

India rules out army pullout from Siachen

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Siachen: While expressing optimism that the upcoming Saarc summit would lead to better relations in the region, India on Thursday ruled out demilitarisation of the Siachen glacier unless differences with Pakistan were resolved.

"As long as there is a controversy, there can be no demilitarisation here," said defence minister George Fernandes, on his 38th trip to the Siachen glacier.

After interacting with the troops on Christmas day, he said, "As and when India and Pakistan are able to resolve their differences and learn to live as friends, I see no problem in development along the glacier."

He said the onus of this friendship rested on Pakistan as India had been facing its onslaught since 1947 despite having extended a hand of friendship umpteen times.

Fernandes, however, was optimistic about the outcome of the upcoming Saarc summit in Islamabad. "From all the indications we have had so far, it should be a successful summit."

The defence minister said he was



G. Fernandes

hopeful because of the way things moved after the ceasefire was announced and enforced.

"There is a reason to feel that things can take the right turn," he said.

The defence minister said there could be certain compulsions

which would enable Pakistan to take decisions for pushing the present situation forward. About these compulsions, he was noncommittal. "They are better not discussed."

After the ceasefire was announced last month the infiltration had reduced to some extent, said Fernandes. However, the jawans deployed at the border are still doing the same job to checkmate the infiltrators and displace them in case they crossed the Line of Control.

He said the significance of Siachen lay in the fact that it was part of the Indian territory. "We do not need any other reason to hold on to it," he said. PTI

More sorry than safe

9-03 N from SVB 22/12
POTA changes were overdue

If the BJP had not been hell bent on proving its national security credentials, if the Congress had not been equally determined that this should not happen and if the two major political parties had not made the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) a prestige issue, the amendments or Supreme Court strictures would not have come. Much useless controversy would have been avoided and time saved. But loud rhetoric and dilatory tactic being two favourite political weapons, we can only be thankful that correctives have come, even if late. Parliament has amended Section 60 of POTA to check police/government abuse of the law.

The review committees, at the Central and state levels, which can be moved by anyone charged under POTA, now have the authority to turn down official decisions and such revisions have been made binding. There's a grey area: POTA, 2002 does not make it clear whether the Central review committee can act as a court of higher appeal vis-a-vis the state committees. This should be the case, not only because the aggrieved must have a second chance but also because the chances of manipulating the review committee process are higher at the state level than at the Centre. Indeed, the Central POTA review committee must quickly establish its independence and fairness so that the law can recover some credibility. This would mean treating an "obscure" case with as much dispatch as a headline-making case.

Vaiko's case, of course, got the biggest headlines. The Supreme Court's observation that in a democracy mere expression of sympathy for "terrorist" causes ought not to lead to arrest is unexceptionable. Such allowance for "non-mainstream" opinion is a hallmark of a liberal civil society. It is a measure of how badly the Centre had drafted the law and/or an indication how callous administrators are of civil liberties that this distinction was not put in black and white.

To say, as the BJP says sotto voce, that Jayalithaa's extravagant interpretation of the law could not be anticipated is disingenuous. The lady didn't turn mercurial post-POTA. The BJP, whose government she brought down, should know that better than any one. Also, Jayalithaa could misapply POTA only because its provisions allowed her to. The court's observation should now be taken as the firm guideline by all concerned authorities.

That means, to take some examples, a Kashmiri journalist advocating secession, a radical Marxist eulogising Bihar and Andhra Naxalites, a madrasah teacher finding much good in Lashkar-e-Toiba — none of these people should come under POTA because they hold views different from what is broadly the mainstream consensus. The line between freedom of expression and security is admittedly not always clear but the state, in a democracy, must begin by erring on the side of freedom.

OVER 40 INJURED IN GRENADE BLASTS IN J&K

Militants take nine persons hostage

Dish
Security
11/10

7/1/10

By Our Staff Reporter

SRINAGAR, OCT. 20. Militants today took nine persons, including women and children, hostage in a house in the Shopian area of Jammu and Kashmir's Pulwama district while one civilian was killed and 45 were injured in two separate grenade blasts in the Kashmir Valley.

Around 6.30 a.m., the Special Operations Group of the State Police surrounded a house in Tharian Imam Sahib village of Shopian where four militants were hiding.

The house was cordoned off and, using the local mosque's public address system police appealed to the militants to surrender. The militants refused. Four persons, including an Imam, were then asked to go inside the house and convince the militants to surrender. Once inside, the four were taken hostage, along with five others living in the house.

