Central leaders to the latest tragedy, therefore, was the correct one. Minister of state for home, Swami Chinmayanand, made the right connections between the blasts and the attempt to communalise the situation during the Amarnath yatra and arrived at the right conclusion when he asserted that the "peace process would continue". The stepped up violence in the state — within 12 hours of the attack on Vaishno Devi pilgrims, came the suicide strike at an army camp in Akhnoor — indicates that this is an extremely crucial period when a peace process that promises so much lies in balance.

Ansari is Hurriyat chief

By Our Staff Reporter

JAMMU, JULY 12. The All-Party Hurriyat Conference today appointed the Shia leader, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, as its new chairman for two years.

Representatives of six parties of the seven-member executive council took part in an unscheduled meeting at the APHC's Rajbagh headquarters. Abdul Ghani Bhat, former chairman and Muslim Conference leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (Awami Action Committee), Bilal Ghani Lone (People's Conference), Moulvi Abbas Ansari (Ittehadul Muslimeen), Ghulam Rasool Dar Eidi (Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front) and Shabir Tota (People's League) attended the meeting while the Jamaat-e-Islami, a constituent of the APHC, was not represented.

After the meeting, Prof. Bhat said, "the appointment of the new chairman was through a consensus and there were no differences on this point." The term of a chairman is for two years but an extension can be given under extraordinary circumstances. Prof. Bhat was already on a year's extension.

He said, "the main task is to unite all the separatists under a common umbrella and give a



new shape to the separatist movement. The need at present is to remain united and be true to the sentiments of the people we lead.

"A meeting would be held soon to unveil a new road map in the prevailing circumstances, he said.

The Jamaat's Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who along with the JKLF chief, Yasin Malik, stayed away said: "We were invited by the Hurriyat Conference for the meeting but we made it known that we would not participate till the time action is taken against the People's Conference. I congratulate the new chairman and wish him the best of luck."

Gilani Indian agent: Sajjad

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, July 8

SAJJAD GHANI Lone, chief of People's Conference, has finally broken his silence.

On Tuesday, Lone hit back at Gilani, describing him as an "Indian agent, with an assignment of breaking the Hurriyat Conference".

He told reporters at his Rawalpura residence that at a time when "peace talks were in full swing" and the Hurriyat was playing a major part in it, India was keen to dilute its importance. He made a pointed reference to Gilani saying that he was released from jail to split the Hurriyat.

Gilani has been boycotting meetings of All Parties Hurriyat Conference demanding disciplinary action against the People's Conference for allegedly taking part in the last Assembly polls.

Sajjad has squarely denied his party's participation in the elections and said the party was exonerated by the Hurriyat Conference when the issue came up for discussion in the amalgam meeting. Two members of Jamaat-e-Islami, which Gilani represents in the Hurriyat, were present at that meeting, he said. Sajjad claimed that Abdul Khalif Haneef, a close confidant of Gilani, con-



Sajjad Ghani Lone at a news meet in Srinagar on Tuesday. AFP

tested election on his (Gilani's) advice. He also said that a substantial chunk of Jamaat supporters cast their votes in favour of People's Democratic Party (PDP) in south Kashmir and National Conference in

No unilateral ban on over-flights, says Pak

Press Trust of India
Islamabad July 8

Even as India awaits a response to its offer of restoring airlink, Pakistan has sought an agreement with New Delhi to prevent any unilateral banning of over-flights in future by either country.

Pakistan has suggested a meeting of civil aviation officials of the two countries to ensure that one party would not be able to withdraw over-flight rights of the other country, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan told reporters here on Monday as the two countries geared up to resume the Delhi-Lahore bus service from July 11.

The spokesman said Pakistan had offered to restore only the flight connections between the two countries and not over-flights.

Soon after extending a hand of friendship to Pakistan, Vajpayee on May 2 announced restoration of civil aviation link between the two countries. Pakistan is yet to reciprocate. "India suspended over-flights for Pakistan since January 2002 and we have to react," Khan said.

north Kashmir, and in return "the PDP government is pampering some Jamaat members and supporters."

The People's Conference leader also released a letter, which he had sent to Hurriyat chairman Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat on June 12.

The letter is a dossier on Gilani and his family's "pro-India" activities. Sajjad said Gilani's daughter met Farooq Abdullah, George Fernandes and Lal Krishna Advani to seek the release of her husband Ifrikhar Gilani.

"Does Gilani justify these meetings, and does he justify contacts of any sort with Indian establishment," he asked.

Sajjad said the threat perception of the top leaders of People's Conference was very high as Gilani was creating the same kind of vicious environment through his statements, which culminated in the assassination of his father, Abdul Ghani Lone. He accused Gilani of ensuring that statements were issued by every possible militant outfit.

"Has Gilani learnt no lesson from the assassination of Abdul Ghani Lone? He asked Hurriyat Conference to comprehend the seriousness of the situation and see "who is inviting militancy in politics".

India protests US conference on Kashmir

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: The Indian government has gone ballistic over a State Department-sponsored conference on Kashmir, which among other things, ignored the Indian embassy in Washington and did not take into account the views of Kashmiri Pandits.

The conference, which took place here on Tuesday, involved experts on the region from US government agencies and from various think-tanks, including Indian and Pakistani analysts.

Hosted by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (BINR), it was closed for reporting by the media.

The embassy is believed to have protested to the State Department about the conference, which came even as Indian foreign secretary

Kanwal Sibal was meeting top US officials. Kashmiri Pandits in the Washington area—who lobby relentlessly to be heard—were also angered by their sidelining and have written a strong letter to the administration.

State Department sources, however, said the conference was a scholarly meeting and was not a policy prescriptive.

The BINR hosted a similar conference two years back. A source acknowledged that the Indian government had gone neutral about the conference, believing that the State Department was using the event to start a mediation process. That was not at all what we intended to do. It was only a meeting of experts, the source said.

In fact, a flyer that announced the conference said, "The BINR organises conferences to solicit the views of

cluded from the meeting. One state department official said the place where the conference was held—Washington's Meridian Hall—was very small and could not accommodate more than 40 people.

But Indian officials rubbished the explanation and said there appeared to be a deliberate effort to steer the debate in a particular direction. "If the State Department is giving its blessing to such a conference then the least it can do is to see that all views are presented," an Indian official, who like his American counterpart wanted to remain unnamed, said.

Usmaan Raheem Ahmad of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Nasim Zehra, fellow at Harvard University Asia Center (independent journalist), Mohammed Waseem of the

Brookings Institute, and Farooq Kathwari of the Kashmir Study Group were among those invited for the conference.

Indians in the group included Major General Dipanker Banerjee of the US Institute of Peace and Raju G.C. Thomas of Marquette University, while western expertise came from Robert Wirsing, who has authored a book on Kashmir.

Steven Ghitelman, a familiar South Asia hand at the BINR moderated the conference and former US ambassador to India Frank Wisner delivered the closing remarks.

At least one participant from India, 'The Hindu's' strategic affairs editor, C. Raja Mohan, did not attend the conference. As with the Indian embassy, no representative of the Pakistani mission was invited either.

- State Department sources say the conference was a scholarly meeting, not a policy prescriptive
- The Indian embassy is believed to have protested to the State Department about the conference
- Kashmiri Pandits in the Washington area were angered on being sidelined

non-governmental specialists and to facilitate the exchange of views between these specialists and government officials. The views expressed in the conferences are solely those of the individuals and are not necessarily the views of the BINR or the State Department."

Still, that did not account for why the Pandits were ex-

Central Agency For Federal Crimes Possible If Consensus Emerges Among States

Govt committed to J&K peace process

New Delhi
2 JULY

DEPUTY prime minister L.K. Advani on Wednesday said the government would continue its efforts to bring normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), asserting there had been a marked change in the situation there. Mr Advani, who was speaking at the parliamentary consultative committee meeting of the home ministry, agreed that the anti-militancy operations like Sarp Vinash should be a continuous process to eliminate terrorist elements from the troubled state.

Referring to the Prime Minister's recent initiative on Kashmir, Mr Advani said it had been wide-

ly acknowledged by almost all countries. "There has been a sea-change in the concept of nations on the Kashmir issue in between my earlier visit to America last year and the recent one," Mr Advani said. Stating that his recent visit to the US and Britain was aimed at strengthening the enduring relationship, the deputy prime minister said the visit gave him an "opportunity to present the real issue of terrorism, specially cross-border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan."

"Today India is held in high esteem in the world which recognises and respects the immense human resources at our disposal and also admires our adherence to democracy," he said. "Several nations have expressed surprise

The deputy prime minister assured the members that national security would be dealt with unitedly and drew the attention of the members towards the efforts of the home ministry to institutionalise the chief minister's conference on internal security.

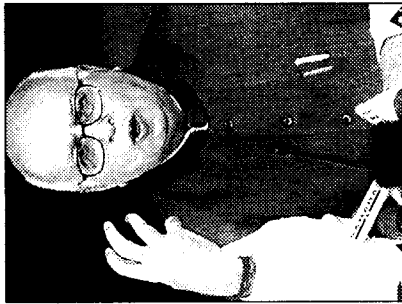
He also referred to the regular meetings of directors general and inspectors general of police with the Intelligence Bureau preceding the chief minister's meeting. On the question of bringing about a central agency to deal with "federal crimes," he said in the Indian context this could come only "if there is a consensus among all states."

Later, the government also made a presentation on terrorism to the members of the consulta-

tive committee which gave a graphic picture of major concerns which included terrorism in Kashmir, militancy in the North East and Left-wing extremism in certain states.

"Though India is a partner in coalition against international terror, it continued to remain a victim of continuing cross-border terrorism perpetrated by Pakistan and its ISI," it said, and added "Pakistan still continues to sponsor terrorism against India and harbour al-Qaeda and Taliban elements and other fundamental outfits."

The members were also briefed that during last year, the efforts of the government resulted in securing 13 deportations from Dubai.



ADVANI: VALLEY DICTION

how such a nation has not been made a permanent member of the (UN) Security Council."

—PTI

2 MILITANTS KILLED AFTER SEVEN-HOUR BATTLE

HO-1 29/6 9-8 W 784

12 jawans killed as 'fidayeen' storm Army camp

By Our Staff Reporter

SANJUWAN (JAMMU), JUNE 28. In a pre-dawn suicide attack on Saturday, two terrorists pierced the heavily-guarded Sanjuwan Army camp on the outskirts of Jammu city and killed 12 Army personnel.

Seven persons, including a Lieutenant, were injured.

Hurling grenades and firing from automatic weapons, the two *fidayeen* (suicide-squad members) dressed in Army fatigues battled the Armymen for more than seven hours before being killed by a quick reaction team.

Local residents told *The Hindu* that they heard a shot around 3.45 a.m. from the Army camp in the Pir Bagh colony, home to some 850 members of the 36th Infantry Brigade.

However, they did not give it much thought as the jawans regularly practised shooting at that time.

Half-an-hour later, the terrorists entered the living quarters and opened fire on the sleeping soldiers.

The firing lasted about 20 minutes during which jawans tried to take cover.

Soon, members of the quick reaction team as well as other soldiers rushed to the spot and a pitched-battle ensued.

The terrorists then ran to the top of the building and continued firing from behind a water tank. They also allegedly fired rocket-launchers and the encounter continued till 10 a.m.

Talking to presspersons later, the Sanjuwan area commander, J.S. Thind, said: "We have killed the two terrorists but the operations have not stopped as the militants could have planted explosives in the area which could then be triggered by remote control".

According to Brig. Thind, six quick reaction teams were engaged in the operation.

A massive search was continuing in the



Armymen on guard outside their camp in Sanjuwan, on the outskirts of Jammu, after the militant attack on Saturday. — AP

surrounding forests. The entire area had been cordoned off. The fact that armed militants had sneaked into the heavily-guarded camp surrounded by barbed-wire fencing was causing concern.

Security had been stepped up after terrorists attacked a camp housing the families of Army personnel at Kaluchak, 28 km from here, on May 14, 2002, killing 32 persons.

In another attack in July last year, 27 persons were killed by terrorists at Rajiv Nagar, 1 km from the Sanjuwan camp.

Security sources said that there were some indications of a suicide attack two days ago to coincide with the visit of the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to the area

following radio intercepts and security was beefed up.

Local residents said they had seen five armed men in the area last night but police refused to confirm this account. Although Defence sources blamed the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant outfit for the attack, a report said that a lesser-known militant outfit Al-Nasreen had claimed responsibility.

The Minister of State for Defence, Chaman Lal Gupta, and the 16 Corps Commander, T.P.S. Brar, visited the Army camp while the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, condemned the attack and expressed his condolences to the families of the slain jawans.

Musharraf outlines four-stage approach on Kashmir

5/11/2006
Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON, June 27. — President Musharraf has outlined a four-stage approach to resolve the Kashmir issue. Any search for an immediate solution to the problem would be rejected by extremists in both India and Pakistan, he said.

After a meeting with members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee at Capitol Hill where he talked about the Kashmir problem and the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq, Gen. Musharraf outlined the four stages to the media:

- 1) Pakistan and India will have to start talking to each other.
- 2) India will have to accept the cen-

trality of the Kashmir dispute to be resolved for better bilateral relations.

- 3) Eliminate whatever is unacceptable to Pakistan, India and the people of Kashmir.

- 4) Hit the solution that is win-win for Pakistan, India and the people of Kashmir.

Gen. Musharraf said the problem has been that “we straight start talking of the solution of the Kashmir dispute. If we talk of solution now, we will not make any progress. So, go step-by-step, finally cross the bridge when you come to the bridge and that is hit for a solution when you reach a stage, where a solution is possible and the people of the countries can be taken

along.”

“When we talk of solution there are such contentious solutions, which are not acceptable to either side, then there are extremists in every country, who will not accept any flexibility, any accommodation being shown by either side.”

Asserting that Pakistan stood for peace and harmony in the region, the General, who met President Bush at Camp David on Tuesday, said: “We have proposed a number of, seven to be exact, measures to improve relations between India and Pakistan. We are in the process of moving on them. We are waiting for a response from the Indian side. The process is slow (but) encouraging signs are there.”

Wipe out fear in Valley: Kalam

Statesman News Service

UDHAMPUR, June 26. — The President today applauded J&K police for its fight against separatists and called for a “cohesive endeavour” to remove fear from the minds of the state’s terror-stricken people. After a programme at Sher-e-Kashmir Police Training Academy in the morning, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, on his first visit to the state, said the people were craving for peace. And it falls on the Army, Air Force, police and the administration to restore peace.

He recalled that during his interactions with youngsters from the state, he found them expressing their longing for peace while giving vent to their fears. They consider themselves “proud citizens” of J&K and India, but want their fears to be removed, the President said at the function, also attended by Governor Lt-Gen. (retd) SK Sinha and chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed.

27/6
The President praised the state police for tackling situations such as the ones arising from the seizure of Hazratbal and Charar-e-Sharief shrines by militants. He also praised the role of the 9th battalion of state police in tackling militancy in Punjab.

Suggesting use of advanced technology for better policing, Dr Kalam said the J&K police should be linked with the police headquarters of various states. He also asked the force not to use information on Internet, for that could prove detrimental to the national security. “Instead, we must have our own operational system.” He also called for the use of advanced technology in modernising police.

The President, accompanied by the Governor and chief minister, also visited Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, where he prayed for peace and prosperity of the country. Walking from Sanji-Chaat to Bhawan, he joined pilgrims in chanting *Jai Mata Di*.

Another report on page 6

Army mistake kills imam and son

MUKHTARAHMAD

Srinagar, June 16: The imam of a local mosque and his son were shot dead by the army in Baramulla last night after being mistaken for militants. The government has ordered a magisterial inquiry into the incident, which led to big protests in the area.

An ex gratia payment of Rs 2 lakh for the imam's next of kin has been announced along with the promise of a job for a family member.

A senior police officer said Imam Abdul Quayoom Shah and his 13-year-old son, Maqsood Ahmad, were returning to their house in Kachoo Kreeeri village in Baramulla district after offering prayers at the local mosque when troops sprayed them with bullets, killing both on the spot.

"The army had laid an ambush in the village and as soon as the imam approached, the soldiers challenged them. They opened fire from automatic weapons killing the imam on the spot along with his son," said the officer, on condition of anonymity.

The villagers found the bodies lying in a pool of blood. News about the killing spread this morning and thousands of villagers took to the streets, marching towards the local police station where the bodies had been taken.

The angry crowd, raising anti-army slogans, blocked the main road at Wagoora after police handed over the bodies for burial. They demanded an inquiry and punishment for the jawans involved.

The villagers said the imam and

his son were carrying a kerosene lamp in keeping with the army's instructions to civilians venturing out at night.

Baramulla district police chief Javed Reyaz had a tough time controlling the crowd. The villagers dispersed after Reyaz assured them that action would be taken against those involved in the shooting.

The Baramulla deputy commissioner, Naven Choudhary, who reached the village along with senior police officers, announced the magisterial inquiry and the ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh, which will be handed over tomorrow.

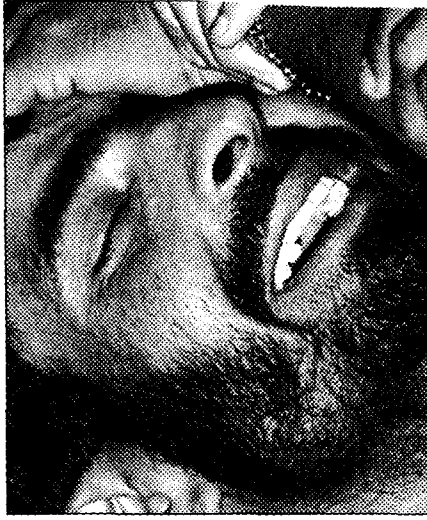
"The additional district magistrate, Baramulla, will hold an inquiry and submit a report within 10 days," a government source said.

The deputy commissioner said the additional superintendent of police, Sopore, will conduct a separate investigation.

Tension is still high in the village and additional police have been deployed in the area as a precautionary measure.

But Choudhary said the situation was now under control.

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had recently asked security forces not to harass innocents during anti-militancy operations. The chief minister had said security forces would be held in check. But the latest incident has caused the administration considerable embarrassment, dealing a serious blow to the much-publicised "healing touch" that the chief minister has promised Kashmiris.



Ghulam Nabi mourns the death of his father Abdul Quayoom Shah and brother Maqsood Ahmad. (Reuters)

Talk to all sides in Kashmir, Sonia urges Centre

HD-11
2/6

78K
W-98 conf!

By Javed M. Ansari

BARAMULLA, JUNE 1. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, today called on the Centre to talk to all sides in Kashmir and to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards resolving all contentious issues. Secularism and democracy were the only answer, she said, adding that those opposing secularism, whether within the State or outside, were only spreading hatred.

Addressing a joint Congress-PDP rally here at the end of her three-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, she made a strong and emotive appeal to the people.

"I share your pain, I know what it means to lose a husband or a mother," she told the crowd.

Earlier, Ms. Gandhi had arrived in a helicopter along with the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed.

The Congress president said the time had come to put an end to the gun culture and revert to the tradition of peace and pluralism that the region was famous for.

"*Humey aur poori duniya ko aap ki tehzeeb par naaz hai* (the whole world is proud of your culture," she said. In particular, she referred to the Nadimarg massacre of innocent Pandits and the subsequent three-day bandh observed by the people in protest.

Tracing her links with the State and its people, Ms. Gandhi said, "this is the land of my ancestors". She also recalled her visits to the State with her husband Rajiv Gandhi. Admitting that some things may have gone wrong during the Congress rule, she said, "but it was never this bad, the suffering in the last 15 years has been indescribable".

It was a reflection of the special place that Jammu and Kashmir had in her heart that



The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, presenting a letter guaranteeing a job to Saleema Begum, who lost a relative to militancy, in Baramulla, North Kashmir, on Sunday. Looking on are the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed (extreme right), the State Congress chief, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and the Finance Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Beig. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

she had decided to hold the Congress Chief Ministers' conference in the State. Her mention of the measures taken by

Congress Chief Ministers in various States to help Kashmiri students was met with cheers. Promising that State Govern-

ment's initiative would have her party's full support, she said, "this coalition is being run on the basis of a Common Minimum Programme and it will complete its full term."

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Sayeed sought time to solve the problems of the State.

"We have with the support of the Congress started a policy of healing wounds, of trying to provide employment and of bringing back peace and prosperity. This cannot be achieved overnight. We need your support," he said.

Making another pitch for opening up travel between India and Pakistan, he said, "we are a Muslim-majority State and are free to practice our culture and religion. Let the people from the other side come and see the reality."

Landmine detected near rally venue

SRINAGAR, JUNE 1. Hours before the scheduled visit of the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to Baramulla in north Kashmir, security forces detected a landmine on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway this morning, official sources said here.

The mine was detected around 8 a.m. near the Flood Complex at Khawajabagh on the highway, the sources said. The Flood Complex is 500 metres from the venue of the public meeting to be addressed by Ms. Gandhi and several Chief Ministers of Congress-ruled States who were here for the two-day conclave, which ended yesterday.

Security forces and police later defused the landmine, the sources said. — PTI

Backwill rules out mediation on J&K issue

Our Mumbai Bureau
28 MAY

SETTING all speculations about the existence of an American roadmap on the Kashmir issue to rest, Mr Robert Blackwill, the outgoing US ambassador on Wednesday ruled out any mediation by the US. He also said India should join hands with the US in rebuilding Iraq.

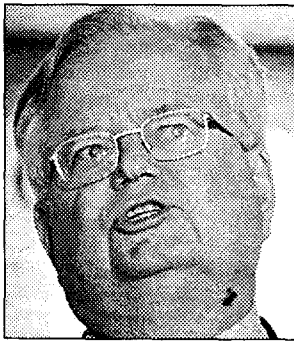
"The Bush administration, despite constant media speculation to the contrary will not attempt to mediate on the Kashmir issue," Mr Blackwill told mediapersons in Mumbai on Wednesday.

"There will be no American roadmaps. No American gameplan. No American substantive proposals," he said referring to Indo-Pak ties. He emphasised that differences between India and Pakistan must be resolved bilaterally. Mr Blackwill was responding to media reports that had spoken about the existence of a roadmap to resolve the Kashmir dispute. The state department had already denied the existence of a roadmap.

The US ambassador claimed that America did not have any forewarning about Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's peace initiative, which was announced at a public rally in Srinagar. "The Bush administration did not have any hidden hand behind the PMs Srinagar speech," Mr Blackwill

said adding that "we have not put pressure on the Indian government..We only made our preferences known."

"The President's resolve is not to see the US-India relationship through the prism of Washington's interaction with Islamabad or India's differences with Pakistan," he said. Commenting on media reports he said: "Some in the Indian press have already concluded that Mr Vajpayee's initiative has failed. That reminds me of those who decided that coalition military forces had bogged down in Iraq after a week of war. We have to be patient and see what happens."



BLACKWILL: HANDS OFF

"Vajpayee's proposition, coming on the heels of his earlier efforts at Lahore and Agra, will be judged by history as a truly remarkable act of statesmanship," he said. Asked about apprehensions expressed by the Opposition parties that the US pressurised India to hold talks with Pakistan, Mr Blackwill said: "I am not a psychiatrist..I cannot tell..But we have not put any pressure on the Indian government." On the issue of India's role in the rebuilding of Iraq, Mr Blackwill emphasised that Iraq has not damaged the relations between US and India. "Washington has appealed to India to participate in the reconstruction and stabilisation of Iraq," he said.

Geelani removed from Hurriyat executive

SRINAGAR, MAY 25. In an attempt to moderate the extremist voices in the Hurriyat Conference, the Jamaat-e-Islami has removed its firebrand leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, from the executive body of the separatist amalgam.

Shiekh Ali Mohammad, who took up the Jamaat position in the executive, following Mr. Geelani's arrest last year, will be the permanent representative of the party, highly-placed sources in the 25-party conglomerate told PTI here.

The Jamaat-e-Islami chief, G.M. Bhat, recently sent a letter to the Hurriyat chairman, Ab-

²⁹⁵ ¹¹⁰⁻¹ dul Gani Bhat, informing him about the party's decision to replace Mr. Geelani on the executive council, the sources said.

The move was aimed at marginalising Mr. Geelani in view of the latest thaw in Indo-Pak relations and avoiding a confrontation with the People's Conference representative in the Hurriyat, Bilal Gani Lone.

However, the Jamaat chairman said the decision to replace Mr. Geelani was owing to his health condition and there was nothing more to be read between the lines. The arrangement was temporary.

REVENGE KILLING BY MILITANTS

4 women, 2 children beheaded in Rajouri

By Our Staff Reporter

28K
10-1
W/S

JAMMU, MAY 19. In a gruesome act of reprisal against the family of a security services personnel, militants belonging to the Jaish-e-Mohammad beheaded six members — four women and two infants — in Chowikan Kotedara village of Rajouri district last night. The militants stormed the house of Mehboob Bhakerwal — whose one son, Wazir Mohammad, is an armyman and the other, Khan Mohammad, a serving personnel in the Special Operations Group of the State Police — and killed the family members present. The men had gone out for the marriage of a relative in another village when the militants struck.

The militants stormed the house around 11 p.m. on Sunday and beheaded the six persons, including two children, Arshad Mohammad (4) and Maroof Ahmad (2). The four women include are Khatun Begum (60), Hanifa Begam (30), Jakra Begum (29) and Taj Begum (20). Police sources told *The Hindu* that the inhuman killing of the four women and the children was a revenge taken for the killing of the Jaish-e-Mohammad "divisional

commander", Saifullah Shirazi, and his bodyguard, Qadir Khan alias Billal, some days ago. Shirazi, a Pakistani national, was a top-ranking militant active in the border belt for five years. He was killed in the house of Mehboob Bhakerwal, where he had gone looking for Khan Mohammad, a policeman.

Based on the information provided by the family a combined operation of police and the Army was launched on May 5 and after a seven-hour encounter the militant and his bodyguard were eliminated.

The village is situated around 12 km. from the town and it took police several hours to reach the spot.

This is the second such militant attack on the family of security services personnel under similar circumstances in the last six months in the border belt.

The last was in Khawas village of Rajouri district on December 23 last year when five Lashkar-e-Taiba militants killed two members of a police constable's family.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, condemned the attack and termed it an inhuman act. He also expressed condolences to the bereaved family.

20 MAY 2003

THE HINDU

Russia opposes Pak. move to raise Kashmir issue at U.N.

NEW DELHI, MAY 6. Russia today opposed Pakistan's reported move to rake up the Kashmir issue in the U.N. Security Council saying the Council president cannot impose any issue as the majority of its members were against it.

"This issue is not on the agenda of the world body", the visiting Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Yuri V. Fedotov, told reporters when asked about reports that Pakistan, which recently took over as president of the UNSC, proposed to raise the Kashmir issue.

Mr. Fedotov, who had

meetings with the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, and Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal, said the Security Council president "cannot impose" any issue and the majority of the Council members were against raising of the Kashmir issue.

The "central problem" was not Kashmir but that of terrorism and training camps for terrorists operating in Pakistan, he said.

Welcoming the recent initiatives taken by both India and Pakistan, he said Russia was trying its best to

"encourage and stimulate" this trend.

He said his country was looking forward to the visit of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, later this month.

"The visit will be another step towards strengthening and consolidating relations between India and Russia," Mr. Fedotov said.

Mr. Vajpayee will travel to St. Petersburg for the 300th year anniversary celebrations of the historic city and also hold annual summit-level meetings with the President, Vladimir Putin. — PTI

FOR THE US, J-K IS NO LONGER 'DISPUTED'

EXPRESS EXCLUSIVE

CIA redraws map, sends political signals: Region east of LoC is 'Indian state' now, in the past it was not

JASJIT SINGH
NEW DELHI | MAY 3

THE new map of Jammu and Kashmir recently released by the CIA significantly describes the region east of the Line of Control as "Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir" while it designates the territories to its west as "Pakistan-controlled areas of Kashmir." In the past, the US treated the whole state as disputed.

There are other notable changes from the past which

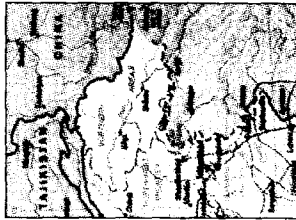
would no doubt make many people wonder at the political signals implicit in the map. The importance of this issue lies in the fact that the current map would have undergone rigorous inter-agency examination in the US system, and after approval at the highest levels, now depicts the official government position in the map which would be used by everyone in official and unofficial circles in the United States and its allies.

Maps often convey more than mere details of places

and the geographical features depicted. For example, it was the US Air Force Aeronautical Charts of the early 1960s that drew a straight line joining Point NJ9842 with the Karakoram Pass to the east. Point NJ9842, it may be recalled, marks the last point of the mutually agreed Line of Control between Pakistan and India according to the bilateral 1972 Simla Agreement. This line, which depicted the Air Defence Information Zone, was not meant to indicate a boundary and could not be interpreted as such. But unfortunately, India paid no attention and within years

many of the reputed world atlases started to mark the straight line as the eastern boundary of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

The authoritative Times Atlas, which till at least 1967 had shown a notional extension of the Cease-Fire Line beyond NJ9842 as going northward (in tune with the 1949 Karachi Agreement between India and Pakistan). But its post-1971 editions, like many other, started to indicate the Air Defence Information Zone line as the eastern boundary of POK.



THE NEW CIA MAP (LEFT) AND THE OLD ONE (ABOVE)



CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

ARMY PICKS UP RADIO MESSAGES

J&K ultras have chemical arms

301 115
Statesman News Service

JAMMU/NEW DELHI, April 30. — Foreign mercenaries in Jammu and Kashmir have chemical weapons, the Army said today.

In a statement faxed from the Northern Command headquarters in Udampur, public relations officer Lt.-Col. SPK Singh said the Army had been receiving information over the past two-three months that terrorists in the state had been moving about with containers that looked suspicious. Recent intelligence reports suggest that they have been talking about use of poisonous gas. The reports are significant because Americans have already voiced concern about chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction falling in the hands of terrorists in J&K.

The Hizbul Mujahideen

had recently alleged that the Army was using chemical weapons against militants.

The Army picked up the first hints while monitoring radio conversations between militants in the state and their minders on the other side of the LoC, sources said. One such message was intercepted after a week of heavy losses suffered by the militants. The militants were reportedly told to look towards their containers if there were more such losses. In recent days, ultras have lost about 30 men.

So far, the Army has only circumstantial evidence about militants holding on to chemical weapons. The chemicals, if they are there, have not been used. Chemical weapons can be of various kinds. Some such as Tabun or Sarin are difficult to prepare, while other types can be made available easily.

During World War I, chlorine gas was used as a chemical weapon. The Defence Research and Development Organisation has developed antidotes to some chemicals. The Army has some chemical weapons, but none of them are in any operational use.

US report raps Pak: The US state department today said militancy in Jammu and Kashmir was being "fuelled by infiltration from Pakistan", which had over the last one year almost made the region a flashpoint for a wider conflict between the neighbours, adds PTI from Washington.

In its annual report on terrorism, the department lists ultra groups in J&K and points out that some are based in Pakistan and some in PoK. The report said some of the groups had thousands of members.

VAT only after groundwork

NEW DELHI, April 30. — Much to the relief of the BJP, the finance minister announced today that VAT (Value Added Tax) would not be implemented till the "groundwork is fully complete".

Replying to the debate on the Finance Bill in the Lok Sabha, Mr Jaswant Singh said: "There can't be a double tax regime in the country". While there would be no compromise on the list of commodities already identified to be placed under VAT, the proposed reduction in the rates of CST (Central Sales Tax) from four per cent to two per cent will

not come into force since the proposal was contingent on the introduction of VAT. "CST and VAT cannot co-exist for long."

Asim's reaction: Dr Asim Dasgupta today said he would discuss the issue with Mr Singh next month. Asked whether the Union finance minister's statement in Parliament would delay the introduction of VAT, Dr Dasgupta said he would give his opinion after meeting Mr Singh. He said efforts would be made to introduce the new form of taxation by 1 June. —SNS

Another report on page 9

1 MAY 2003

THE STATESMAN

13 militants killed in Doda encounter

By Our Staff Reporter

JAMMU, APRIL 29. Thirteen militants and six security force personnel were killed in a gunbattle in Doda district of the Jammu region early on Tuesday. Three jawans were injured in the encounter.

According to police sources, on receiving intelligence inputs that a group of militants was camping in the Bharat Nullah area, 35 km from Doda town, members of the 10 Rashtriya Rifles as well as the State Police launched a combing operation. Over two dozen militants of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Taiba were holding a joint meeting of their command councils when the security forces reached the spot.

Immediately, the militants began firing at the security forces and a fierce battle ensued. Thirteen militants were killed while the others fled to the neighbouring forest area. Six Rashtriya Rifles jawans also

died in the encounter while three injured jawans were airlifted to the Udhampur Military Hospital. Five AK-47 rifles, 1 Pika gun, 1 RPG and 1 wireless set were recovered from the spot.

The search for the remaining militants was continuing and the Doda SP, Saji Mohan, and other senior Army officers were camping at the spot.

Fidayeen strike foiled

Shujaat Bukhari reports from Srinagar:

In Kupwara district, the attempt by two members of a Jaish-e-Mohammad suicide squad to sneak into the Rashtriya Rifles Dragma headquarters was foiled. While one militant, identified as Badri Hanan of Pakistan, was killed near the camp, the other was chased and shot dead by security forces personnel. In another incident, two BSF jawans were injured when a landmine exploded in Padgampora Pulwama and a BSF vehicle hit it.

THE HINDU

30 APR 2003

Vohra for talks with separatists

9-85 JAV-
K.C.S. 29/4

Majid Jahangir
Srinagar, April 29

THE CENTRE'S interlocutor on Kashmir, N.N. Vohra on Tuesday invited separatist groups — including the All Parties Hurriyat Conference — for talks, notwithstanding their refusal to have parleys with him. Wrapping up his nine-day mission in Kashmir, during which he met several leaders of various political parties, he told reporters that “the process of talks will not be complete unless we have heard and discussed with all those who are angry, unhappy, dissidents and sharing a different belief.”

Vohra said the dialogue process would go ahead and claimed that the separatists groups, who stayed away

from the first round of talks, would not spurn him next time.

“Process of talks is incomplete without the participation of the separatists group,” said Vohra while addressing mediapersons here on Tuesday. He, however, exuded confidence that those who had not met him this time will come forward when he visits Valley again. “It is of paramount importance to listen to all those who are discontent and unhappy with us,” he said.

Interestingly though, the main separatists leaders of APHC and Shabir Ahmed Shah stayed away from holding parleys with the Centre's pointsman, but Vohra revealed that many separatists who matter in Kashmir called him up in Srinagar. “It is a matter of

faith and that is why I will not mention their name,” quipped Vohra when asked to name those separatists who spoke to him on phone.

About his engagements and observations after his visit to the Valley Vohra said that Kashmir was more than a political problem. “I have met a large number of parties and individuals and it gave me a feeling about Kashmir with other issues like unemployment and economic development. Solution to the issue cannot be found in one go,” Vohra felt. During his nine-day stay in Srinagar he met representatives from about 30 organisations and 117 individuals.

He said people were fed up with the endless violence and wanted peace.



N.N. VOHRA at a news conference in Srinagar on Tuesday.
FAROOQ JAVED/HT

MILITANTS KILLED AFTER CAR-BOMB ATTACK

'Fidayeen' bid to storm Srinagar radio station

By Shujaat Bukhari

*18K
40-1
27/4*

SRINAGAR, APRIL 26. In a daring attack, a group of *fidayeen* (suicide squad) militants attempted to blow up the local station of All India Radio, known as Radio Kashmir, by detonating an explosives-laden car at the gate of the heavily-guarded building in the heart of Srinagar this afternoon. Three militants and two securitymen were killed and eight others injured in the gun battle that ensued.

Around 1 p.m. as the Station Director, Rafeeq Ahmed Masoodi, was supervising the recording of a musical concert, the car drove up to the gate of the station and exploded, apparently triggered by remote control. The driver and a CRPF jawan nearby died instantly. The car, which had a red light on its roof, was blown to pieces.