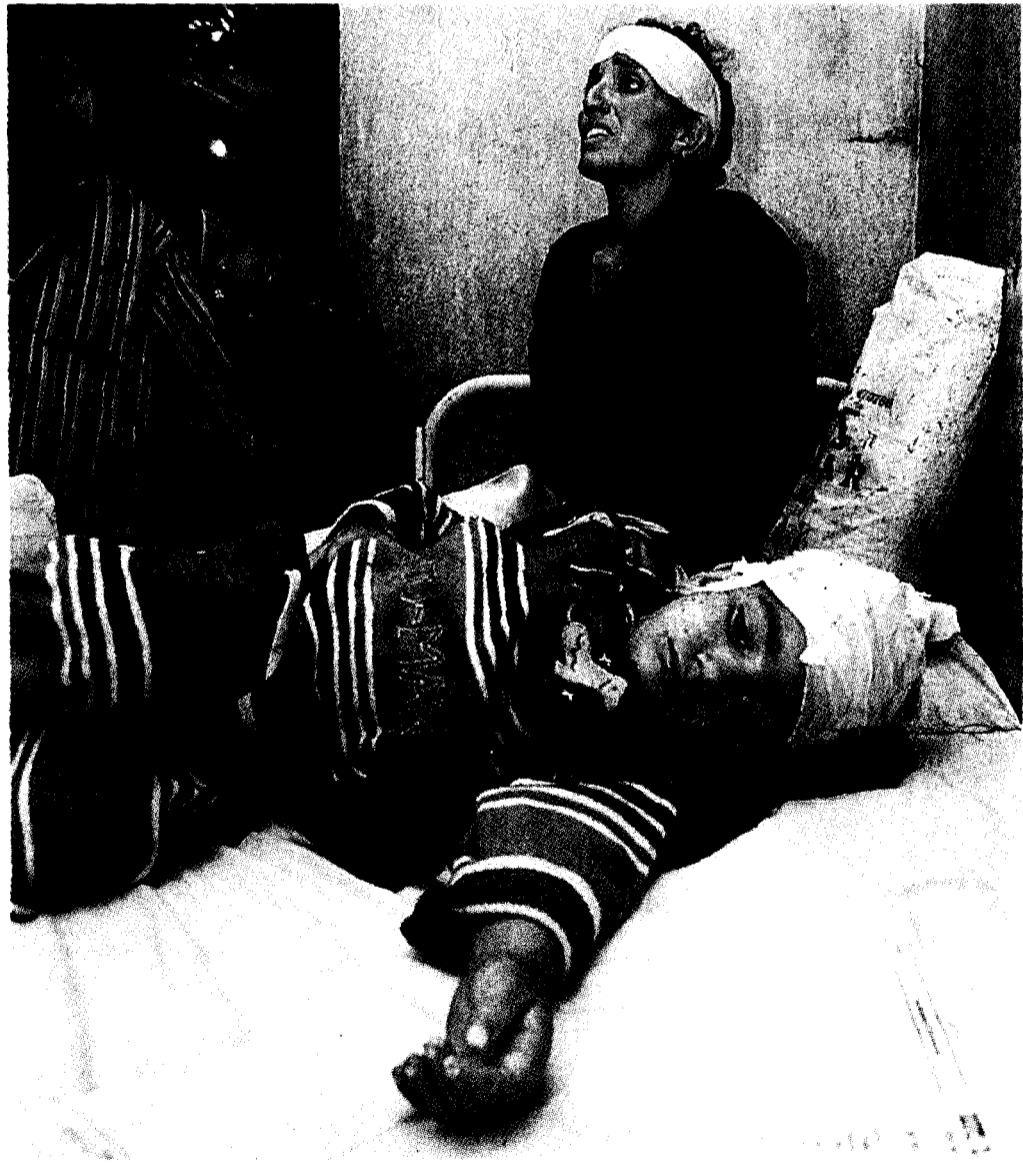
According to a PTI report, the militants reportedly demanded that the village *numberdar* be sent into the house for negotiations. The security forces are said to have rejected the demand.

Talking to *The Hindu*, the DIG, Anantnag-Pulwama, Ravindra Kotwal, said that they were worried about the safety of the civilians inside and that was why the operation was being held up. The utmost care was being taken to save the lives of the civilians. Reinforcements of Army and police had reached the area and the security ring around the house had been strengthened.

In another incident, militants lobbed a grenade at a Border Security Force bunker in the crowded Batmaloo bus stand in Srinagar around 3.30 p.m. The grenade missed the target and fell in a civilian area injuring 40 persons, including women and children. Eyewitnesses said that for 10 minutes there was absolute panic in the area. The injured were admitted to the SMHS, Barzalla and SKIMS hospitals.

Two hours later, in Anantnag, a grenade was hurled at a shop where security personnel were making purchases but it fell among civilians. A person identified as Mohammad Yosuf was killed and five persons were injured.

The area was cordoned off and a search operation launched.



A child injured in a grenade explosion at a bus stand in Srinagar on Monday. — Photo Nissar Ahmad

GROWING SUCCESS IN REMOTE SENSING

REMOTE SENSING IS one of the success stories of the Indian space programme. From a situation in the 1970s when remote sensing was virtually unheard of in this country, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has engineered a remarkable transformation. India's own satellites now provide the data and ISRO has ensured their widespread use domestically and their growing utilisation abroad. As a remote sensing satellite passes overhead, its cameras continually take pictures of the ground below in different frequency bands. This information is later processed to generate a wide range of data on vegetation, mineral availability, land use and so on. A remote sensing satellite can cover the whole globe in just a few weeks and continue to do so through its lifespan. Using data from Landsat, the world's first civilian remote sensing satellite, ISRO demonstrated the benefits of rapid, accurate and comprehensive information for a wide range of applications in areas such as agriculture, land management, resource mapping and forestry. Such applications are now taken for granted by users in government and increasingly in the private sector too. An estimate prepared a few years ago suggested that potential benefits from these remote sensing applications could be more than Rs. 10,000 crores a year, paying for the whole space programme several times over. Since launching its first Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellite in 1988, ISRO has put eight remote sensing satellites into orbit, including, most recently, the IRS-P6. As a result, the IRS is today the world's largest constellation of remote sensing satellites — an extraordinary achievement for a developing country.