Two militants, who reportedly got off from the car a safe distance away and took shelter in a mosque, hurled grenades and began firing from automatic rifles. The CRPF men guarding the complex, which also houses the Doordarshan Kendra, returned the fire and a fierce battle ensued.

The Quick Reaction Team of the Border Security Force's 127 battalion, which is constantly on the move, rushed to the spot and encircled the two militants who had come out of the mosque.

"One was killed at the TRC Crossing and another was shot dead near the Poloview side gate," the DIG BSF, Des Raj, said later.

Before his death one of the militants hurled a grenade at a BSF jawan, killing him instantly. Four BSF and three CRPF personnel besides a AIR security official were injured.



The body of a militant who was killed in a gunbattle with the security forces near the AIR station in Srinagar on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad (Another photo on Page 8)

While the station gate bore the brunt of the blast, a portion of the boundary wall, some guardrooms and the adjacent barracks were completely damaged. The windowpanes of rooms in the entire station and adjoining building were smashed.

Life came to a grinding halt in the entire Civil Lines area, as police and paramilitary forces cordoned off the stretch from Poloview to Dalgate and diverted the traffic. The scene in the Radio Kashmir building was chaotic.

In the evening, a spokesman for the Al-Madina militant outfit called up newspaper offices and

said members of the group were responsible for the attack but did not give any details.

Landmine blast

In another incident, 11 persons were injured, five of them seriously, when militants detonated a landmine in Azad Gunj area of Baramulla minutes after the State Finance Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Beig, inaugurated a bank branch there.

Sources said, "the attack was aimed at Mr. Beig but since his cavalcade had a jammer the landmine could not explode." "However, as soon as the jammer was out of reach the mine exploded."

All the injured have been admitted in the hospital.

CM condemns attack

PTI reports:

Condemning the *fidayeen* attack, the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said by stepping up violence, especially when the peace process has been initiated, the militants and their mentors had demonstrated their obvious designs to thwart restoration of normalcy.

He said, "it is our solemn pledge to the people to restore peace with dignity in the State and we would continue to work for it with the people's support".

Militants send reminder in Valley

■ VIOLENCE SPIRALS | Suicide squad targets BSF hq, patrol ambushed, court attacked

MUZAMIL JALEEL
SRINAGAR, APRIL 25

AS the Centre inches towards resumption of a dialogue with Pakistan, the militants today sent some reminders with a suicide attack on the security forces—the first this year—an ambush and a blast. Five security personnel, including a major in the Army, two militants and four villagers were killed and 35 injured in the incidents.

Two militants appeared at the gates of the highly-fortified Border Security Force headquarters at Madar in Bandipore, 58 km from here, around 9:45 am. "One of them had strapped explosives and grenades to his body. He tried to sneak

inside through a gate. The one who had stayed outside engaged the troops in a fierce gunbattle while the other blew himself up," said sub-divisional police officer of Bandipore Khalid Muzafar. This camp had been the target of the first such suicide attack in Kashmir in July 1999.

"Three BSF men were killed while two were injured in the attack. A local milkman, Ghulam Mohammad Khan, was caught in the crossfire and got killed," he said.

The identity of the militants has not yet been established but the BSF suspects Jaish-e-Mohammad, which has a substantial presence in the area, to be behind the incident. The security forces cordoned off the entire area



Meanwhile, N N Vohra gets on with dialogue. Javed Shah

and launched a search to nab other members of this militant group, if any.

This camp, situated at the base of a hillock, is divided by a road that connects Bandipore with dozens of villages in the Harmukh

mandant and two other BSF men had died.

The last such suicide attack where a militant had blown himself up had taken place at the assembly complex here on October 1, 2001. It was carried out by the Jaish-e-Mohammad. The strike that had followed the September 11 attacks had attracted international condemnation. In fact, such attacks were stopped after the December 13 Parliament attack that led to a massive troop build-up on the borders and even threatened a war between the two neighbours.

A few kilometres up in the Harmukh jungles, militants ambushed a patrol of 14 Rashtriya Rifles—at

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

A bloody reply to PM's peace offer

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

April 25. — While governments and diplomats ponder over nuances and read the fine print before responding to "initiatives", militants are quick on the draw — Kashmir witnessed its first fidayeen attack of the season today. Their way of reacting to the Prime Minister's peace offer to Pakistan.

The coming of summer routinely brings in both hot days and gunfire to the state. But this is expected to be an extremely hot summer. Having been pushed to the sidelines of the J&K agenda in recent times, the militants are keen to prove that they still have muscles to flex.

Militant outfits reinforcing their presence is being viewed by experts against the backdrop of the Prime Minister's visit to Srinagar. According to local opinion, the visit boiled down to a "show of strength" by the PDP. By organising large crowds at Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's public functions, the chief minister was cocking a snook at the militants.

Mr Vajpayee's speeches had little that can be called new. But his tone and tenor were different. Words such as *insaaniyat* (humanism), *jamhooriyat* (democracy) and *kashmiriyat* (Kashmir's age-old legacy of Hindu-Muslim amity) touched many a heart.

The PDP was euphoric over the impact. So too were the players at the Centre who thought the militants would be under pressure and cracks might begin to appear in their ranks. The militants' reaction is believed to have been aimed at dispelling any such impressions.

Today's suicide attack at the BSF headquarters in Bandipora, observers said, was a reminder to many in the government that their assessment of the militants' clout was not in tune with the ground situation.

It's now being suspected that the militants will train their guns on PDP workers. Earlier, the target used to be those of the National Conference.

While the militants had been totally opposed to Dr Farooq Abdullah, their anger with the PDP-led government is for slightly different reasons, sources said. They contend that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed has failed to defang the security forces whom they accuse of violating human rights.

OFFICIALS

26 APR 2003

Militants kill 14, injure 43 in Kashmir

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, April 25. — Terrorists today killed 14 people, including an Army major and four soldiers, and injured 43 in a series of attacks across the Kashmir valley. The security forces gunned down two militants.

A two-member suicide squad (fidayeen) attacked a BSF frontier headquarters at Bandipora around 9.50 a.m., killing three jawans and a civilian and injuring six soldiers. DIG

(Baramulla-Kupwara range) Mohammed Amin Shah said sentries asked the militants to stop at the gates. The ultras then fired, killing three BSF jawans and a civilian. Both the ultras died in the ensuing encounter, which also left three BSF jawans injured. The slain jawans were Mushitaq Ahmad, Shabir Ahmad and Ram Singh, while the slain civilian has been identified as Ghulam Mohammad Khan.

The area has been sealed off and

combining operation launched to track down the ultras who are believed to have provided cover to the two fidayeen.

At Sumlar in Bandipora, militants ambushed a foot patrol of 14 Rashtriya Rifles, killing a major and a soldier and injuring three. The injured have been admitted to the Army hospital. The slain major has been identified as Lal Sen.

In the afternoon, terrorists detonated an improvised Explosive Device on the premises of a court in

Pattan tehsil, killing three persons and injuring 34. Deputy Inspector General of (North Kashmir range) Mr MA Shah said the complex was packed with people when the incident took place. Among the dead were two women, who have been identified as Nasreena and Fatima.

At Waripora in Baramulla's Dangiwaicha, militants slit the throat of a People's Democratic Party block president Mr Abdul Gani Malik. Malik had been abducted a few days

ago. In the same area, militants killed Abdul Ahad Malik, who is believed to have been working for the security forces in the area.

At Pampore in Pulwama district, militants killed Javeed Ahmad. They fired at him from point blank range.

Vajpayee visit historic: Mufti

The Prime Minister's "historic" visit to Jammu and Kashmir will usher in an era of opportunities that may pave the

way for talks to resolve the terrorism issue, the chief minister said today.

"The Prime Minister, who sensed the pulse of Kashmiris and their quest for peace in his recent visit, also shared their pain and agony," Mufti Mohammed Sayeed said. The Prime Minister chose Kashmir — the bone of contention — to extend the hand of friendship to Pakistan. The solution to the problem will come only through unconditional dialogue that has been initiated by the Centre.

TUESDAY, APRIL 22, 2003

MR. VAJPAYEE'S VISIT

THE TIMING OF the launch of N. N. Vohra's interlocutory exercise in Jammu and Kashmir, coming as it does after the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's two-day visit to the State, is indeed a positive aspect of the highly critical and delicate mission he has been entrusted with. By all accounts, Mr. Vajpayee's historic visit that saw the Prime Minister extending a "hand of friendship" to Pakistan and announcing several initiatives on the development front — as for instance measures for creating employment and promoting tourism — has gone some way in improving the atmosphere. No less striking were his open endorsement of the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Government's declared policy of providing a healing touch to the alienated sections of the population and his assurance that the Centre would work in "tandem" with it, not to speak of his accent on a resolve "not to repeat the mistakes of the past". But, regrettably, Mr. Vajpayee has not done much to clarify the scope of Mr. Vohra's exercise or define the objectives of his mission or the specific parameters within which he is expected to function. To say that the doors are open for all those who want to talk peace, as the Prime Minister has done, may make profound sense as a general enunciation of openness but, in the context of the Kashmir imbroglio, it cannot be said to reflect a clear sense of purpose or direction.

When the Centre nominated Mr. Vohra as its interlocutor — the third, after K.C. Pant and Arun Jaitley (whose assignment was limited to a discussion with the then Farooq Adbullah regime on the 'autonomy' question) — it was said he would talk to "elected representatives" of the people and to "other groups", meaning those who had not participated in the poll process. Subsequently, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, indicated that the Centre would have "no objection" to the designated negotiator talking to separatist groups such as the All-Party Hurriyat Conference also, and this was widely seen as a positive turn in the Government's attitude towards the separatist umbrella outfit. Af-

ter all, hardly three months earlier and soon after the Assembly poll, Mr. Advani had, in response to a Hurriyat-related suggestion, vehemently ruled out any dialogue with groups which he called "Pakistan's proxies". Then again it was said that Mr. Vohra would "give a hearing to all sections of people", an omnibus expression that sounds strikingly similar to what was used in relation to the Pant mission, which came ahead of the Assembly elections in an attempt to showcase the ruling establishment's oft-declared intent to talk to any group pushing for peace in the State and ultimately turned out to be no more than a freewheeling exercise. The general expectation that Mr. Vajpayee would take the opportunity of his visit to the State (ahead of Mr. Vohra's) to clarify the finer aspects of the dialogue initiative has been belied.

On his part, Mr. Vohra has extended an open invitation to all those who desire to talk to him, a procedure at variance with what Mr. Pant had adopted — he had sent out letters to major separatist groups, including the Hurriyat — and it is only appropriate that he should first interact with mainstream political parties. But there should be no reservation or inhibition in reaching out to the separatist elements and hearing them out, and the way the Hurriyat leadership, for instance, has reacted to Mr. Vajpayee's statements vis-a-vis Pakistan suggesting a nuanced positive shift in the Centre's approach is an encouraging pointer. Admittedly, the advent of the Mufti regime on the basis of a mandate obtained in a free and fair exercise of the franchise and the people's growing disillusionment with militancy as a means of redress provide an atmosphere conducive for finding an enduring solution to the problem of the Jammu and Kashmir people's alienation. In this defining moment, it should be realised that any dialogue initiative that seeks to address the core issues of the Kashmir problem can be meaningful only if it recognised the complementarity of the internal and external tracks of the negotiating process.

Optimistic Hurriyat sees talks in July

High hope and risk in Atal move

SEEMA GUHA

Srinagar, April 20: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has turned around the incurable sceptic in Kashmir with his promise of a "new beginning", but risks grave consequences of failing to meet the rush of expectations.

"The Prime Minister's statements, the way he dressed up his ideas show a definite change in tenor and mood, let us hope no impediments are placed in his march towards peace," Abdul Gani Bhat, chairman of the Hurriyat Conference, said.

Bhat had low expectations from Vajpayee's trip.

Although Vajpayee took care to emphasise that India was extending the hand of friendship to Pakistan if it stopped cross-border terrorism, the rider has been overlooked in the general euphoria.

Immediately after his statement on Friday, the Hurriyat called off its general strike.

Bhat is so optimistic that he went on to say: "Talks will begin by July at the latest." He refused to explain the July deadline.

Vajpayee had invited a Pakistani response, which came without delay. Foreign minister Mian Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said: "We are serious about stopping cross-border activity as much as we can, but for it to completely stop, we have to give hope to people who have become so hopeless that they are prepared to

give up their lives and I am talking about the people of Kashmir."

Everyone in the Valley keeps quoting US secretary of state Colin Powell who is believed to have said that Kashmir is on top of the American agenda. "After Iraq, the US has to deal with Kashmir," said Maqbool Haq, a Srinagar lawyer.

The feel-good factor the Prime Minister's visit has created may not, however, smooth the path for the Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, who begins his visit to the state tomorrow. His brief is to hold talks with all sections of people.

The Hurriyat has not bothered to contact Vohra's office. "The Kashmir problem cannot be solved by Vohra. He can talk to the state representatives and to Mufti about development and other things but what can he have for us? We want final settlement of an age-old problem. At his level he can give us nothing," said Bhat.

Hurriyat leaders believe that before talks between India and Pakistan begin, they should be allowed to visit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. "We can appeal to them and ask them to give up their guns and prepare the ground by calling a ceasefire. Pakistan can't do this, it will have to be us and on our part we are willing to work for peace," he added.

At Muzaffarabad, the PoK capital, Lashkar-e-Toiba announced today it would continue to wage a jihad in Kashmir, Reuters said.

21 APR 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

A historic visit, says Sayeed

SRINAGAR, APRIL 20. Terming Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to the Kashmir Valley "historic", the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said for the first time a Prime Minister had made a serious attempt to address the Kashmir issue. "For the first time a Prime Minister has not only made a serious attempt to address the (Kashmir) issue from the soil of the Valley itself but also extended a hand of friendship to Pakistan," he told PTI in an interview.

Mr. Vajpayee had endorsed his Government's healing touch policy and struck a cord with the people of the Valley saying he was in the Valley to share their sorrow as well. The people had been longing to hear such words, Mr. Sayeed said.

Mr. Vajpayee's message was that he was here (in Jammu and Kashmir) to solve all issues, Mr. Sayeed said. "The visit of the Prime Minister was a great success" and historic.

The Prime Minister had made



it clear that the gun was no solution and that sooner or later the talks would have to begin, the Chief Minister said and asked militants and separatists to shun violence and join the dialogue process during the week-long visit of the Centre's interlocutor, N. N. Vohra's to Kashmir beginning tomorrow. "I have made it clear that militants should leave the gun and join the table. Even the separatists should come forward and hold talks," Mr. Sayeed said.

Dismissal of the allegation that

the Vohra committee was yet another attempt by the Centre to enter into a non-serious dialogue, the Chief Minister said Mr. Vajpayee had clearly said that the atmosphere has now changed in the State.

On the Hurriyat Conference's stand on talks with the Centre, Mr. Sayeed said, "I am being told that they would also fall in line. After all one should take note of the fact that the amalgam called off its second day's strike during Mr. Vajpayee's visit." The reaction from the separatist leaders had so far been positive. Pakistan should make a positive response to the Prime Minister's peace initiative and abandon its beaten track policy of claiming that it did not indulge in cross-border terrorism. "Aise aarak phahenge aur bahar se kah denge ki baat karo, aise kaise chalega (they indulge in spreading terror and also say that they want to talk, this will not do)," the Chief Minister said.

Welcoming Mr. Vajpayee's

initiative of creating one lakh jobs in the State, Mr. Sayeed said the visit had proved beneficial for the people as the annual plan allocation to the State had been raised to Rs. 2,600 crores. The Prime Minister inaugurated a project for upgradation of Srinagar Airport to world-class standards.

"We raised the issue of revival of the tourism industry which has been well taken as the Prime Minister has formed a committee to go into it," said. The implementation of railway project in the Valley had been advanced and the people would be able to see a train in 2005 with the completion of railway line between Qazigah and Baramulla, the Chief Minister said.

The Railway Minister, Niresh Kumar, had conveyed to him that a coach factory would be set up in the Valley to help generate more employment. "The menace of unemployment has to be tackled by the State and the Centre together

A step forward: Karan Singh

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, APRIL 20. The Congress MP and scion of the erstwhile royal family of Jammu and Kashmir, Karan Singh, today described as a "step forward" the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's offer to hold talks with Pakistan.

Dr. Singh, who was here to attend a couple of public functions, told reporters that the Prime Minister's statements in Srinagar deserved to be appreciated for three reasons — providing a healing touch within the State, creating a climate for 'détente' between India and Pakistan and for announcing an economic package for the people of the State.

Asked whether he considered a "step backward" the Prime Minister's statement putting the onus for negotiations on Pakistan, Dr. Singh shot back: "Why do you view it in a negative sense? He has not gone

JAMMU, APRIL 20. The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, said "confusing" statements were emanating from the Centre regarding Pakistan and cautioned New Delhi against taking any step with Islamabad to resolve the Kashmir issue without doing any groundwork.

Any wrong step at this juncture would prove "disastrous" not only for the State but for the entire nation, the National Conference leader told reporters here on Saturday evening. "The Centre should first do the groundwork in Kashmir before taking any step to resolve the Kashmir issue."

Pointing to the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha's statement that Pakistan was a fit case for military action, Dr. Abdullah said, "one Minister's stand is supported by another. But at the same time, the Prime Minister is extending a

band of friendship to Pakistan".

Instead of issuing confusing statements, the Centre should evolve a comprehensive policy deal with Pakistan, he said.

Meanwhile, in Raipur the senior Congress leader, Mani Shankar Iyer, accused the Centre of not having a clear policy on Jammu and Kashmir and urged the Prime Minister to put things in the right direction.

Addressing reporters here last night, he said, "Instead of offering a financial package for Kashmir, Mr. Vajpayee should make the Government's stand clear." "One day the Prime Minister says the Government is ready to talk with Hurriyat and the next day he backtracks."

To a question, the Congress leader said, "The cause of the Centre's wrong policies, the relations between Pakistan and United States are getting stronger". — PTI

Complete groundwork first, Farooq tells Centre

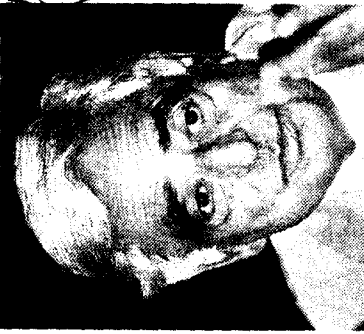
'Change in stand confusing'

LUCKNOW, APRIL 20. The former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Farooq Akhtar, today said the Prime Minister's stand on the Iraq war "The Prime Minister's stand is supported by another. But at the same time, the Prime Minister is extending a band of friendship to Pakistan".

THE HINDU

2 1 APR 2003

A historic visit, says Sayeed



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Dismissing the allegation that

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Asked whether he considered a "step backward" the Prime Minister's statement putting the onus for negotiations on Pakistan, Dr. Singh shot back:

"Do you view it in a negative sense? He has not gone backward but forward. Actually, it is a step forward from the earlier, rigid position (of ruling out talks with the neighbouring country)." Dr. Singh said he was for resuming the dialogue with Pakistan. Referring to the economic package, he hoped that it would facilitate the creation of employment opportunities and economic growth.

Asked whether the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed Government in Jammu and Kashmir should continue the "healing touch" policy even after Nadimarg killing of Kashmir Pandits, Dr. Singh recalled the Chief Minister's observations and said such an approach was required as the economy of the State was a shambles due to the 14-year-long militancy.

Complete groundwork first, Farooq tells Centre

JAMMU, APRIL 20. The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, said "confusing" statements were emanating from the Centre regarding Pakistan and cautioned New Delhi against taking any step with Islamabad to resolve the Kashmir issue without doing any groundwork.

Any wrong step at this juncture would prove "disastrous" not only for the State but for the entire nation, the National Conference leader told reporters here on Saturday evening. "The Centre should first do the groundwork in Kashmir before taking any step to resolve the Kashmir issue."

Pointing to the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha's statement that Pakistan was a fit case for military action, Dr. Abdullah said, "one Minister's stand is supported by another. But at the same time, the Prime Minister is extending a

hand of friendship to Pakistan".

Instead of issuing confusing statements, the Centre should evolve a comprehensive policy to deal with Pakistan, he said.

Meanwhile, in Raipur the senior Congress leader, Mani Shankar Iyer, accused the Centre of not having a clear policy on Jammu and Kashmir and urged the Prime Minister to put things in the right direction.

Addressing reporters here last night he said, "instead of offering a financial package for Kashmir, Mr. Vajpayee should make the Government's stand clear." "One day the Prime Minister says the Government is ready to talk with the Hurriyat and the next day he backtracks."

To a question, the Congress leader said, "because of the Centre's wrong policies the relations between Pakistan and United States are getting stronger" — PTI

'Change in stand confusing'

LUCKNOW, APRIL 20. The former Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, today termed the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's offer of talks to Pakistan "confusing" and "ridiculous".

Mr. Vajpayee should have first clarified the reason for the sudden change in the stand when the External Affairs Minister had warned Pakistan of dire consequences only a week ago, Mr. Chandra Shekar said here. "The people of the country have the right to know why the country had changed its view on Pakistan within a week."

He was still to understand Mr. Vajpayee's statement that both India and Pakistan should learn a lesson from

the Iraq war. "The Prime Minister should have clarified his version so that a common man could understand the real meaning of such statements," Mr. Chandra Shekar said.

Holding the Opposition equally responsible for the "country's lack of foreign policy", the former Prime Minister, however, admitted that the condemnation of the Iraq war by Parliament would certainly have some bad impact.

"It would have been good if the Opposition parties had left it to the Prime Minister to decide on the issue."

Calling the recent political controversy in Uttar Pradesh "unfortunate", Mr. Chandra

Shekar claimed that a "civil war" like situation might arise in the State following caste and communal clashes.

"Development works are being neglected due to the ongoing confrontation among political parties and the official machinery is also being misused."

Asserting that the BJP and the BSP would not benefit in the coalition Government in the State, the former Prime Minister maintained that the present coalition era had only led to political instability in Uttar Pradesh.

He also criticised the BJP's ideology of "cultural nationalism" saying it would only disintegrate the country.

PM's visit makes a positive impact

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 20. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's latest visit to Kashmir is seen to be different compared to his own or his predecessors' visits. Mr. Vajpayee evoked a positive response from the political groups like the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, though a decision on talks remains elusive.

Perhaps, after taking cognisance of the media coverage which termed his first-day speech as nothing new in Kashmir history, Mr. Vajpayee announced a comprehensive plan for creating one lakh jobs in the next two years in the State. He also reviewed his earlier package and made new promises to

some of his predecessors. Instead, he left no room for confusion in his desire for having a new beginning in relationships with Pakistan. Though Mr. Vajpayee repeated the condition of an end to cross-border terrorism for the talks to materialise, much to the comfort of the separatists as also a section of the populace, he avoided any rhetoric or Pakistan-bashing. "His softness towards Pakistan is significant as his statements were conciliatory in the backdrop of the atmosphere created between the two countries after the Iraq war," said Tahir Mohiuddin, editor of the Urdu weekly, *Chattan*.

Even as Mr. Vajpayee refused to extend a direct invitation to the Hurriyat and other

an invitation." The reaction of the separatists over the statement is positive. The Hurriyat chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, said: "there is no escape from admitting that there is a change in the mindset as well as the style of the Prime Minister with regard to the resolution of the conflict". He, however, said the Hurriyat would meet and discuss its formal response.

The People's Conference chairman, Sajjad Lone, thinks that "the body language of the Prime Minister was relatively positive." The Democratic Freedom Party chief, Shabir Shah, too welcomed Mr. Vajpayee's statement but said that "he should have been more specific".

The Prime Minister's visit has come as a

Atal ready to talk J&K if terror stops

Arun Joshi
Srinagar, April 19

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee said on Saturday that India is ready to discuss all issues, including Jammu & Kashmir, with Pakistan if it stops exporting terrorism to the state.

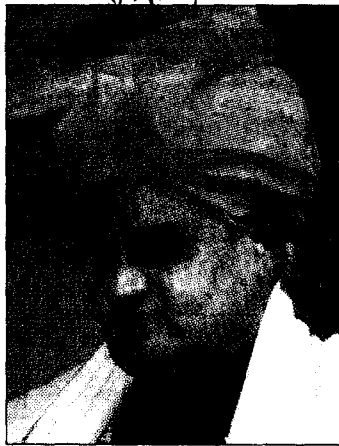
Vajpayee threw the ball in Islamabad's court, saying the "hand of friendship" was not offered unconditionally. Pakistan must show it is willing to reciprocate by responding positively to the gesture.

"Many in the media and others had failed to... (take note of) my words that Pakistan too has to respond in equal measure and good faith," the Prime Minister told reporters at the end of his two-day visit to the Valley.

"If Pakistan demonstrates its reciprocation to the friendship offer by stopping cross-border terrorism and dismantling terrorist training camps", Delhi would send a senior external affairs ministry official to chalk out an agenda for talks, "which would cover all issues, including Jammu & Kashmir", Vajpayee said.

"It is imperative that Pakistan dismantles its terrorist machinery for meaningful dialogue. It all depends on Pakistan, and I would wait and watch for that response."

Asked whether he would take any new initiatives to resume talks with Pakistan, the Prime Minister said he has already done enough by extending the hand of friendship. "It has to be a two-way traffic. Talks cannot be held unilaterally," he said, emphasising



AFP
A.B. Vajpayee at a convocation at Kashmir University on Saturday.

how crucial it is for Pakistan to "demonstrate its sincerity".

Asked if the Hurriyat and other separatists could be a party to the talks, Vajpayee said the "talks offer is open to all". But he added that "their (the Hurriyat's) position is higher" than that of the Naga rebels. "Why are they asking for a dialogue on the pattern of the Nagas?"

Vajpayee skirted a question on External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha's comment that Pakistan is a fit case for a pre-emptive strike, merely saying: "He had said that in a different context."

Asked why he did not mention the Nandimarg massacre of Pandits in his speech on Friday, Vajpayee explained he didn't want to "incite sentiments". He announced the creation of 100,000 jobs in Jammu & Kashmir.

More reports on Page 4

20 APR 2003

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Vajpayee's speech, a bid to regain initiative

By C. Raja Mohan
NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, could not have chosen a better place than Srinagar to change India's recent disturbing tone in Pakistan and create some useful diplomatic space for the government.

Mr. Vajpayee did not say anything to suggest that India is departing from current stance on negotiating with Pakistan. New Delhi is unlikely to sit down for talks with Islamabad, unless there is a conducive environment.

"We are again extending the hand of friendship, but hands could be extended by both sides," he said in his address at public meeting in Srinagar.

In avoiding the usual cliches of cross-border terrorism and reaffirming New Delhi's commitment to address both the internal and external dimensions of the Kashmir question, Mr. Vajpayee has begun to pull India out of the diplomatic corner it had pushed itself into.

Mr. Vajpayee cannot but be aware of the extraordinary opportunity that the successful conclusion a few months ago in Islamabad and Kashmir has provided India in confidently dealing with the long-festering problems relating to the State's international endorsement

ular hopes in the State for a new beginning have meant that New Delhi, after a long time, is in a position to regain the political initiative in Kashmir.

On the external side, India seemed to squander this advance

age by merely repeating the mantra that there can be no dialogue with Pakistan without an end to cross-border terrorism. India is right in pointing out that Pakistan has not fulfilled its promises to permanently end

the infiltration of terrorists into Kashmir. But the Government's position appeared increasingly negative without any room for dialogue. Mr. Vajpayee is dispelling the impression that New Delhi has no desire to engage Islamabad.

ation of India's position, including its determination to resolve the Kashmir question through dialogue. Mr. Vajpayee is dispelling the impression that New Delhi has no desire to engage Islamabad.

By making a positive presentation of India's position, including its determination to resolve the Kashmir question through dialogue, Mr. Vajpayee is dispelling the impression that New Delhi has no desire to engage Islamabad.

The belligerent rhetoric from different sections of the Government in the last few weeks had created an impression across the world that India has, for domestic political reasons, shut the door on Pakistan.

Islamabad had been campaigning in major capitals that irrespective of what actions it took New Delhi was in no mood to talk. India's negative articulation of its position was in many ways reinforcing Pakistan's campaign.

In asserting that "all issues can be resolved through talks", Mr. Vajpayee is sending out a political assurance that if Islamabad can be persuaded to create an appropriate environment, New Delhi will be ready for a substantive dialogue on the full agenda of India-Pakistan relations, including the Kashmir question.

Mr. Vajpayee's remarks come at a time when there is renewed international concern about an impending India-Pakistan conflict this summer amidst rising infiltration and violence in the State.

By recalibrating India's arguments on engaging Pakistan and presenting them in a forward-looking manner, the Prime Minister has put India in

A sense of disbelief, surprise in Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 18. Is it correct? Have we heard it correctly?

This is the reaction of the Pakistani establishment to the statement of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, extending a "hand of friendship and offer of talks" made in Srinagar earlier in the day.

The sense of "disbelief" was evident from the reaction of the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khursid Mahmud Kasuri, to the news. In a telephonic interview from Riyadh to the State-run Pakistan Television, Mr. Kasuri hoped that there would be no "clarification" from India or even from Mr. Vajpayee on the statement attributed to him.

The Minister has dashed off to Saudi Arabia on an invitation from Arab States for consultations on a post-Saddam Iraq. Of course, he was "thrilled" over the development.

Mr. Kasuri termed it a "positive" movement forward in India-Pakistan relations and said that it would bring down the "temperature". Mr. Kasuri said that Pakistan in the past had

journalist that it could be the result of 'international pressure'.

The Pakistan Foreign Office, however, was cautious.

It would like to see the text of Mr. Vajpayee's statement before giving a formal response. It is all the more felt necessary considering the recent bitter exchange of words between New Delhi and Islamabad over "pre-emptive strikes".

In a related development, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said that Pakistan stood for peace, development and progress of SAARC region.

Talking to a delegation of journalists from Nepal which called on him in Rawalpindi this morning, Gen. Musharraf said that peace was essential to enable the utilisation of the resources of the region for "improving the living standard of our peoples."

Significantly, he did not comment either on the recent statements emanating from New Delhi or the circumstances under which Pakistan was compelled to postpone the

Let us not repeat mistakes: Vajpayee

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 19. Admitting that New Delhi had often faltered in the journey towards restoring normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today called for a resolve not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Addressing the 16th Convocation of Kashmir University here, Mr. Vajpayee said, "today, our sincere commitment to bring peace and normalcy (to the State) makes me admit that we have often faltered in our journey towards this goal". It was sometimes forgotten that democracy was too delicate a plant to be subjected to manipulations and mishandling, he said adding "we must learn from these mistakes and resolve not repeat them. We should look to the future with a constructive approach and not remain obsessed with the acrimony and unrealistic goals of the past".

Pointing out that the large participation of people in last

year's Assembly elections had provided a ray of hope, he said, "they gave a ringing verdict against the militancy and terrorism unleashed against us from across the border for the past decade. Defying threats and violence, they

turned out in impressive numbers to exercise their franchise". The Centre had fulfilled its promise of holding free and fair elections and "the verdict has clearly shown that the vast majority of the people are fed up with the violence". Complimenting the State Government for taking good initiatives, he said, "the elections have given us (a) great opportunity to build upon the positive elements in the current situation". "We have also started a process of talks with the elected representatives and other sections of public opinion in the State. I believe and would like one and all in Jammu and Kashmir to share this belief that there is no problem which cannot be resolved peacefully and democratically."

Without elaborating, the Prime Minister said this conviction was taking place at an important point — almost a turning point — in the State's history. "My current visit has reinforced my belief that darkness and despair are, indeed,



The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, G.C. Saxena, presenting a shawl to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, during the 16th annual convocation of the Kashmir University in Srinagar on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

departing; that light and hope are, indeed, arriving". Equating the three regions of Kashmir, Jammu and Ladakh with the unity in diversity of India, he said, "secular democracy has further strengthened our nationhood". The destiny of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was inseparably tied to India's destiny, he said adding "let there be no doubt that a bright future awaits us". Mr. Vajpayee urged reputed non-governmental institutions to come forward and help the development process in Kashmir and promised full support in establishing more professional institutions and Kendriya Vidyalyayas in the State.

The Governor and Chancellor, G. C. Saxena, awarded gold medals to the toppers in various subjects. The Chief Minister and Pro-Chancellor, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the Infosys chairman, N. R. Narayana Murthy, and the Vice-Chancellor, Jalees Khan Tareen, also spoke.

THE HINDU

'BUT THE ONUS IS ON ISLAMABAD'

Waiting for Pak. response to offer of friendship: PM

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 19. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said he was waiting for a reply from Pakistan for his offer of friendship made at a public meeting yesterday. "They have welcomed my speech but have perhaps skipped another part of it in which the responsibility has been put on Pakistan as well. Talks cannot be one-sided," he said.

Addressing a crowded press conference at the conclusion of his two-day visit to Jammu and Kashmir, Mr. Vajpayee repeated the conditions for resuming talks with Pakistan and said that unless cross-border terrorism was stopped and training camps for militants dismantled, there could be no meaningful talks. "We want to tread the path of friendship but a lot depends on Pakistan's response. I reiterate that only talks can resolve all the issues."

Repeatedly referring to his desire for friendship with Pakistan, the Prime Minister gave the impression that he did not backtrack from his offer of talks. "Terrorism, he said, could not be tolerated and only when it stopped could an atmosphere for



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, addressing a press conference at the Srinagar airport on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

talks be created. Talks could be held on all the issues, including Kashmir, he said adding "let us make an honest effort in this direction".

Referring to the Nadimarg massacre of

Kashmiri Pandits, he said he did not mention it deliberately during his speech at Kashmir University convocation on Saturday the day as "I did not want to fan the fire" and added that he had neither fought Kargil nor Nadimarg but "I want to start a new beginning".

Iraq a warning for all

On the Iraq war, Mr. Vajpayee issued a warning for the entire world, especially the developing world and those countries which were still caught in the cobwebs of poverty. "I will not elaborate on that but we have to see how long India and I will keep on fighting. The time has come for a new beginning to be made." To that end, he said if Pakistan announced that cross-border terrorism had been stopped, "I will send a senior official of our Ministry tomorrow to Islamabad to discuss the agenda for talks."

Mr. Vajpayee avoided a direct reply to a number of questions on talks with Kashmiri separatists and said "the doors are open for all those who want to talk to the Centre's interlocutor, N. N. Vohra, come to Kashmir with an invitation and we can assure you that the situation can change and a defining moment for Kashmir has come". He said the former interlocutor, K. C. Pant, had also invited separatist All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) for talks but it did not respond positively.

The Prime Minister strongly supported the healing touch policy of the State Government led by the Chief Minister, Mohammad Sayeed, but made it clear that it was not for militants. "It cannot be for those who are bent upon deepening wounds," he said adding "there can be no other policy except the healing touch".

The Prime Minister announced a committee would be set up to look into the problems of Kashmiri Pandits. Adequate security measures were being initiated for those who had stayed back in the Valley.

'Let's not repeat mistakes': P

New employment package

By Our Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR, APRIL 19. In continuation of the economic package announced by him in May 2002, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today announced another package mainly dealing with the unemployment problem in Jammu and Kashmir.

Unemployment among the youth was one of the State's most pressing problems. "Therefore, we have decided to prepare a comprehensive plan to create at least one lakh employment and self-employment opportunities in the State

in next two years," he said at a press conference adding that "for the purpose I have decided to set up a special task force comprising representatives of the Centre, the State Government, industry, commerce, banks and financial institutions. The task force will submit its report before June 30 and implementation will begin by August 15, 2003."

The sectors covered under the package are tourism, power, Information Technology, education and the Kashmir channel of Doordarshan. Implementation of these plans will be monitored by the Prime Minister's Office.

20 APR 2003

THE HINDU

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Without elaborating, the Prime Minister said this convocation was taking place at an important point — almost a turning point — in the State's history. "My current visit has reinforced my belief that darkness and despair are, indeed,



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activism on Kashmir and
India-Pakistan relations.