The cameras of IRS-P6, also called Resourcesat, have been specifically designed to meet Indian requirements and its data are therefore likely to be extensively used. The Resourcesat's three cameras take images in more frequency bands and have better resolution. One of these cameras

is able to cover an extremely wide area and offers repeat coverage every five days. Just the ability to identify crops more accurately and assess their growth status better will improve many important applications. Central and State Governments already get advanced acreage and production estimates for crops such as wheat, paddy, sorghum and cotton. With Resourcesat, the accuracy of these estimates can be greatly improved. India's multiple-cropping patterns and smaller plot sizes may no longer be a constraint to extending such estimation to cover many more crops. Disaster management in general and drought monitoring in particular will benefit. Until now, drought monitoring has been possible only up to the district level. With Resourcesat, the hope is that such drought monitoring can be extended down to the taluk level. The Forest Survey of India, which was one of the first Government agencies to use remote sensing data operationally, will be better able to carry out its "Inventory of Trees Outside Forests" project for a more accurate inventory of the country's tree cover.

Some ambitious projects in remote sensing application are planned. One is to set up a National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) that will allow maps, various sorts of data and images to be integrated seamlessly. The NSDI will be the mainstay for plans to have a National Resources Census at regular intervals. Such a periodic census will quickly identify resource hotspots so that remedial action can be initiated without delay. ISRO is also planning more remote sensing satellites. Two Cartosat satellites will allow high-resolution mapping. ISRO's first Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT), which has just been approved, will be capable of penetrating cloud cover and darkness. Remote sensing may not have the glamour of manned spaceflight, but its benefits can be tremendous for what is still a predominantly agricultural country.

Cabinet Committee On Security To Review Musharraf's Offer Today

Pak drops UN path to J&K peace

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 18 DECEMBER

THE Cabinet Committee on Security will discuss on Friday the offer made by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf of not insisting on plebiscite in Kashmir. The CCS was supposed to meet on Tuesday but could not do so because of the ongoing Parliament session.

Talking to a news agency, Mr Musharraf has said Pakistan is ready to drop long-standing demands for the implementation of UN resolutions over Kashmir and meet India "halfway" in a bid for peace. For over 50 years, Islamabad has insisted on a plebiscite to allow people in the divided Kashmir to decide between joining India or Pakistan, a position backed by a series of UN Security Council resolutions in the late 1940s.

But, speaking less than three weeks before an important South Asian summit in Islamabad, Mr Musharraf said he was prepared to be "bold and flexible" in an attempt to resolve the perennial dispute over Kashmir. "We are for United Nations Security Council Resolutions," Pakistan's military ruler said in an interview at his home late on Wednesday. "However, now we have left that aside."

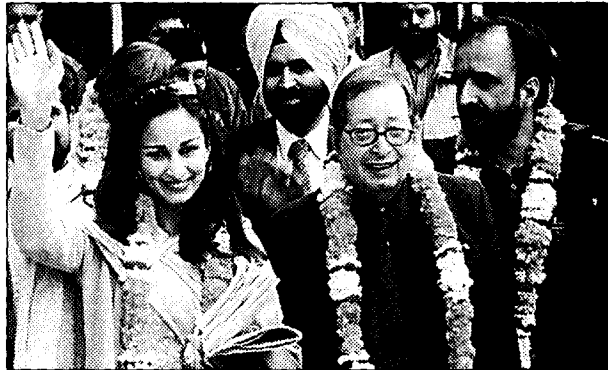
"If we want to resolve this issue, both sides need to talk to each other with flexibility, coming beyond stated positions, meeting halfway somewhere." Mr Musharraf said this represented a "very real opportunity" to make peace, but warned India not to throw away the chance by

continuing to spurn offers for talks. "The basis of everything, the basis of a reduction in militancy ... is moving forward on a process of dialogue," he said. "If that political dialogue doesn't come about, who wins and who loses? It is the moderates who lose and the extremists who win, and that is exactly what has been happening."

Mr Musharraf refused to be drawn on how to settle the Kashmir dispute, but said any solution had to be acceptable to Kashmiri people as well as to both countries. In January, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is expected to visit Islamabad for a South Asian summit, billed as an important chance to move the peace process forward. Mr Musharraf said Mr Vajpayee should not miss the chance to discuss Kashmir.

"We have come to a stage where there is a thaw in relations, where there is expectation on both sides in the people," he said. "If the leadership doesn't rise to the occasion, it is a pity and I think we'll disappoint our public again," Mr Musharraf said. But Musharraf warned that he would not plead for an audience with Mr Vajpayee next month.

"The ball is in his court. If he wants to meet me, I'll meet him. If he doesn't want to meet me, I am not that keen." Mr Musharraf also criticised India for taking advantage of the ceasefire to accelerate construction of a fence along the LoC dividing Kashmir, a move he said showed New Delhi's "insincerity" about seeking a peaceful solution.