Nothing new in the visit: Omar

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 18. The National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, sees nothing new in the visit of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to the State and said the public meeting in Srinagar today did convey a symbolism by sending a strong message that Kashmir was an integral part of India.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Abdullah, who attended the Prime Minister's foundation stone-laying ceremony at the airport here, asked "what is new in his visit? He has been to Jammu and Kashmir many times as Prime Minister and addressed public meetings in Jangdar". On the big rally in Srinagar, Mr. Abdullah acknowledged the efforts of the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, saying, "it is good, it conveys a signal to the militants and the Hurriyat".

"During our rule, Mr. Vajpayee addressed a meeting at a place that normally faces shelling from across the border. I see no change in the law and order situation in the State. And I think the media has given much

ing security, good governance and a corruption-free administration to the people of the State is part of this policy.

The ground realities are totally different. There has been no change.

The man who talks of transparency was the first to appoint his relatives in cushy jobs. More people have lost jobs than those who have been given jobs. The security environment is deteriorating rapidly."

However, the People's Democratic Party had benefited from this policy politically, he said.

Mr. Abdullah said the Government's top priority should be fighting militancy as the State's problems were directly related to terrorism.

On the prevailing situation, he said, "people are surrounded by guns. Militants have guns. The security forces have their guns. Last, but not the least, we have surrendered militants who have guns."

"People are sick and tired of the terror spread by the surrendered or Ikwani militants. No effort has been made to disarm them."

"The Mufti can claim what he wants. It is a hard reality that the NC led by Farooq Abdullah did whatever it could for the people of the State. We fought terrorism when it was at its peak. The Chief Minister can now talk of disbanding the Special Operations Group because of what we had achieved during our tenure. Six years ago he would not have dared to talk in such terms."

Predicting that the coming months would be the most dangerous phases of the militancy, he said they (militants) have already made a beginning.

"The Nadimarg killings were part of this dastardly campaign. For six years our workers were targeted and killed. Now the workers of the ruling PDP are getting killed. There is no clear strategy to combat cross-border terrorism."

The NC president who is scheduled to meet the Centre's interlocutor, N. N. Vohra, next week said his (Mr. Vohra's) mission would not be complete until he held talks with those who started the (armed) movement in the State.



hype to this visit," he said. "It is a fact that militant activities have registered a sharp increase in the past six months. People are petrified. The morale of the security forces has gone down as well. The economic condition of the State has weakened further. There is a change in the situation; not for the good, but for the worse."

On the healing touch policy of the State Government he said, "the Mufti claims it is not a policy but a philosophy. Provid-

Vajpayee's speech, a bid to regain initiative

By C. Raja Mohan
DELHI, APRIL 18. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, has not chosen a better than Srinagar to change the recent disturbing tone in Pakistan and create some diplomatic space for the Government.

Vajpayee did not say anything to suggest that India is desisting from its current stance on Kashmir. It is unlikely to sit down for talks with Islamabad, unless there is a conducive environment.

He again extended the offer of friendship, but hands were not extended by both sides. He said in his address at the meeting in Srinagar.

He avoided the usual clichés of cross-border terrorism and terrorism. He said that the Government is committed to addressing both the internal and external dimensions of the Kashmir question. Mr. Vajpayee has begun to pull in the diplomatic initiative and pushed it into the hands of the Government.

Vajpayee cannot but be of the extraordinary opportunity that the successful talks a few months ago in Srinagar and Kashmir has provided India in confidently dealing with the long-festering relations with the State. Mr. Vajpayee's initiative in the past had extended an invitation to Mr. Vajpayee

to begin the State for a new initiative. He meant that New Delhi, after a long time, is in a position to regain the political initiative in Kashmir.

On the external side, India seemed to squander this advance by merely repeating the mantra that there can be no dialogue with Pakistan without an end to cross-border terrorism. India is right in pointing out that Pakistan has not fulfilled its promises to permanently end

the infiltration of terrorists into Kashmir.

But the Government's position appeared increasingly negative without any room for diplomatic manoeuvre.

By making a positive presentation of India's position, including its determination to resolve the Kashmir question through dialogue, Mr. Vajpayee is dispelling the impression that New Delhi has no desire to engage Islamabad.

Islamabad had been campaigning in major capitals that irrespective of what actions it took New Delhi was in no mood to talk. India's negative articulation of its position was in many ways reinforcing Pakistan's campaign.

In asserting that "all issues can be resolved through talks", Mr. Vajpayee is sending out a political assurance that if Islamabad can be persuaded to create an appropriate environment, New Delhi will be ready for a substantive dialogue on the full agenda of India-Pakistan relations, including the Kashmir question.

Mr. Vajpayee's remarks come at a time when there is renewed international concern about an impending India-Pakistan conflict this summer amidst rising infiltration and violence in the State.

By recalibrating India's arguments on engaging Pakistan and presenting them in a forward-looking manner, the Prime Minister has put India in a better position to deal with the emerging international diplomatic activism on Kashmir and India-Pakistan relations.

A sense of disbelief, surprise in Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

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This is the reaction of the Pakistani Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, extending a "hand of friendship and offer of talks" made in Srinagar earlier in the day.

The sense of "disbelief" was evident from the reaction of the Pakistani Foreign Minister, Khursid Mahmud Kasuri, to the news. In a telephonic interview from Riyadh to the State-run Pakistan Television, Mr. Kasuri hoped that there would be no "clarification" from India or even from Mr. Vajpayee on the statement attributed to him.

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journalist that it could be the result of 'international pressure'.

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Talking to a delegation of journalists from Nepal which called on him in Rawalpindi this morning, Gen. Musharraf said that peace was essential to enable the utilisation of the resources of the region for "improving the living standard of our peoples."

Significantly, he did not comment either on the recent statements emanating from New Delhi or the circumstances under which Pakistan was compelled to postpone the proposed SAARC summit in January this year.

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Ending infiltration must for J&K peace: Blair

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 18. The British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, says that "ending cross-border infiltration" is essential to stop violence in Jammu and Kashmir.

In a rare and candid interview to the Pakistan English weekly, *Friday Times*, Mr. Blair has said that terrorist organisations — including the Lashkar-e-Taiba, the Jaish-e-Mohammed and the Harkat-ul Mujahideen — had been at the forefront of attacks in Jammu and Kashmir.

"Violence will never solve the Kashmir dispute, it will only prolong it. And ending cross-border infiltration is essential to stop violence in Jammu and Kashmir". He was answering a question on what he meant when he asked Pakistan to stop "cross-border infiltration" in Kashmir.

"During the last decade, the nature of the conflict has changed as a result of the incursion of armed militants across the Line of Control," he told the weekly. Asked what role Britain could play in a possible resolution of the Kashmir problem, Mr. Blair said ultimately the issue would have to be resolved bilaterally.

"In the end, this dispute between Pakistan and India including on Kashmir can only be settled by bilateral negotiations. But it is a dispute with serious international implications, not least because any future military conflict could escalate to nuclear weapons use.

This would be devastating for Pakistan and the whole of South



Asia. In such a dangerous environment it is imperative that both sides act with restraint and avoid inflammatory rhetoric. All who wish both countries well — and this certainly includes the U.K. — should do what we can to encourage them to find a solution through peaceful means and engagement," Mr. Blair has said.

The British PM has told the weekly that the territory of Kashmir had been the subject of dispute since independence in 1947 and there had been three major wars between India and Pakistan and a "bloody battle" in Kargil in 1999. "The people of Kashmir have been caught in the middle at a cost of tens of thousands of lives with many more displaced," he has said.

Asked if the resolution of Northern Ireland problem could be a model for India and Pakistan Mr. Blair has said that certain steps had been taken in resolving the Northern Ireland problem despite long and difficult negotiations. "Thanks to the courage of Northern Ireland's politicians and the sup-

port of its people, we have seen real progress towards a lasting and just peace. There are, of course, still real obstacles to overcome but anyone who visits Northern Ireland now can see the huge difference in everyday life there in the last decade. It has taken a great deal of patience, hard work and courage but Northern Ireland does show that generations of conflict, fears and suspicion can be tamed.

It has also required a real commitment to peace from both the U.K. and the Irish Governments to create the right framework for this progress.

"As to Britain's role in trying to create this climate over the Kashmir crisis, any offer of help must have the full support of all parties to stand any chance of success," Mr. Blair told the weekly.

Asked if Britain would play a bigger role in Central and Southern Asia or just tag along with the United States, Mr. Blair said the U.K. had strong ties to central and southern Asia which stem not only from our shared past but from the close relations.

He told the weekly that Britain remained committed both to promoting regional stability in south Asia and to Pakistan's long-term economic development.

Together with our United States, European Union and other partners, we will continue to engage and cooperate with our Asian friends and allies, bilaterally and in multilateral forums, not only on regional issues but in a global context too".

Vajpayee's speech, a bid to regain initiative

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, APRIL 18. Is it correct? Have we heard it correctly? This is the reaction of the Pakistani Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, extending a "hand of friendship and offer of talks" made in Srinagar earlier in the day.

The sense of "disbelief" was evident from the reaction of the Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khursid Mahmud Kasuri, to the news. In a telephonic interview from Riyadh to the State-run Pakistan Television, Mr. Kasuri hoped that there would be no "clarification" from India or even from Mr. Vajpayee on the statement attributed to him.

The Minister has dashed off to Saudi Arabia on an invitation from Arab States for consultations on a post-Saddam Iraq. Of course, he was "thrilled" over the development.

Mr. Kasuri termed it a "positive" movement forward in India-Pakistan relations and said that it would bring down the "temperature". Mr. Kasuri said that Pakistan in the next few

months hopes in the State for a new beginning have meant that New Delhi, after a long time, is in a position to regain the political initiative in Kashmir.

On the external side, India seemed to squander this advance by merely repeating the mantra that there can be no dialogue with Pakistan without an end to cross-border terrorism.

India is right in pointing out that Pakistan has not fulfilled its promises to permanently end the infiltration of terrorists into Kashmir.

But the Government's position appeared increasingly negative without any room for diplomatic manoeuvre.

By making a positive presentation of India's position, including its determination to resolve the Kashmir question through dialogue, Mr. Vajpayee is dispelling the impression that New Delhi has no desire to engage Islamabad.

The belligerent rhetoric from different sections of the Government in the last few weeks had created an impression across the world that India has, for domestic political reasons, shut the door on Pakistan.

Islamabad had been campaigning in major capitals that irrespective of what actions it took New Delhi was in no mood to talk. India's negative articulation of its position was in many ways reinforcing Pakistan's campaign.

In asserting that "all issues can be resolved through talks", Mr. Vajpayee is sending out a political assurance that if Islamabad can be persuaded to create an appropriate environment, New Delhi will be ready for a substantive dialogue on the full agenda of India-Pakistan relations, including the Kashmir question.

Mr. Vajpayee's remarks come at a time when there is renewed international concern about an impending India-Pakistan conflict this summer amidst rising infiltration and violence in the State.

By recalibrating India's arguments on engaging Pakistan and presenting them in a forward-looking manner, the Prime Minister has put India in a better position to lead the

journalist that it could be the result of 'international pressure'.

The Pakistan Foreign Office, however, was cautious.

It would like to see the text of Mr. Vajpayee's statement before giving a formal response. It is all the more felt necessary considering the recent bitter exchange of words between New Delhi and Islamabad over "pre-emptive strikes".

In a related development, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, said that Pakistan stood for peace, development and progress of SAARC region.

Talking to a delegation of journalists from Nepal which called on him in Rawalpindi this morning, Gen. Musharraf said that peace was essential to enable the utilisation of the resources of the region for "improving the living standard of our peoples."

Significantly, he did not comment either on the recent statements emanating from New Delhi or the circumstances under which Pakistan was compelled to postpone the

A sense of disbelief, surprise in Pak.

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

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and the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, to visit Pakistan to attend SAARC summit.

"We hope they would respond positively when we extend another invitation as and when the SAARC summit dates are finalised", he said.

A positive gesture

The Pakistan Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, hailed it as a 'positive gesture'. An enthusiastic Mr. Rashid declared that if India took one step towards peace, Pakistan would take two.

"This is what we have been saying all along. There can be no military solution to any problem. All issues, including Kashmir, must be resolved through talks across the table," he said.

Mr. Rashid said this was the approach of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at the Agra Summit in July 2001 and it failed to yield any tangible benefit for India and Pakistan due to the attitude of 'hard-liners' in India.

He, however, did not wish to venture any guess on the 'sudden change in the

journalist that it could be the result of 'international pressure'.

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ALL HELP PROMISED TO MUFTI GOVT.

PM extends 'hand of friendship' to Pakistan

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 18. Saying that the gun was no solution to any problem, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today began his two-day visit to Kashmir with a call for friendship with Pakistan but said it should be extended from both sides. He also reiterated the Centre's promise to hold talks with the people of Jammu and Kashmir and assured complete support to the State Government.

At a massive public meeting attended by around 20,000 people in Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium here, Mr Vajpayee said his Government had made efforts to build a harmonious relationship with Pakistan. "As Prime Minister of the country I wanted to have friendly relations with our neighbours and I went to Lahore, but it was returned with Kargil. We still continued and invited General Pervez Musharraf to Agra but again failed," said Mr. Vajpayee, the first Prime Minister in 15 years to address a public meeting in Srinagar. "We are again extending a hand of friendship, hands should be extended from both the sides. Both sides should decide to live together. We have everything which makes us to have good relations," Mr. Vajpayee said. This was the time to change the map and "we are busy in Delhi towards that and we need to work together".

Making a reference to Iraq, Mr. Vajpayee said the war should have been averted as "I believe the gun is no solution to problems". It would only kill people and would not solve any problem. The time had come to change Kashmir's fate. "Sitting in Delhi we are concerned



The Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, hands over a job appointment letter to a Kashmiri woman as the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed (left), looks on during a public rally in Srinagar on Friday. — PTI

about Kashmir." Mr. Vajpayee said amid a thunderous applause.

Without naming any separatist or militant group, he reiterated New Delhi's promise to hold a dialogue on both internal and external problems. "Not only our doors but also our hearts are always open for you. You (can) come to us with your grievances," he said adding "no guns but only brotherhood can resolve the problems".

Complimenting the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's Government, he said the Centre would work in tandem with the State Government. "It is our duty to make

Mufti's Government a success."

Kudos to people

Mr. Vajpayee complimented the people of Jammu and Kashmir for exercising their franchise at grave risk to their lives and even daring death. "It (election) is a sacred right which can change your destiny and if (it) falls into the wrong hands, it can lead to destruction." Taking full credit for holding free and fair elections, he referred to his Red Fort speech and said the people had ridiculed him. "They asked which world I was living in as votes cast here are not counted and, even if they are counted are not credited to

the right party." He also assured the people that special attention would be paid to the State in addressing unemployment.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Sayeed, welcoming the Prime Minister, strongly defended his "healing touch" philosophy and said all disputes should be resolved through a dialogue. Making a fervent appeal to the youth to shun the path of violence, he said, "if you have any stand, the gun is no way to achieve your goal. So leave it and come forward to seize the golden opportunity of the talks being held by Mr. Vohra".

Pak. thrilled: Page 11

19 APR 2003

THE HINDU

STATE PLAN OUTLAY TO BE HIKED BY Rs 400 CR

Vajpayee's feelgood message for J&K

Nandini R Iyer and Kavita Suri in Srinagar

April 18. — Addressing a public rally in Srinagar, the first in 16 years by a Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee declared today: "The times are changing. I have come today to instill confidence in you of that very fact. Kashmir has seen troubled times but now the turnaround has begun. The time has come. Let there be spring again in Kashmir".

His speech at the rally at Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium was peppered with confidence-boosting messages for the people of the insurgency-scarred state, along with words of caution over the futility of violence to solve the Kashmir issue.

"Even in Iraq, the war has ended and talks have begun," Mr Vajpayee said, before adding: "In fact there was no need for a war in Iraq". And to deliver home his point, Mr Vajpayee recited a couplet of the famous Kashmiri poet Mehjoor, drawing thunderous applause from the mammoth gathering.

Mr Vajpayee also announced a good dose of largesse for the people of J&K. These included a Rs 400 crore increase in the annual Plan outlay for the state for

the current fiscal, and an assurance to the government of "all Central help" in tapping the state's hydel power potential. Making this announcement at a meeting of representatives from the state chambers of commerce, Mr Vaj-

podium with Mr Vajpayee and Mr Sayeed), he called on the people to "strengthen the hands of Mufti saheb" as "Mufti has the potential to change the situation".

Saying that "the last person who seriously built roads in this country was Sher Shah Suri," the Prime Minister referred to unemployment in the state and said the road, rail and airport expansion projects he had come to inaugurate would help solve the problem.

Mr Vajpayee touched upon Pakistan briefly, referred to his peace initiatives — the Lahore bus *yatra* and Gen. Musharraf's visit to Agra, and said: "It takes two hands for a clap and Pakistan will have to respond positively to our friendly moves". He added: "We still extend the hand of friendship but the process has to take place from both sides".

Pakistan Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali today welcomed Mr Vajpayee's speech in which he "extended a hand of friendship" to Islamabad. "But the basic principles on issues will remain the same," he said at Islamabad, adds PTI.



The Prime Minister and J&K chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed wave to the crowd at their Srinagar rally on Friday. — AFP

payee said the Plan outlay would be hiked from Rs 2,200 crore to Rs 2,600 crore, almost 19 per cent.

Endorsing the state government, which some observers felt was an oblique criticism of the earlier Farooq Abdullah government (Mr Abdullah shared the

Turn to page 2
More reports, photograph
on page 4

Ultras attack police post, kill 11

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

9-81 28K 11 17/3

Srinagar: At least nine policemen and two civilians were killed while five others were injured when militants attacked a remote police post in Udhampur district late on Saturday. The ultras also kidnapped four policemen and took away a large quantity of arms and ammunition.

One of the civilians, whom the militants suspected to be a police informer, was found with his throat slit.

Twenty-five policemen were on duty at the post in Gool area when heavily-armed ultras barged into the building, firing rockets and spraying bullets. The police retaliated, and the gun-battle lasted nearly two hours. The attackers, however, managed to escape. But they took away with them two police constables and two special police officers (SPOs) besides 18 self-loading rifles, a light machine gun, three AK-47 rifles and some ammunition.

The Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM) has claimed responsibility for the attack. A man, identifying himself as JuM spokesman Jamil Ahmed, told a news agency here that the attack had been jointly carried out by his group and the Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami.

The police said the attack might have been in retaliation to the killing of Amanullah, a suspected leader of the Pakistan-based Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, by security forces last week. They added that a massive hunt had been launched to track down the attackers. This is the second major strike by militants in three days. On Friday, six people, including a deputy superintendent of po-

Jammu, 2002

November 24
Raghunath temple.
13 persons killed,
including 3 militants

May 14
3 ultras attack
Kaluchak Cant. 36
killed, 48 hurt

March 30
2 militants attack
Raghunath temple.
3 killed, 20 injured

Jammu, 2003

March 15, 23:30 p.m.
Police post attacked.
9 policemen, 2 civilians killed

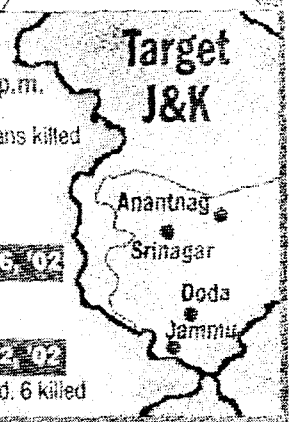
March 14
Hotel attacked.
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Amarnath, Aug 6, 02

Amarnath pilgrims
attacked. 9 killed.

Srinagar, Nov 22, 02

CRPF camp attacked. 6 killed



lice, were killed in a hotel siege in Poonch district.

Besides attacking the police post, the militants also set on fire houses and a hospital before retreating.

Police and security forces were rushed to the area on Sunday and they have launched massive combing operations in and around the village to track down the culprits. According to an army spokesman, a group of four ultras had been cornered by the security forces in the area.

While eight of those injured were rushed to Military Hospital in Udhampur, one was airlifted and admitted to Government Medical College Hospital here.

Director general of police J.K. Suri and IGP Jammu zone, P.L. Gupta, who visited the village, have assured the villagers that additional security forces would be deployed in the surrounding areas to effectively contain the growing level of militancy in the area.

17 APR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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9-8 28K 5M 17/3

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Jammu, 2002	Jammu, 2003
November 24 Raghunath temple. 13 persons killed, including 3 militants	March 15, 23:30 p.m. Police post attacked. 9 policemen, 2 civilians killed
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	Srinagar, Nov 22, 02 CRPF camp attacked. 6 killed

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 APR 2003

Vohra can talk to Hurriyat, says Advani

By Rajat Pandit
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Panaji: Stressing that the Union government firmly believed in devolution of powers to all states, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on Sunday said he had given the go-ahead to the Centre's interlocutor on Jammu and Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, to hold talks with all separatist groups, including the Hurriyat Conference.

"There is no harm in talking to people who subscribe to separatism but are not engaged in violence. I told Vohra that there was no objection in talking to the Hurriyat if they are willing," said Mr Advani, while talking to mediapersons on his way to the country's solitary aircraft carrier, INS Viraat, off the Goa coast.

Incidentally, this comes a day after former Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chief Yaseen Malik met Congress president Sonia Gandhi in a bid to create some political space for themselves.

Mr Advani, however, made it clear that the Centre would not agree to any proposal that such talks be trilateral with the inclusion of Pakistan, as the Hurriyat Conference had been repeatedly demanding.

Holding that the people of Jammu and Ladakh also had the long-standing legitimate grievance that all the power in Jammu and Kashmir was concentrated in Srinagar, Mr Advani said if there was a "re-arrangement in the Delhi-Srinagar relationship, then the rearrangement in the Srinagar-Jammu and Srinagar-Ladakh relationship should be considered simultaneously".

He said, "This government is of the view that over the

last few decades, the Indian federation has become over-centralised and there is a clear case for devolution of powers to the states. Some states like J&K and Nagaland have a special history which needs to be recognised."

The Centre has demonstrated its "commitment to democracy by holding free and fair elections in militancy-affected states of Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Tripura and Meghalaya", said Mr Advani. He then went on to take a swipe at the Congress for a "fragile commitment" to the three "cardinal planks of national security, namely democracy, secularism and national unity", and "surrendering to vote-bank politics".

"They now talk of cow slaughter and Bhojshala. By constantly harping that Pota is anti-minority, they are virtually dubbing the minorities as terrorists," said Mr Advani, who was at pains to point out that there was not a

single allegation against the Centre for misusing Pota. Instead, the state governments were in the dock for it.

Bowing to pressure from political parties, the Centre recently announced the setting up of a review committee to check the misuse of the provisions of Pota. Incidentally, Gujarat and Jharkhand, both BJP-ruled states, have taken recourse to a large number of arrests under this very law.

Be that as it may, Mr Advani said, "We would not like an extraordinary law enacted by the Centre through a joint session of parliament to be misused by anyone. The terms of reference of the review committee are being drafted and the two other members of it will be announced in the next 10 days or so." The committee will take a comprehensive view of the use of Pota in different states and give suggestions to remove shortcomings in its implementation.

Mr Advani said he had held consultations with the

law ministry on this aspect. "(But) in all democracies, including the US, UK, France and others, there are stricter anti-terrorism laws than Pota," he said.

110-1
1312

41 injured in Kashmir blasts

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 12. At least one civilian was killed and 41 injured when militants lobbed grenades at three places in south Kashmir today.

Police sources said militants hurled a grenade at a security force patrol in Qazigund town. It, however, missed the target and exploded on the road injuring 21 civilians. One of the seriously injured, a doctor, later died in hospital. Two Army personnel were also injured in the blast.

Earlier in the day, six civilians were injured when militants lobbed a grenade towards a police party in Kulgam town of south Kashmir. The third consecutive strike of the day came at the district headquarters of Anantnag in south Kashmir where militants tossed a hand grenade on a paramilitary forces picket. It missed the target and exploded on the road injuring 15 civilians, including a child.

A top-ranking commander of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen was killed in an encounter

with security forces in Keller area of Pulwama district late on Friday night.

Police sources identified him as Qamar-uz-Zaman and claimed that he was the deputy district commander of the outfit. However, officials in Pulwama district claimed that he was a divisional commander of the outfit.

PTI reports:

According to police sources, a joint patrolling party of the BSF and the State police had laid in wait near the Yawan forest of Pulwama district last night following a tip-off that a top militant was moving through the area. On spotting a group of militants, the security personnel challenged them and an exchange of fire followed in which Qamar was killed and the rest escaped, the sources said.

Describing the killing as a major success, they said Qamar had been active in the area since 1990. An AK assault rifle, three magazines, a pistol with a magazine, a wireless set and two hand grenades were recovered from the slain militant.

13 APR 2003

THE HINDU

J&K and Centre will jointly fight enemies of peace: Mufti

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, rounded off his meetings here on the State's security concerns and development prospects with a one-on-one meeting with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

During the 40-minute interaction, described as a "courtesy call" by the Prime Minister's Office, Mr. Sayeed briefed Mr. Vajpayee on the situation in the State and found him receptive to the efforts that his Government was making to prevent another exodus of the minority Pandits after the Nadimarg massacre.

Mr. Sayeed later told presspersons that the meeting was "useful". Asked whether they had discussed his Government's "healing touch" philosophy, he said: "Can any Government be opposed to this philosophy? It deals with the problem of corruption, providing good governance to the people, creating job opportunities, removing regional injustices and healing the wounds of people who are victims of militancy". He added: "I believe the Prime Minister agrees with this".

Mr. Sayeed said the yearning for peace in the State had strengthened and that his Government was resolved to continue with its policies to achieve peace, addressing the "internal dimension" of the situation. The Centre and the State, he said, would jointly deal with the "enemies of peace".

He also apprised the Prime Minister of the development agenda and returned satisfied about his "keen interest" in the



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

mega projects envisaged, such as the construction of a super-highway project and the extension of the railway to the Kashmir Valley. Officials said he impressed on the Prime Minister the need to monitor the execution of such projects so that they were completed on time.

Mr. Sayeed also met the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, K.C. Pant, who, at the conclusion of the hour-and-a-half-long meeting said, "there is a perceptible change in the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and we will see to it that development programme in the State is expedited, and the four-lane north-south highway and railway projects are completed on time".

Mr. Pant also said there had been a remarkable improvement in Ladakh, Kargil and Kashmir and that, he and Mr. Sayeed discussed issues relating to "removing impediments" in the way of implementation of the development packages for these areas.

Hurriyat calls for dialogue

PTI reports from Srinagar:

The All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) today made fresh calls for a dialogue to resolve the Kashmir issue and accused the Centre of following a hardline policy on the subject.

"It is in the interest of the people of India, Pakistan and Kashmir that a meaningful, result-oriented and fruitful dialogue be initiated to resolve the Kashmir issue," an APHC spokesman said after a meeting of its seven-member executive council here.

He alleged that the hardline policy was adopted at a recent meeting convened by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, in New Delhi to discuss the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and said that "hardline policies failed to deliver in the past nor will it prove fruitful in future. We have been facing hardline policies for a long time".

THE HINDU

3 APR 2003

'JEHADIS ACROSS THE BORDER'

More Army units in J&K if need be, says Fernandes

HQ 1
214
NEW DELHI, APRIL 1. Voicing serious concern over reports of massing nearly 2,00,000 "jehadis" across the border in Pakistan, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, today said if required, the Army's presence would be further increased in Jammu and Kashmir.

At the same time, he favoured continuance of the "healing touch" policy of the Mufti Mohammed Sayeed Government.

Mr. Fernandes said while the world attention was riveted on the conflict in Iraq, there were reports of 2,00,000 trained "jehadis" comprising Afghans, Pakistanis and from some other countries being massed across the border "ready for any kind of action" in the Valley.

Such reports had been corroborated in London and the U.S. State Department and this would be factored in by a special group set up to review the security scenario in the State especially in the wake of the Nadimarg massacre, he told PTI in an interview here.

Stressing that such reports became much more significant as Pakistan was seen as a "comrade in the fight against terrorism", he said "there is confirmation now that it is a biggest terrorist state" — the confirmation coming from two major allies of the coalition now waging the war against Iraq.

Observing that the special group, set-up by a high-level meeting chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, last night, was seized of the entire security scenario in J&K, Mr. Fernandes said it had been authorised to codify India's "riposte".

To a query on the "healing touch" policy of the PDP-led Government, he said: "No, I don't think that we should give up the policy. On the contrary,

9-84 J&K
we need to put our best foot forward in that direction".

On measures to reassure and safeguard minorities in the wake of the Nadimarg massacre, Mr. Fernandes said there could be two ways to deal with the menace.

One would be ensuring a self-generated security in the form of training and arming the public on the lines of Village Defence Committees (VDCs) and the second would be sanitising the areas where the minority community lives so that speedy action could be taken upon any slightest suspicious movement.

"All these ideas emerged from yesterday's meeting and will be brought into effect," he said.

Unilateralism

Mr. Fernandes cautioned that the unilateralism of the U.S. and Britain in waging a war against Iraq could have "great consequences" and termed the talk of reconstruction of the war-devastated country as "sickening".

Declaring that the very talk of post-war reconstruction of Iraq made him "sick rather than enthused", he said India had decided to provide relief and rehabilitation to the people of Iraq in whatever way it could.

Asked if India would be invited by the Washington and London to participate in post-war rehabilitation of Iraq, the Minister said "personally I have a sick feeling. This smacks of cynicism of the worst type. You go and blow up the whole place and kill several hundred people. And then start talking of reconstruction and rebuilding."— PTI

THE HINDU
wishes its readers
A HAPPY UGADI

THE HINDU

2 APR 2003

Delhi stealing Mufti's thunder

Arun Joshi
Jammu, April 1

THE FIVE-MONTH-OLD government of Mufti Mohammad Sayeed is facing a challenge with the Centre setting up a special group on security of J&K.

The common people believe that Delhi is going to steal the limelight from the state government and outline a rough road for the days to come. Mufti will now be forced to follow the dictates from Delhi, feel observers.

"The Centre has very tactfully taken over the role that the unified headquarter (UHQ) of the state used to play by holding periodic review of the security situation in J&K," feels Ajay Sadhotra, former minister and a senior National Conference leader.

Even the PDP feels that the Centre may further squeeze the state government and ask it to change its stance regarding militancy and some other things. "All I can say is that the Centre is trying to play a bigger role at our cost," said a senior PDP minister.

He said the very "structure of the special group under the chairmanship of a special secretary to the Union home ministry gives wide indications of what the Centre actually wants to do: To embark on an aggressive anti-terrorism strategy."

It is feared by the state government circles that it may have to succumb to pressure in the name of national security and back-track on some of the steps

that it has taken.

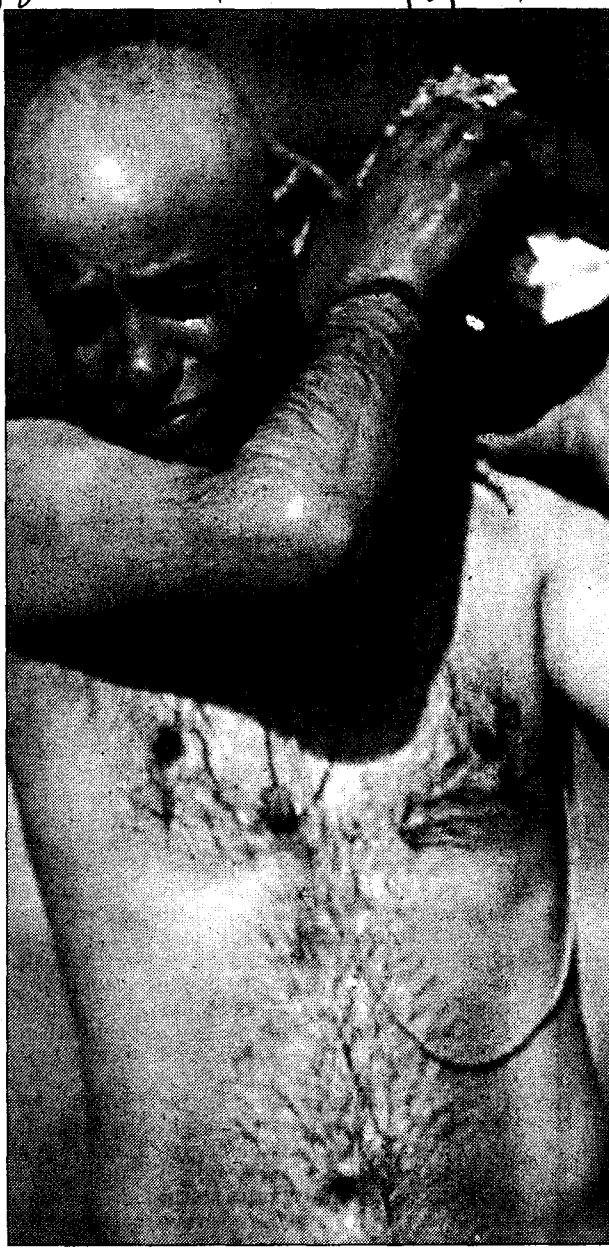
The Mufti government has disbanded the Special Operations Group of the state police that was playing a frontline role in fighting terrorism, denied prosecution of men held under Pota and released many detainees.

Now it would be difficult for Mufti to resist any move of the Centre to take harsh steps against the militants and, as a result, the "healing touch" policy may be badly hit.

"Mufti himself is responsible for this," says an analyst. As chairman of the UHQ he held only one meeting and attended the second only when Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani convened it in December last year. He did not convene the UHQ meeting even when the police posts were attacked. BJP general secretary Ashok Khajuria said the chief minister has allowed the things to come to such a pass wherein the Centre had to act in the interest of the nation and safety and security of the people of the state.

When UHQ failed to meet and decide the security measures, the Centre got a chance to step in and enhance its role in the internal security affairs of the state.

"The chief minister will have to say yes to the anti-terrorist operations for he cannot have the cake and eat it too," Khajuria said. "Because anything contrary to that would be seen putting deliberate hurdles in curbing the militants," Khajuria said.



A bereaved Kashmiri Pandit performs 10th-day rituals on Tuesday following the massacre of 24 people in Nandimarg.

Force cannot resolve J&K issue: Mufti

HT Correspondent
Jammu, April 1

MUFTI MOHAMMAD Sayeed has told the Centre that the use of force cannot solve the Kashmir problem.

Attacking the proponents of the use of force to restore peace, the J&K chief minister told a meeting on security in Delhi on Monday: "You used enormous force in Kashmir and what did you gain out of it? The people have been more alienated."

The meeting was convened by L.K. Advani in Delhi to review the security scenario of J&K.

Defending "healing touch" policy, Mufti said the enemies of peace needed to be isolated rather than the people of the state and using force is not the way to do that.

HE said there were only 638 incidents of violence till now this year as compared to 957 in 2001 and 856 in 2002 in the corresponding period. The civilian killings had declined to 182 as compared to 249 two years ago and 204 last year. Three more minority community members have been killed this year in comparison to last year, and that's because of the Nandimarg massacre.

The number of security personnel killed in different incidents has declined too.

Pandits yet to make up their minds

Rashid Ahmad
Nandimarg, April 1

ON ONE hand, the killer-ghost of March 24 night hangs frighteningly around them. The government, on the other, wants them to stay back in the Valley. The 28 Pandits who survived the last week's massacre in this village are caught up in an uncertain future. "We are so shocked that we don't understand what to do", says 19-year old Mohan Lal alias Vicky, whose entire family, including father, mother, sister and uncle were shot dead by the unknown assailants. "Today is our last day of mourning", he adds, "and we may be able to take some decision within the next few days".

About 200 members of the community from various parts of the Valley, besides Jammu and Delhi, converged on the village on Tuesday to join the 10th day mourning ceremony

Don't leave, APHC to Pandits

THE HURRIYAT Conference has urged the Pandits to reconsider their decision to leave the Valley and join them to fight the forces inimical to the collective values of heritage of Muslims and Pandits. The Pandits have decided to migrate from the Valley to other parts of the country after the Nandimarg massacre.

They say they feel insecure. They have spurned the offer of better security by the state government. Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, during his visit to Nandimarg last week had assured them that the Centre would consider their demand.