PEACE MISSION: Pakistani parliamentarians (from left to right) Sherry Rehman, Qmar Zaman and M.P. Bandara enter India through the Wagah border on Thursday. — PTI

Pervez statement angers J&K ultras

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 18 DECEMBER

KASHMIR separatists have taken a strong exception to Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf's statement to drop the plebiscite option. They said neither Islamabad nor New Delhi has a right to decide on behalf of Jammu & Kashmir.

Within days after the former US secretary of state Medlenine Albright said the plebiscite was the only solution to the festering the Kashmir mess, Pakistani President said they would drop the UN resolutions in the bilateral negotiations. This has angered many in Jammu & Kashmir. National Conference (NC) that has 28 members in the 87-member state legislature and stakes credit for running the "Plebiscite Front" during the 22 years of "political wilderness" of its leadership, termed Musharraf's statement "unfortunate and malicious."

Hurriyat Conference also reacted on the expected lines. Molvi Abbas Hussain Ansari, who heads the moderate pro talk alliance said: "We believe flexibility on both sides is necessary, but it does not mean dropping a realisation which has categorically described Kashmiri people as prime party to the dispute."

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18/12

POTA politics

D & N

IT'S NOT everyday that realpolitik leads to good sense prevailing. When such a cause-effect does click into place, it however becomes clear that things like laws of the land don't exist in a vacuum unencumbered by the rules of politics. One doesn't have to be a pundit to realise that the amendment to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, was passed in the Lok Sabha to bail out a friend of the NDA. MDMK leader Vaiko has been languishing in a Chennai jail ever since the Jayalalitha government charged him under POTA. Mr Vaiko's crime was to allegedly express support for the LTTE, designated as a terrorist organisation. Under the unamended law, it was legally kosher to haul the MDMK leader up. So don't miss the real irony: the NDA is attempting to bail Mr Vaiko out by amending a law that got him into jail in the first place.

It was the Supreme Court's decision earlier the same day on which the Lok Sabha passed the tweaked POTA that got the ball rolling. It upheld the validity of the law, but at the same time laid down a host of guidelines about the way the Act should be read. The very fact that POTA needed to be amended sug-

gests that the law, as predicted before it was passed in its original form a year ago, was always more of a tool for political vendetta or community-based targeting. In its new form and as prescribed by the Supreme Court, one can't be charged under POTA unless it is proved that the accused has the "criminal intention of aiding" terrorist organisations. While that may get Mr Vaiko off the Jayalalitha hook, the law still remains open to abuse. How does one, for example, determine when simple 'verbal' support for outlawed groups become full-blown 'aid'? Does the hosting of lectures or rallies in support of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, for instance, amount to 'support' or 'aid'?

Also, while the apex court has upheld that individuals can't withhold information about terrorist activities, can one be sure that there won't be a repeat of the fiasco that involved Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani? POTA, despite the removal of a fang here and a fang there, remains a flawed law. The correct implementation of the criminal laws that it supposedly supplements should have taken care of the bogeymen that scare POTA-supporters.

ভূটানে জঙ্গিদের

সঙ্গে ভারতীয়

ফৌজেরই লড়াই

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি ১৫

১৭ ডিসেম্বর: ভূটানে যুদ্ধ হচ্ছে। যুদ্ধ হচ্ছে জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে ভারতীয় বাহিনীর।

ভূটানের পাহাড়ে-জঙ্গলে ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে আলফা-কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিদের সরাসরি লড়াই চলছে তিন দিন ধরে। ভূটান সরকারের সঙ্গে কথা বলে সোমবার সকাল থেকে ভারতীয় জওয়ানেরা অভিযান শুরু করেন। এখনও পর্যন্ত এই অভিযানে ১২০ জন জঙ্গি মারা গিয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক অবশ্য খবর এসেছে, আলফা ও কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিরা প্রায়শই পাল্টা আক্রমণ চালাচ্ছে। তাদের হামলায় অন্তত ৩৪ জন ভূটান-সেনা প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন। মারা গিয়েছেন অনেক জওয়ানও। তাঁদের সংখ্যা কত? প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রক জানাতে চায়নি। অসমর্থিত সূত্রে খবর, কমবেশি ২৫ জন জওয়ান প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন।

আজ সন্ধ্যা পর্যন্ত মরণপণ লড়াই চলেছে। সংঘর্ষ চলার সময়ই ৪০ থেকে ৫০ জন আলফা ও কামতাপুরী জঙ্গি ভূটানের সীমানা ছাড়িয়ে অসমের উদালগুড়িতে পালিয়ে গিয়েছে। গোয়েন্দাদের আশঙ্কা, তাড়া খেয়ে জঙ্গিরা পশ্চিমবঙ্গেও ঢোকার চেষ্টা করছে। সোমবার মুখ্যমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য দিল্লিতে ছিলেন। উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী আডবাণী তাঁকে সে দিনই ফোন করে ওই আশঙ্কা জানান। অসম ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে চূড়ান্ত সতর্কতা জারি করা হয়েছে। ভূটান সীমানা সিল করে দেওয়া হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছেন সেনা প্রধান এন সি ভিজ। অনুপ্রবেশ দেখলেই গুলি চালানোর নির্দেশও জারি হয়েছে।