HTC, Jammu A Pandit family leaves the Valley.

(kiryah) of those killed in the carnage. They chanted religious slogans, recited hymns and prayed for the departed souls. The male survivors and close relatives of the slain Pandits also had a ritual bath and shaved off their heads. As the rituals began, a pall of gloom again descended on the village,

bringing back memories of the ghastly killing of March 24 for the survivors.

Besides ruling PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti, Revenue Minister Hakim Yaseen and Minister of State for Industries Raman Matoo, hundreds of Muslim residents of the village and other adjoining localities

joined the mourning.

Incidentally, it was a Muslim barber Ghulam Ahmad Hajam, who performed the ritual of shaving off the heads. His eyes were filled with tears while performing the norm. The massacre of the Pandits has dealt a blow to his person, too. "I lost my close friend Bansi Lal in the

carnage", he said. "We had been friends for several years, and I used to trim his hair and shave off his beard", he said in a choked voice.

The atmosphere had a surcharged look as some angry members of the community reiterated their desire to leave the Valley without further delay. Some 18 Pandits of the village had tried to migrate from their village to Jammu on Sunday. However, they were persuaded by the authorities to stay back and were brought back from Qazi Gund. The government, in an attempt to infuse confidence among the 28 surviving members of the community, has deployed a CRPF company for their security in the village.

"They (securitymen) can, at the most, protect us inside the village", said an angry member, "but who will protect us in our agriculture and horticulture fields? It is better that we all migrate", he yelled in anger.

Jehadis poised for 5-point entry

Vishal Thapar
New Delhi, April 1

HARDCORE JEHADIS are poised to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) from at least five launch camps close to the Line of Control (LoC), Intelligence sources have warned. A military satellite recently picked up activity at a few launch pads located at Hasan (forward Kahuta), Nakiyal, Khoi Ratta, Samahni and Dhali Bagh (all in PoK). Indian agencies contend that Pakistan is directly orchestrating these activities.

"Pakistan wants to make the most of the international community's preoccupation with Iraq," a top mili-

tary officer said, suggesting that it seems emboldened by "inadequate pressure from the US". "The recent spurt in terrorist activity in the J&K hinterland with attacks on soft targets is intended to disturb the Indian security grid," he inferred. The game plan is to facilitate infiltration by causing distractions. There are an estimated 3,500 militants in J&K, most of whom are foreigners.

Echoing the comments of Defence Minister George Fernandes that Army presence may be beefed up in J&K, the officer confirmed that "deployment may change in proportion to the threat". Indian agencies are concerned at the Pakistan

MMA's call to militants to enroll at jihadi camps, like the one at Muridke, which is also the headquarters of the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, the scourge of J&K.

"This activity is being orchestrated by the Refugee Management Centre, a Pakistan ISI front. It is run under the supervision of Brigadier Nazir Hussain, director (operations) of the ISI's Kashmir wing, who is based in Muzaffarabad," Intelligence sources have revealed.

According to Intelligence reports, militants from such cadres as the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Harkat-ul-Jihad-Islami are "managed" by

this centre, which also makes preparations for these men to be pushed across to the Indian side.

A considerable amount of weaponry, including 500 Kalashnikovs, 200 rocket-launchers, 200 mortar-launchers, 100 Pika guns, 250 light machineguns and 200 wireless sets are reported to have been made available to the Muzaffarabad camp alone.

Kashmir is not the only worry for security agencies. "For the first time, 50 jihadis from Indonesia, have been spotted in Bangladesh. These are al-Qaida cadres under the tutelage of the ISI, primed to cause disturbances in India's North-East," a top military officer said.

Excessive use of force in J&K: US

THE US, in its world human rights report, has accused the Indian security forces of resorting to "excessive use of force" while combating insurgency in J&K and the North-East. It also alleges that the judicial system in J&K has been disrupted because of "judicial tolerance of the government's heavy-handed counter-insurgency tactics, the refusal of the security forces to obey court orders and terrorist threats".

The report was released on a day when US forces in Iraq gunned down seven civilians fleeing the war zone, raising questions on human rights violation.

HTC, Washington

victims at Nadimarg in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday.

Pandits confront Advani

By Shujaat Bukhari

NADIMARG, MARCH 25. Squarely blaming the State administration for Monday's massacre in this south Kashmir village, several Kashmiri Pandits today demanded that they be allowed to migrate from the Kashmir Valley. Heart-rendering scenes were witnessed when the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, came calling to express solidarity with the families of the victims.

A few Pandits, who came along with their Muslim neighbours to hear Mr. Advani, blamed the Mufti Government and the police for the killings. "We are not safe here, save us," cried one of them. Refusing to listen to any advice, they said, "there can be no second thoughts about our demand". A cornered Mr. Advani had no option but to say that, "if a person feels unsafe it does become the re-

sponsibility of the Centre to accede to his request. No one can be forced to stay anywhere against his will". At the same time, he told them that by migrating from the Valley "you will be fulfilling the agenda of our enemy who is bent on ethnic cleansing in the State".

Pointing out that he was pained to see those who had decided to stay back in 1990 were now adamant on migration, Mr. Advani said the State and the Central Governments had been trying to restore normality in the State over the past few years.

Later, a visibly moved Ms. Gandhi, who visited the village along with the State Congress chief, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and central party leaders, Ambika Soni and Makhan Lal Fotedar, said, "our hearts are full. Something drastic needs to be done." "I shall sit down with my colleagues and see how to move forward in protecting the lives of the minorities. We need to formulate a plan for their safety."

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2003

19-10
2/23
9/8/03 ✓
A HEINOUS ACT

BY ANY RECKONING, the massacre in a remote village in south Kashmir on Monday must rank among the most abominable acts of savagery and cowardliness perpetrated by the terrorist elements operating in Jammu and Kashmir. As many as 24 persons — 11 of them women and two children — all belonging to the minority Hindu community were gunned down in an outrageously brutal fashion. The grisly episode, which testifies to the heinous mindset of the forces at work, has rightly been condemned in the strongest of terms by all sections of civil society. In a way, this is of a piece with earlier terror attacks that were aimed at heightening communal tension and provoking a communal backlash, as part of their overall strategy to keep the State in turmoil perpetually. More recently, since the advent of the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed Government on the strength of a popular mandate secured in an election that won universal acclaim for its credibility and fairness, there has been such an attempt when the famed Raghunath temple was attacked by a suicide squad. Now, in picking on the Kashmiri Pandit families as the target for their latest attack, the terrorist groups have sought to gain their diabolical ends by creating a sense of insecurity in the minority community.

In the immediate context, the Government basically needs to strengthen the security mechanism, both its intelligence and policing components. Going by what some of the survivors of the massacre have had to say about the happenings, there indeed appear to be many weak links in the security chain. In a manner truly reflective of its sensitivity to the Kashmiris' pent-up feelings of disaffection, the new regime has, in the less than five months it has been in office, indeed taken some positive steps that form part of the process of providing a "healing touch" to the much-traumatised people of the State. For instance, its decisions to set free (after proper screening) separatist leaders and mili-

tants who remain lodged in prison for no valid reason, to desist from invoking the oppressive POTA and to disband the Special Operations Group — a police wing that had acquired the dubious distinction of becoming a law unto itself — are attributable to this policy line the ruling PDP-Congress coalition headed by Mr. Sayeed has consciously adopted under its agenda of governance. Having taken such bold initiatives, it should be the endeavour of the Government to see that the highest vigil is maintained against terrorist activities and the security milieu is not vitiated. Needless to say that, given the sort of challenge Jammu and Kashmir is up against on the terrorism front — what with its vexatious cross-border dimension — it is of paramount importance that the State Government gets unstinted cooperation and support from the Centre in this regard.

The Nadimarg massacre has a message to convey for both the Sayeed regime and the Kashmiri Pandits. It has come at a time when the Government is seriously working for the return of the families belonging to this community who had migrated from the State on account of heightened terrorist activity. The perpetrators' intention obviously is, on the one hand, to make the administration rethink its plan and, on the other, to deter the migrant Pandits from getting back to their home State. Given the very nature of the objective sought to be achieved, there are bound to be such attempts by forces that have a vested interest in perpetuating the Kashmir imbroglio to frustrate or sabotage any initiative in that direction. While everything has to be done by the governments of the day — with the Centre and the State working in concert — to prevent terrorist attacks especially of the Nadimarg variety and, no less important, to ensure that the perpetrators do not get away with them, it is imperative that the Sayeed regime persists with its 'healing touch' initiatives and that there is no let-up in the effort at bringing peace and normality to the troubled State.

26 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Advani to visit massacre site today

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. An emergency meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) today took stock of the situation in the Kashmir Valley following the massacre of Kashmir Pandits early this morning, preceded a day earlier by the killing of the Hizb leader, Abdul Majid Dar, in north Kashmir.

The CCS, which was also briefed on the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, would be updated on the situation in Kashmir tomorrow after the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, visits the massacre spot, about 10 km from the national highway. A Home Ministry team from Delhi, headed by the

senior officer, Ashok Bhandari, has already left for the area.

Talking to newsmen after the meeting, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had expressed grief and sorrow at the loss of innocent lives. "The Government condemns the incident in the strongest terms. The Deputy Prime Minister will visit the site tomorrow. On return, he will brief the CCS. We will keep reviewing the situation and take whatever steps are necessary to meet the situation," he said. Fresh from a visit to the State, the Chief of the Army Staff, N.C. Vij, besides representatives of intelligence organisations acquainted the CCS with the situation.

6-11-1991

25 MAR 1991

Reassess 'soft policy' on terrorism: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. Political parties have condemned the massacre of Kashmiri Pandits in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir even as the Congress and the BJP traded charges over the handling of militancy in the State.

Condemning the "inhuman depravity", the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, described it as the work of anti-India elements who "are bent upon frustrating attempts to restore normality in the State".

Ms. Gandhi's statement apart, the Congress was quick to counter the charges levelled against the coalition Government. The party said it did not want to "get into a political skirmish" on the attack and was critical of the BJP for trying to politicise it even before the details were known.

To the accusation that the attack was a fall-out of the Mufti Government's decision to dismantle the Special Operations Group, the Congress said it was too early to jump to conclusions.

The party pointed out that it had time and again urged the Centre to restore the paramilitary presence in the State to the pre-election levels.

The party spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy, said that way back in 2000, the Congress had demanded that paramilitary personnel be positioned in villages where the Pandits lived instead of camps.

Stating that the Centre was in the know of all the details pertaining to this incident, he reiterated the party's demand for a clear-cut policy to fight cross-border terrorism.

'Impose Article 356'

The BJP lost little time in reminding the Centre that it should consider the use of Article 356 in Jammu and Kashmir if the Mufti Government continued to ignore the Central directive to tackle militancy. The Congress said that Article 356 was not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir under the Constitution. Blaming the ISI and Pak-supported militant groups for the killings, the BJP spokesman, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, could not escape from owning responsibility for it.

After the Union Home Ministry team's assess-

ment of the situation, the Centre should direct the Mufti Government to take effective steps and if it failed to adhere to, then it should send a Constitutional directive, failing which action should be considered under Article 356.

The BJP criticised the State Government's approach to tackling militancy by "curtailing" the military operations, disbanding the SOG and the "healing touch". Acknowledging that the Kashmir situation required a "healing touch", the BJP president, M. Venkaiah Naidu, said this "must only heal the victims of terror and not its perpetrators". He demanded that in the light of the continuing militant strikes, the State Government reassess the utility of continuing with its "soft policy on terrorism". He said that in the national interest, the Congress should put a halt to the PDP's "soft agenda" towards terrorism.

A brutal act: CPI(M)

The Left parties condemned the massacre with the CPI-M describing it as a brutal act of gunning down innocent people in cold blood. "This inhuman act has been deliberately done to spoil the chances of restoring peace and allowing the minority community to live peacefully in the Valley," the CPI(M) politburo said in a statement.

The CPI central secretariat said the modus operandi of the militants was a "desperate move". This was aimed to strike a blow at the efforts being made by the Mufti Government to bring back Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley.

'New attempt by terrorists'

PTI reports:

In Berlin, the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, condemned the Kashmir attack in the harshest possible terms and said it was "a new attempt by terrorists to destroy hopes for peace in the region." He called on all sides to try to end the conflict peacefully.

The U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, condemned in 'strongest term' the 'cowardly act' of terrorism in which 24 Kashmiri Pandits, including women and children, were massacred near the town of Shopian.

THE HINDU

25 MAR 2003

Violence rocks J&K towns

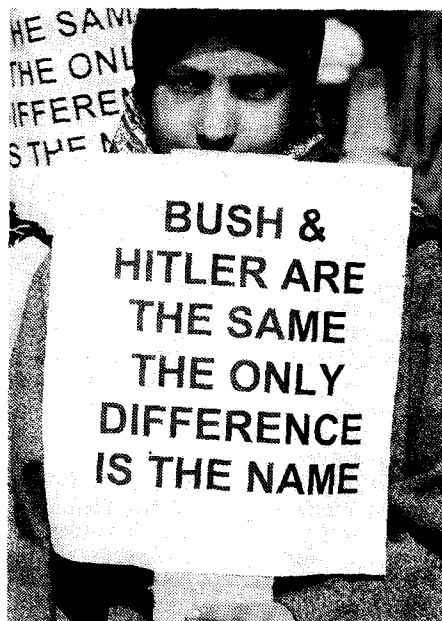
By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MARCH 21. A day after the U.S.-led attack on Iraq, strong protest demonstrations today followed by violent clashes rocked Srinagar and other major towns of Kashmir. Dozens of people were reported injured in pitched battles with police at a number of places.

The biggest demonstration was held in downtown Srinagar where thousands, led by Kashmir's head priest, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, took to the streets immediately after the Friday prayers. The protesters, including men, women and children, raised slogans against the U.S. President, George W. Bush, and the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, besides burning their effigies and their countries' flags.

Outside the Mirwaiz Manzil, headquarters of the Awami Action Committee, Mirwaiz Umar had a dig at the Muslim world. "If the Muslims across the globe fail to unite this time in saving Iraq, the aggressor will attack other Muslim countries too" he said, adding "America is the biggest enemy of Muslims."

The Mirwaiz expressed complete solidarity with the people of Iraq on behalf of the Kashmiris. After the Mirwaiz finished his speech, the demonstration took a violent turn and led to clashes between the police and protesters who threw stones at them. Police used dozens of teargas shells to quell the mob. Ding-dong battles between the



A Kashmiri girl displaying a placard during an anti-U.S. rally in Srinagar on Friday. — Reuters

two sides were continuing till late in the evening. At least a dozen people were injured in the clashes. Reports from other major towns of Baramulla, Sopore, Pulwama and Anantnag said that peaceful dem-

onstrations were held to protest against the attack.

Our Jammu Staff Reporter writes: Widespread protests were witnessed in Jammu region. In Doda district, residents took out a procession and burnt the effigies of Mr. Bush. Shops and establishments remained closed in several places. Reports of protest were also pouring in from Rajouri and Poonch districts.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said: "Such an action could lead to an unending trail of misery and bitterness that could destabilise the whole world." He said the people of the State join the rest of the country in disapproving the unilateral action against a sovereign nation and further efforts should have been put in to resolve the issue peacefully. Mr. Sayeed said the use of force for settling issues that could be resolved through negotiations was against the spirit of our times.

The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party leader, Shabir Shah, condemned the attack on Iraq and called it an "act of madness." He said: "There is no justification for these strikes. We oppose these acts as it is not in the interest of world peace."

The legislative leader of the People's Democratic Forum, M.Y. Tarigami, said: "The people of the State oppose the blatant aggression on Iraq. The message is clear from the Americans that might is right, and this threatens world peace."

Ultras attack police post, kill 1

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

Srinagar: At least nine policemen and two civilians were killed while five others were injured when militants attacked a remote police post in Udhampur district late on Saturday. The ultras also kidnapped four policemen and took away a large quantity of arms and ammunition.

One of the civilians, whom the militants suspected to be a police informer, was found with his throat slit.

Twenty-five policemen were on duty at the post in Gool area when heavily armed ultras barged into the building, firing rockets and spraying bullets. The police retreated, and the gun-battle lasted nearly two hours. The attackers, however, managed to escape. But

they took away with them two police constables and two special police officers (SPOs) besides 48 self-loading rifles, a light machine gun, three AK-47 rifles and some ammunition.

The Jambhat-ul-Mujahideen (JmM) has claimed responsibility for the attack. A man, identifying himself as JmM spokesman Jamil Ahmed, told a news agency here that the attack had been jointly carried out by his group and the Harakat-ul-Jehadi Islami.

The police said the attack might have been in retaliation to the killing of Anamullah, a suspected leader of the Pakistan-based Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, by security forces last week. They added that a massive hunt had been launched to track down the attackers. This is the second major strike by militants in three days. On Friday, six people, including a deputy superintendent of po-

Jammu, 2002

November 24
Raghunath temple.
13 persons killed,
including 3 militants

May 14
3 ultras attack
Kakuchak Cant. 36
killed, 48 hurt

March 30
2 militants attack
Raghunath temple.
3 killed, 20 injured

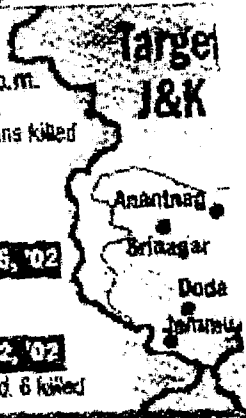
Jammu, 2003

March 15, 23:30 p.m.
Police post attacked.
9 policemen, 2 civilians killed

March 14
Hotel attacked.
3 killed, 9 injured

Anantnag, Aug 6, '02
Aniamath pilgrims
attacked. 9 killed.

Srinagar, Nov 22, '02
CRPF camp attacked. 6 killed



lice, were killed in a hotel siege in Poonch district.

Besides attacking the police post, the militants set on fire houses and a hospital before retreating.

Police and security forces were rushed to the area Sunday and they have launched massive combing operations in and around the village to track down the culprits. According to an army spokesman, a group of four ultras had been cornered by the security forces in the area.

While eight of those injured were rushed to Military Hospital in Udhampur, one was airlifted and admitted to Government Medical College Hospital here.

Director general of police J.K. Suri and IGP Jammu zone, P.L. Gupta, who visited the village, have assured the villagers that additional security forces would be deployed in the surrounding areas to effectively contain the growing level of militancy in the area.

17 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Centre softens on Hurriyat talks

Srinjoy Chowdhury in Goa

March 16. — The Centre is ready to talk to the Hurriyat Conference as part of its efforts to open dialogue with militants ready to lay down arms and separatists not involved in violence.

Speaking to reporters today, Mr LK Advani said: "We have no objection in talking with the Hurriyat (about a peaceful solution of the Jammu and Kashmir problem).... But there is no point in talking to those engaged in militancy unless they are ready to lay down arms." Referring to the talks with the Bodos, the Deputy Prime Minister said it was even worthwhile to talk to "people who subscribe to separatism, but are not engaged in violence". But he ruled out any "trilateral talks" involving Pakistan.

Mr Advani's statements are significant as Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and

J&K Liberation Front leader Mr Yasin Malik met Mrs Sonia Gandhi yesterday. In the past, the Centre had taken a tougher stand against the Hurriyat. The shift in stand comes with Mr Advani's statement that people in J&K "have legitimate grievances".

The Deputy Prime Minister, who is here to attend naval exercises, said the decision to appoint Mr NN Vohra, a retired home secretary, to work towards a solution of the J&K problem was taken after discussions with Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. Mr Arun Jaitley, currently law minister, had been given the task but Mr Jaitley was "one of us" and his views reflected the view of the government. "A new government had come up and a new beginning had been made." Mufti Mohammed Sayeed suggested it would be better to have someone who was not directly linked to the government or the BJP and

Turn to page 2

9 cops killed in J&K militant strike

JAMMU, March 16. — Militants blew up a security post killing nine policemen and two civilians and abducted four policemen at a village in Udhampur district last night. Lashker-e-Tajyaba, Hizbul Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami and Al-Badar militants attacked a police post in Gool village around 11 p.m. and started firing indiscriminately. The policemen retaliated and in the two-and-a-half hour encounter nine policemen were killed and eight injured.

Militants took four policemen captive and while fleeing took 26 weapons, including self-loading rifles with them. They set on fire six houses and a hospital in the village and shot dead two persons. — PTI

Ultras attack police post, kill 11

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

Srinagar: At least nine policemen and two civilians were killed while five others were injured when militants attacked a remote police post in Udhampur district late on Saturday. The ultras also kidnapped four policemen and took away a large quantity of arms and ammunition.

One of the civilians, whom the militants suspected to be a police informer, was found with his throat slit.

Twenty-five policemen were on duty at the post in Gool area when heavily-armed ultras barged into the building, firing rockets and spraying bullets. The police retaliated, and the gun-battle lasted nearly two hours. The attackers, however, managed to escape. But they took away with them two police constables and two special police officers (SPOs) besides 18 self-loading rifles, a light machine gun, three AK-47 rifles and some ammunition.

The Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen (JuM) has claimed responsibility for the attack. A man, identifying himself as JuM spokesman Jamil Ahmed, told a news agency here that the attack had been jointly carried out by his group and the Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami.

The police said the attack might have been in retaliation to the killing of Amanullah, a suspected leader of the Pakistan-based Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, by security forces last week. They added that a massive hunt had been launched to track down the attackers. This is the second major strike by militants in three days. On Friday, six people, including a deputy superintendent of po-

lice, were killed in a hotel siege in Poonch district.

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	Srinagar, Nov 22, '02 CRPF camp attacked. 6 killed

Target J&K

17 MAR 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

J&K orders release of 17 militants

By Our Staff Reporter

JAMMU, MARCH 14. In tune with its "healing touch policy", the Jammu and Kashmir Government has ordered release of 17 detenus facing mild charges in militancy-related acts. The process, which was halted after a series of terrorist strikes on the security forces in the State and the Raghunath Temple here, has resumed after a gap of four months.

Immediately after the terrorist attacks, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, had stated in Parliament that the Centre was being ignored in the release of the detenus. Thereafter, it became an issue of contention between the BJP and the Congress. The BJP made it an election issue in the Gujarat Assembly elections, where posters were seen accusing the Congress of being soft on terrorism.

To resolve the issue, a joint committee — which included a Central representative — was formed to shortlist the names of prisoners to be released. It was decided that the committee would make recommendations for any release.

The Congress also made it clear that it would not object to the release of detenus.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and his daughter and vice-president of the PDP, Mehbooba Mufti, had already said that the release of detenus would continue as the Government believed that no innocent person should be kept in jail. A list of 17 prisoners was forwarded for release to the Central Government agencies after a two-day meeting of the Central representative, Rakesh Ojha, with the State team last week. The "green signal" for their release was given. The criterion for release was also decided at the meeting.

It was decided that the prisoners should not have been involved in any serious militancy-related act, had already served more than the required period in jail even if they were to be tried and convicted for the crimes and their freedom does not pose any danger to the State. All the 17 prisoners were released on the instructions of Mr. Sayeed, who also holds the Home portfolio, on the recommendation of the Joint Screening Committee.

J&K HD-11 15/3

We are still relevant, says Hurriyat leader

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14. The former Hurriyat Conference Chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, today reiterated that the Kashmir problem was a political one and it could be solved only through dialogue.

Addressing a Friday congregation at Jama Masjid here, he called for building a conducive atmosphere for talks with the Centre. Any negotiated settlement of the issue should keep the India's as well as Pakistan's interests in mind.

"On one hand the Centre wants the Hurriyat to engage in talks and on the other its leaders are labelled as terrorists and accused of speaking on behalf of Pakistan." The Hurriyat Conference was talking to everyone in



Umer Farooq

the State to solve the Kashmir issue.

The Centre was trying to give a communal colour to the organisation by creating an impression that the amalgam was

talking only to the Muslim community, he said.

Stressing that the Hurriyat Conference was still relevant though the Congress-PDP Government had assumed office, the Mirwaiz said: "We are still very much there. The Hurriyat does not mix religion with politics. The impression has been created only by the Government."

He charged the Union Government with pursuing anti-Muslim policies.

The Hurriyat Conference had formed the Mutahida-Majlis-e-Ulema (MMU) in the Valley to counter the propaganda of the communal forces to close Madrassas.

Muslims were ready to face any threat or challenge posed to them.

15 MAR 2003

SEE FINDS

Fidayeen attack in Poonch: DSP, constable killed

By Our Staff Reporter

JAMMU, MARCH 14. In stepped-up violence in the border belt of Jammu region, a Deputy Superintendent of Police and a head constable were killed and seven injured in a fierce encounter with fidayeen (suicide squads) holed up in a hotel in Poonch town.

The encounter started at around 11.25 a.m. The Director-General of Police, A.K. Suri, said the attackers belonged either to the Laskar-e-Taiba or to the Jaish-e-Mohammad terrorist outfit.

The terrorists were armed with sophisticated weaponry and police suffered initial casualties as the militants fired indiscriminately.

Three or four attackers may be holed up.

The militants who sneaked into a posh hotel situated near the bus stand were planning to carry out subversive

activities.

The encounter started when, on the basis of a tip-off, police started searching the surroundings. Immediately, the militants sneaked into the hotel and fired from inside it. They also fired rocket launchers.

At around 2.25 p.m. the two policemen, Manjeet Singh, DSP, and Manohar Lal, head constable, were hit by bullets. They died on way to hospital.

The bodies of the police personnel were flown to Jammu later this evening.

The militants had reportedly taken a hotel employee hostage but the security personnel rescued him.

There were also reports that a CRPF jawan was killed but police refused to confirm them.

The Army was then called in to flush out the militants.

The visiting Minister of State for Home, I.D. Swami,

had earlier called on the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, to review the security situation prevailing in the State. The meeting lasted 20 minutes.

The fidayeen attack in Poonch comes 24 hours after a bomb blast on a bus in Rajouri killing two persons and injuring many.

RDX recovered

PTI reports:

Security forces today busted two militant hideouts and recovered a large quantity of explosives, including 200 kg of RDX, in Doda and Udhampur districts of Jammu Division.

The RDX was recovered from a hideout in Hamirpur area of Doda District.

Plastic cans containing 50 litres of acetyline, a bundle of copper wire, 10 kh of shrapnel and one kg of sulphuric acid were also recovered from the hideout.

15 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Vohra to meet Hurriyat leaders

Statesman News Service 9/8/73

JAMMU, March 5. — The long awaited dialogue-process in Jammu and Kashmir was set in motion today with the arrival of Centre's interlocutor Mr Narender Nath Vohra who held wide ranging discussions with several important personalities here today.

Talking to the media at the civil secretariat this afternoon, Mr Vohra said everybody is welcome to meet him and he would wish to hear everyone. On the question of Hurriyat and his agenda, he said the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister had said in the Parliament that he "would meet everyone". He added that "(as for) at what stage who comes forward, it is they who would have to make up their mind".

In the first phase, he said he would be meeting with the important people in the legislative setup and after discussions with them, he would draw future programme for talks. He said that this first

visit to Jammu and Kashmir is to establish preliminary contacts with important personalities with whom he would be working in future for finding solution to the problem.

After his arrival from New Delhi in a special aircraft, Mr Vohra held wide ranging discussions with the Governor on the situation in the state. The meeting lasted for about 90 minutes. His meeting with the chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed was slated for later this evening.

Later, Mr Vohra met deputy chief minister Mr Pandit Mangat Ram Sharma (Congress) in the civil secretariat. After the meeting which lasted for 35 minutes, Mr Sharma told reporters that even though his meeting with Centre's interlocutor was brief, it was very fruitful. He said they discussed the modalities of his talks with the legislators. He said he has suggested to Mr Vohra to talk to the all political parties in the legislature including the independents.

Mr Vohra also called on the Speaker of the J&K Assembly Mr Tara Chand in the legislative

complex. The meeting lasted for 45 minutes.

The minister for employment and information technology Mr Rigzin Jora, who represents Leh in the Cabinet, also met him. After his meeting, he said that he has invited Mr Vohra to Leh to which he has agreed. Mr Jora said that he was told by Mr Vohra that while finding a solution to the problem, interests of all the regions including Ladakh would be kept in mind.

Later in the evening, Mr Vohra called on the leader of the Opposition Mr Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah of National Conference and the Legislative Council chairman Mr Abdul Rashid Dar and held discussion with them. Each of these meetings lasted for one hour.

Meanwhile, Mr MY Tarigami of the CPI-M, also withdrew his resolution in Assembly today regarding initiation of unconditional dialogue between the Centre and the members of the state legislature and other segments of public opinion for restoration of peace in the city as centre's interlocutors.

N.N. Vohra, new interlocutor for J&K

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 19. The former Home Secretary, N.N. Vohra, will be the Centre's interlocutor for Jammu and Kashmir. The



announcement was made by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, while replying to a question in the Rajya Sabha on whether the Government was taking any steps to begin a dialogue with the elected representatives and separatist groups in Kashmir.

The announcement came as a surprise. Although the Government had in principle decided to appoint Mr. Vohra — and he had had meetings with both the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister and the Principal Secretary in the PMO, Brajesh Mishra — the announcement was not expected until much later. For, the fine print of his position (including whether it is a full-time or part-time appointment) and the remit of his job (among other things, whom the dialogue should or should not include) have yet to be settled.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2003

HD-11
A/2

U.S. Army chief briefed on J&K security situation

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 3. Eric K. Shinseki, the first United States Army chief to visit India, was today extensively briefed about the continuing Pakistan support to infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC).

The Chief of the U.S. Army was first informed about the precarious security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and then about the developing security concerns in the East during an hour-long audio-visual briefing in the War Room in South Block.

Similar concerns were shared during his one-to-one interaction with his Indian counterpart, N.C. Vij, who has repeatedly dealt with this problem in Jammu and Kashmir.

Besides serving extensively in the rugged terrain of Jammu and Kashmir, Gen. Vij was directly involved during the brief but bloody Pakistani endeavour to alter the LoC in Kargil in 1999 as the Army's Director General of Military Operations.

Gen. Shinseki also interacted with the Chairman, Chief of Staff Committee, and Naval chief, Madhvendra Singh, and the newly appointed Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, M. Macmahon.

He also called on the Defence Minister, George Fernandes.



The Chief of the U.S. Army, Eric K. Shinseki, being received by his Indian counterpart, Nirmal Chander Vij, in New Delhi on Monday. — Photo: Anu Pushkarna

Accompanied by a 14-member delegation and his wife, he leaves early tomorrow for the

Philippines. The U.S. Army chief had arrived here on Sunday evening.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2003

9/11/03 ✓
A SHORTSIGHTED APPROACH 40-10
12/2 ✓

THE SEQUENCE OF events clearly points to a link between the closing down of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference's Delhi office and the arrest, three days earlier, of two of the Kashmiri separatist conglomerate's activists with money intended allegedly for funding terrorist outfits in Jammu and Kashmir, an incident that has had an impact also on India's diplomatic relations with Pakistan. The circumstances under which the arrests were made, the reported profiles of the persons picked up (one of them was the man in charge of the Hurriyat-run Kashmir Awareness Bureau, who was held following a raid on the office premises), and the fact that the charges slapped on them relate to the highly stringent anti-terrorism law do add up to a serious enough situation for the investigators to make a thorough professional job of it. In such circumstances, it is not uncommon for the police to conduct raids and, where necessary, have the premises concerned sealed to prevent any tampering with evidence or any other attempt to prejudice the enquiry. What is of the essence is that such actions by the crime investigating or law-enforcing agencies should be transparent and credible if they are not to be seen as instances of a colourable exercise of authority. In the case of the Hurriyat's Delhi Office, the outfit's leadership has spoken of a "forced closure", related presumably to indirect pressure from the authorities and the aggressive majoritarian elements.

This said, it will be naive not to view the Delhi episode in the larger political context affecting Jammu and Kashmir, more specifically the strikingly shortsighted approach of the Central Government to the imperative of initiating a broad-based dialogue. Take, for instance, the Atal Behari Vajpayee regime's attitude towards the Hurriyat. While the BJP-led coalition's responses to Kashmir-related issues, from time to time, seemed to be significantly conditioned by the 'Hurriyat' factor, more recently, the Deputy

Minister, L.K. Advani, made it known that the separatist groups whom he called "Pakistan proxies" (read the Hurriyat) would be kept out of the dialogue process. And this was followed by a patently regressive move such as imposing curbs on travel abroad by separatist leaders and the first target, ironically, was Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, by no means a pro-Pakistan hawk but one who has emerged as a credible moderate face in the Hurriyat, speaking up for a political solution of the Kashmir problem through a comprehensive dialogue. Against this backdrop, one needs to be reassured that the Vajpayee regime has not allowed, and will not allow, its palpable obsession with the Hurriyat to stand in the way of launching the much-needed dialogue process.

If the State Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, over three months in office, is rather anguished that the Centre is yet to come up with an initiative for talks, it is quite understandable. In fact, the popular mandate, as registered in a universally hailed democratic exercise held in October 2002, is nothing but a collective expression of yearning for peace and call for an end to the pervasive sense of alienation, and this has been recognised and acknowledged by the Vajpayee Government. Within the constraints that are inherent in a coalition arrangement as the one he is heading — not to speak of those set by the political imperative of not rubbing the Centre the wrong way — Mr. Sayeed has for his part taken some significant steps by way of providing a "healing touch" as promised in the Common Minimum Programme. But the onus of initiating a credible and all-important process of conciliation is primarily on the Centre and, needless to say, it has to be as inclusive as possible. And this means the dialogue — its format, composition, scope and structure — has to be free from the narrow partisan impulses and deep-seated prejudices flowing from the majoritarian agenda of the leading partner of the ruling coalition at the Centre.

1 2 FEB 2003

A MOVE TO CLIP APHC WINGS, SAYS BHAT

Hurriyat forced to close down office in Delhi

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, FEB. 9. Facing the heat after two of its activists were arrested on charges of acting as conduits for facilitating the flow of funds to terrorists in the Kashmir Valley, the All-Party Hurriyat Conference was forced to close down its office in a South Delhi residential colony today.

The step comes three days after the Hurriyat spokesman, Shabir Ahmad Dar, and a woman activist, Anjum Zamrooda Habib, were booked by the Delhi Police on charges of channelling funds to terrorist organisations.

The Hurriyat has been operating the Kashmir Awareness Bureau from a rented accommodation in Shivalik Nagar since 1995.

It was asked to vacate the premises by the house owner, according to police sources. The owner was apparently "under pressure" after the recent disclosures which sparked something of a diplomatic row between India and Pakistan.

Activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal staged a

demonstration outside the Kashmir Awareness Bureau office on Saturday, demanding that the premises be vacated. The office was also raided by the Delhi Police on February 6.

The office supervisor, Gulfam Ahmed, said that the Hurriyat had decided to shut down the office after a notice was served on it by the landlord.

It would be up to the Hurriyat's executive committee to decide if it would like to set it up in another location here.

The Hurriyat chairman, Abdul Gani Bhat, said on Friday that the amalgam was contemplating closing down the office due to alleged police harassment.

'Carrot and stick approach'

PTI reports from Srinagar:

Mr. Bhat described the moves to close down the APHC office in Delhi and the release on parole of Syed Ali Shah Geelani, senior leader of the conglomerate, as "a carrot and stick approach" towards the Kashmiri leadership, and said only a "meaningful dialogue" involving Pakistan could permanently resolve the Kashmir issue.

"We welcome the release of Geelani but at the same time we should not read too much into it as the Government seems to be doling out carrot and stick treatment to the Kashmiri leadership," he said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Government ordered Mr. Geelani's release on Saturday, considering his health condition, after nine months of detention under the Public Safety Act. He will undergo kidney surgery tomorrow at Mumbai's Tata Memorial Hospital.

Mr. Bhat said the closing down of the Hurriyat office, following the arrest of its leaders for allegedly receiving money from the Pakistan High Commission, was an attempt "to clip the wings of the 25-party conglomerate."

Asked to react to the expulsion of diplomats by India and Pakistan, Mr. Bhat said "I do not think that it would have evoked a positive response from the leaders of the world community."

However, the amalgam would wait and watch the developments before making a statement on the issue.

End of road for talks: Page 11

10 FEB 2003