যুদ্ধই। ভারতীয় স্থল বাহিনীকে সাহায্য করছে বিমান বাহিনীও। তারা নজরদারি চালাচ্ছে। আকাশে চক্র মারছে কপ্টার। সীমান্তে ৬-৭টি কামান বসানো হয়েছে।

অভিযান শুরুর আগেই অবশ্য খবর চলে যায় আলফা ও কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিদের কাছে। এবং তাই শনিবার ৮৯ জন আলফা জঙ্গি আত্মসমর্পণ করে। তারা ভারত ও ভূটান সেনার সঙ্গে লড়াইয়ে রাজি হয়নি। তবে প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকও বুঝে গিয়েছে, আলফা-কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিরাও গেরিলা যুদ্ধের প্রশিক্ষণ পেয়েছে। আর তাই তিন দিন ধরে দু'দেশের সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে লড়ে যাচ্ছে। মন্ত্রক সূত্রে বলা হয়েছে, জঙ্গিদের কাছেও একে-৪৭-সহ মর্টার প্রভৃতি প্রচুর আধুনিক অস্ত্র আছে। জঙ্গলে আছে প্রায় ৩০০০ জঙ্গি। আলফা ও কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে এন ডি এফ বি'র কিছু ঘাঁটিও ধ্বংস করা হয়েছে। টিকরি, কালীখোলা (সামড্রুপ জোংখার) প্রভৃতি জায়গায় জঙ্গিদের ঘাঁটি ছিল।

সার্ক সম্মেলনের আগে ভূটানে আলফা-বড়ো-কামতাপুরী জঙ্গিদের ঘাঁটি গুঁড়িয়ে দিয়ে বাজপেয়ী সরকার বাংলাদেশের উপরও চাপ সৃষ্টি করল। ইসলামাবাদে বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে বেগম খালেদা জিয়ার বৈঠক হওয়ার কথা। সেখানে ভারত জঙ্গি নেতাদের ফেরত দেওয়ার দাবি জোরের সঙ্গে জানাবে। ঢাকার কাছে দিল্লির প্রস্তাব, ভূটান সরকারের মতো খালেদা সরকারও আলফা'র ঘাঁটিগুলো গুঁড়িয়ে দেওয়ার কাজে সাহায্য করুক। ভূটানকে যে ভাবে জঙ্গি ঘাঁটিগুলোর উপগ্রহ-চিত্র দিল্লি দিয়েছিল, তেমনই দেওয়া হয়েছে বাংলাদেশ সরকারকেও। তবে ঢাকা জঙ্গিদের আশ্রয় দেওয়ার কথা অস্বীকার করেছে।

ঢাকা থেকে রহমান জাহাঙ্গির জানিয়েছেন, আলফা নেতা পরেশ বক্রয়া ও অরবিন্দ রাজখোয়া বাংলাদেশ সীমান্ত পেরিয়ে ঢুকেছেন, ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনীর ইস্টার্ন কমান্ডের জেনারেল অফিসারের এই অভিযোগ ঢাকা আজ অস্বীকার করেছে। ঢাকায় বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের এক মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, অলীক সব অভিযোগ আগেও করা হয়েছে। বাংলাদেশ কোনও দিন কোনও বিদেশি জঙ্গিকে আশ্রয় দেয়নি। কারণ, বাংলাদেশ জানে, বিদেশি জঙ্গিদের আশ্রয়-প্রশ্রয় দিয়ে কোনও লাভ হয় না। দিল্লি অবশ্য বারবার বলেছে, রাজশাহি ও পার্বত্য চট্টগ্রামে এখনও বহু জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি বহাল তবিয়তেই রয়েছে। জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি ধ্বংস করার জন্য ভারত ভূটানকে প্রচুর অস্ত্র দিয়েছে। শুধু স্বয়ংক্রিয় রাইফেল নয়, দূর পাল্লার স্ক্রিপপাত্রও দিয়েছে। ভূটানের বিদেশ দফতরের মুখপাত্র ইয়েসি দোরজি জানিয়েছেন, আলফা'র সদর দফতর ভেঙে দেওয়া হয়েছে। উঁচু পাহাড়ে লড়াই হচ্ছে ভিন্ন ধরনের। বিদেশ মন্ত্রক সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, ভারতকে সাহায্য করার জন্য দিল্লি ভূটানকে আর্থিক সাহায্যও করবে। শুক্রবার মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতে সামগ্রিক পরিস্থিতি আলোচিত হবে।

আগরতলা থেকে স্টাফ রিপোর্টার জানিয়েছেন, এন ডি এফ বি'র 'সেনাবাহিনী' 'বড়োলাস্ক আর্মি চিফ অফ স্টাফ' বি সুসরাংগা বলেছেন, '১৭ নভেম্বর ভূটান সরকারের সঙ্গে এন ডি এফ বি'র চুক্তি হয়। চুক্তি ভঙ্গ করে আমাদের ঘাঁটিতে হামলা চালানো হয়েছে। এটা দুর্ভাগ্যজনক।'

● ভূটানে সেনার কাছে টম, মিল্টনের আত্মসমর্পণ...পৃঃ ৭

Despite bad weather, PSLV puts satellite in space

By R.K. Radhakrishnan

SRIHARIKOTA, OCT. 17. Despite cloudy skies and intermittent rain over the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, the eighth flight of the Indian Space Research Organisation's workhorse launch vehicle, the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, today placed a land use spacecraft, the Indian Remote Sensing Satellite Resourcesat-1, in an 821 km-high polar Sun Synchronous Orbit.

With the weather putting pressure on time, the Rs. 80-



The PSLV-C5 after its launch at Sriharikota on Friday.

— Photo: M. Moorthy

crore PSLV C-5 took off eight seconds past 10-22 a.m. today and it took 1,080 seconds to reach its orbital injection point. The weather office had predicted the onset of the monsoon from tomorrow over Sriharikota, and the ISRO had the choice of either going ahead with the launch today or putting it off for a better day after the monsoon.

"Normally one will not attempt such a mission in this inclement weather," said the ISRO Chairman, G. Madhavan Nair. The ISRO had not attempted a launch during the rains. "Today, we had a very difficult situation. Basically, the weather was turning bad and the monsoon was almost setting in. We were driven virtually to the corner. But during the last few days, the launch vehicle team and others were analysing the pros and cons of facing such a challenge. In fact, the vehicle had been built to withstand such rainy conditions. Launch facilities also have been strengthened to meet such eventuality. Today, by a strange coincidence we had an opportunity to prove that the vehicle is all-weather capable and is capable of handling moderate rain conditions," he said.

Nonetheless, the launch was not risky. "If it was risky, we would not have attempted a launch," he said.

As many as 30 propulsion systems developed and tested across the country worked in unison, as programmed, to place the spacecraft with "text-book precision," said the Director, Launch Vehicle Programme, D. Narayana Moorthi.

"At the injection, it gave the precise injection velocity and the satellite separated from the launch vehicle," the ISRO Chairman, told the space community spread across the country over Spacenet TV. This is as planned and comes within a few kilometres of the expectation. This accuracy is world class today."

See also Page 11

HINDU
18 DEC 2003

Bhutan's right

Operation flush-out was long overdue

Bhutan's military offensive against Ulfa and Bodo militants was long overdue and is justified. Having exhausted all patience, wisdom and tact in dealing with about 1,000 rebels holed up in the Himalayan kingdom for about a decade, Thimphu was left with no alternative. Two ultimatums to wind up their camps and leave with goodwill were ignored. Indeed, the Ulfa did go through the motions of dismantling some camps to honour the December 2001 deadline in what turned out to be a farce because they merely shifted elsewhere. Bhutan could have resorted to strong-arm tactics three years ago after its National Assembly endorsed the use of force but moderate members urged restraint for fear of reprisals against Bhutanese citizens. But Bhutan obviously could not have provided permanent sanctuary as the rebels' presence was affecting its development process. Besides, the situation was becoming serious with the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation using that country's territory to train its cadres. There is satisfaction in Delhi since it has been putting pressure on Thimphu to act fast. On its part, Delhi must fulfil its commitment to help Thimphu rid the Indo-Bhutanese border of militants.

This is the right moment for relentless pursuit since they are undeserving of any sympathy for trying to destabilise the state in collusion with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. This is also as good a time as any to remind Bangladesh of the 1996 accord on not allowing insurgent bases on either side. Dhaka denies allegations of harbouring Ulfa cadres but is silent on the several training camps run by Tripura militant groups. Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya need watching for they could provide escape routes for rebels on the run. The Ulfa must renounce violence or perish. Its battlecry for "swadhin Asom" has long fallen on deaf ears and time is ticking away.

THE STATESMAN

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SC clears Pota, LS okays amendment

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Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 16 DECEMBER

It was a day of a double boost for the controversial anti-terror law, Pota. Just as the Supreme Court put its stamp of approval on the law, the Vajpayee government also got the Lok Sabha to revalidate it while approving an amendment.

A division bench of the apex court dismissed all writ petitions which challenged Pota on the ground that it violated the fundamental rights. The bench also agreed with the government's contention that the provision of the Act, which makes a speech in favour of a banned terrorist organisation liable for punishment, needed to be relaxed. Agreeing with Attorney General Soli J. Sorabjee, the court held that for a speech to be treated as an offence under the law, the prosecution will have to prove that it was made with a criminal intent.

The apex court also accepted Mr Sorabjee's contention that the stringent bail provisions provided in the anti-terrorist legislation could be made more humane by providing that normal bail provisions allowed under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) would be applicable if a person's detention under Pota exceeded one year. This, in effect, means that Mr Vaiko, the MDMMK leader, a Pota detainee for 18 months, now can hope to get bail.

If the court order can help deal with continuing criticism of Pota by the Opposition, civil rights activists as well as some representatives of the minorities, the government demonstrated its continuing faith in its usefulness by lining up majority support in the course of an amendment to it. The amendment seeks to confer statutory powers on the Central Review Tribunal, the body which has been provided for to check against instances of misuse. The

amendment, when incorporated in the law, will equip the tribunal with powers to overturn the decision of authorities who order detentions under Pota.

The majority support for the law should comfort the Pota backers because of the significant change in the circumstances since it got the parliamentary approval in the joint session of Parliament that the government was forced to convene in order to overcome its numerical handicap in the Rajya Sabha. The shock generated by 9/11 as well as the terror attack on Parliament, which helped the government to push through the law, has abated. It was also suspected that the allegations of misuse of the law, especially the one about the arrest of Mr Vaiko, may dull the earlier enthusiasm for Pota among the lawmakers.

The apex court's approval extended to upholding the legal validity of Section 14 of Pota, which

made it an offence if a person having knowledge of a terrorist activity, did not divulge the same to the police immediately on acquiring it.

The Bench said there was "no sacrosanct right" available to any person to withhold information about terrorist activities. Those who had challenged the Pota argued that the term, "any person," could also mean journalists and lawyers, seriously jeopardising their professional activities.

The debate in the Lok Sabha, as it gave the go-ahead for the amendment, saw the DMK doing a tight-rope walk on a high wire even as the Opposition marshalled the familiar arguments to demand that the law be scrapped. The DMK, which had to oppose the continuing detention of its ally Vaiko under Pota, had to go about its task while stopping short of opposing the law itself.

Having been told that the Vajpayee government would not put up

with a show of dissent at a meeting of the NDA on Monday evening, and alert to the cost of annoying the Centre at a time when it is also having to deal with a tough Jayalalithaa government, T.R. Baalu had to marshal all the dexterity. He still tripped, when he emphasised differences with the NDA leadership over Pota, giving an opportunity to the Opposition to taunt him.

The proceedings showed the Opposition taking off from where it had left during the joint session, or, for that matter, when it (except the Congress) campaigned for the repeal of the Tada, the precursor to Pota. Allegations about the law being used exclusively against members of the minority community were even made by the BSP, whose leader Mayawati has been accused of using the anti-terror law to intimidate political opponents like the "tainted" Independent UP MLA, Raja Bhaiyya.

ভূটান ছেড়ে আলফা নেতারা বাংলাদেশে, বঙ্গল ফৌজ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার কলকাতা ও শিলিগুড়ি: ভূটানের শিবির ছেড়ে আলফার নেতারা বাংলাদেশে আশ্রয় নিয়েছেন। তাই সোম ও মঙ্গলবার দু'দিন ভূটানে জঙ্গি শিবিরগুলি ধ্বংস করলেও প্রথম সারির কোনও জঙ্গি নেতাকে ধরা যায়নি। ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনী সূত্রে এ কথা জানিয়ে বলা হয়েছে, ভূটানের রয়্যাল আর্মি সে-দেশে আলফা, এন ডি এফ বি এবং কে এল ও শিবির ধ্বংস করার আগেই আলফার বড় নেতারা ওই শিবির ছেড়ে গিয়েছেন।

রাখাটাক না-করেই মঙ্গলবার সেনাবাহিনীর পূর্বাঞ্চলের কমান্ডিং অফিসার লেফটেন্যান্ট জেনারেল জে এস বর্মা জানান, আলফার চেয়ারম্যান অরবিন্দ রাজখোয়া এবং কমান্ডার-ইন-চিফ পরেশ বর্মার মতো জঙ্গি নেতারা এখন বাংলাদেশে আছেন বলেই তাঁদের কাছে খবর আছে। বর্মার কথায়: “বাংলাদেশ সরকার আইনশৃঙ্খলা পরিস্থিতির স্বার্থে তাদের দেশের জঙ্গি ঘাঁটিগুলি ধ্বংস করার চেষ্টা নিলে সকলেরই ভাল হয়।”

ভূটানের রয়্যাল আর্মি সোমবার থেকে ভারত-ভূটান সীমান্তবর্তী এলাকায় আলফা, এন ডি এফ বি এবং কে এল ও শিবির ধ্বংসের যে-অভিযান চালাচ্ছে, তাতে এখনও পর্যন্ত ওই সব জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর বড় কোনও নেতা ধরা পড়েনি। ভারতীয় ফৌজ সূত্রের খবর, ভূটানের শিবিরগুলিতে ওই সংগঠনের জঙ্গিদের পরিবারের সদস্যদের কেউ কেউ থাকতেন। থাকতেন আলফার পরামর্শদাতাদের কেউ কেউ। তাঁদের মধ্যে হিমকাশ্ব বরগোহাই নামে ৬৮ বছরের এক বৃদ্ধ আহত হয়েছেন। শিবিরের বাসিন্দা ছিল বেশ কিছু শিশুও। ওই শিবিরগুলির দেখভালের দায়িত্বে ছিলেন প্রথম সারির এক আলফা নেতা। অভিযানের আঁচ পেয়ে তিনিও ভূটানের শিবির ছেড়ে চলে গিয়েছেন বলে মনে করছে সেনাবাহিনী।

নিজেরা অন্য দেশে চলে গেলে অভিযানে অংশ না-নিলেও ভূটানে আলফা, কে এল ও এবং এন ডি এফ বি-র শিবির ধ্বংস করতে রয়্যাল ভূটান আর্মিকে অজ্ঞান দিয়ে পরোক্ষ ভাবে সাহায্য করেছিল ভারতীয়

ফৌজ। বর্মা বলেন, “আমাদের সেনাবাহিনী ভূটান ও ভারতের সীমান্ত সিল করে দিয়েছিল, যাতে কোনও জঙ্গিই পালানো না-পারে। তবে ভারতীয় বাহিনী ভূটানে টোকেনি। আসল অভিযান চালিয়েছে রয়্যাল ভূটান আর্মি।” পূর্ব থেকে পশ্চিমে ভূটান সীমান্তে ৩৮০ কিলোমিটার এলাকা জুড়ে কড়া সতর্কতা জারি করা হয়েছে।

বর্মার কথায়, “সংঘর্ষে ভূটানের সেনাবাহিনীর ক্ষয়ক্ষতির ক্ষেত্রে আমরা সব রকম সাহায্য করছি। তাদের অস্ত্র, যুদ্ধের সরঞ্জামও সরবরাহ করা হচ্ছে। তবে এর বাইরে ভূটানকে লোকবল দিয়ে কিংবা গোলন্দাজবাহিনী মারফত কোনও ভাবে সাহায্য করা হয়নি। কারণ, ভূটান একটি স্বতন্ত্র রাষ্ট্র।” কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের অনুরোধেই ভূটান সরকার ভারত সীমান্তের লাগোয়া এলাকায় তৈরি হওয়া জঙ্গি শিবিরগুলি ভাঙতে উদ্যোগী হয়েছে বলে মন্তব্য করেন পূর্বাঞ্চলের সেনা কমান্ডার। এ দিকে, পাহাড়ি জঙ্গলের জঙ্গি শিবির ভাঙতে ভূটানের সেনাবাহিনী অভিযান শুরু

করার ২৪ ঘণ্টা পরে ভারতীয় বাহিনী দুয়ার্শের সীমান্ত এলাকায় নজরদারি কক্ষের গুণ বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। ভারত-ভূটান সীমান্তের রায়ডাক, সার্বোশ নদীর ধারে রাতারাতি বাস্কার তৈরি করেছে ফৌজ। রাজ্যের পুলিশ-প্রশাসন ও গোয়েন্দারাও ফৌজের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ রাখছেন। মঙ্গলবার বিকালে সীমান্তের পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে ফৌজ অফিসারদের সঙ্গে জরুরি বৈঠক করেন রাজ্য পুলিশের ডি জি দীনেশ বাজপেয়ী। সন্ধ্যায় ফৌজ ও প্রশাসনের অফিসারদের সঙ্গে দ্বিতীয় দফায় বৈঠকের পরে ডি জি বলেন, “এই মুহূর্তে বিস্তারিত ভাবে কিছু বলা সম্ভব নয়। আমরা পরিস্থিতির উপরে নজর রাখছি।”

ভূটানে ২১ থেকে ২৫টি জঙ্গি শিবির ছিল বলে ভারতীয় ফৌজের খবর। তার মধ্যে ১১-১২টি আলফার, ৮-৯টি এন ডি এফ বি-র, কে এল ও-র শিবির ছিল ৪-৫টি। বর্মা বলেন, “কোন জঙ্গি সংস্থার কটা শিবির আছে, তা নির্দিষ্ট ভাবে বলা যায় না। কারণ, জঙ্গিরা মাঝেমাঝেই শিবির পাড়ায়

নতুন নতুন শিবির তৈরি হয়। কিছু শিবির ব্যবহৃত হয় শুধু সাময়িক আশ্রয়ের জন্য। কোনও কোনও শিবির আবার নজরদারি করার জন্য ব্যবহার করা হয়। ওই সব শিবিরে লোকজন কম থাকে। অনেক সময় সেগুলি ফাঁকা পড়ে থাকে। এর মধ্যে কয়েকটি রীতিমতো বড় শিবির। সেখানে অনেক লোকজন থাকত।” তবে জঙ্গি নেতাদের মধ্যে যারা প্রথম সারির, তারা কেউ ভূটানে নেই বলে মন্তব্য করেন বর্মা।

বর্মা বলেন, “দুর্গম এলাকায় প্রতিকূল পরিবেশে জঙ্গিরা কড়া প্রতিরোধের মুখে পড়েছে। এই অবস্থায় দিন চারেকের মধ্যেই অভিযানের নিষ্পত্তি হতে পারে। কিন্তু জঙ্গিরা গা-ঢাকা দিয়ে ভিতরে পালানো চেষ্টা করলে পরিস্থিতি জটিল হতে পারে।” সেনা সূত্রের খবর, কে এল ও এবং এন ডি এফ বি-র মূল শিবিরগুলি ভারত-ভূটান সীমান্তের কাছে থাকলেও আলফা তাদের মূল শিবিরগুলি সরিয়ে নিয়ে গিয়েছে মেঘালয়-বাংলাদেশ সীমান্তের কাছাকাছি।

এর পর পড়ের পাতায়

Bhutan chases rebels into India wall

16/12/2003
OUR BUREAU

Dec. 15: In pre-dawn darkness, the Bhutanese army moved into camps of insurgent outfits in its southern districts bordering Bengal and Assam as the Indian army formed a wall on this side of the border.

The hammer-and-anvil operation started with the Royal Bhutan Army attacking at least four hideouts in areas bordering Bengal's Jalpaiguri district and Assam's Nalbari.

A newly-formed Bhutanese government militia aided the royal army in the move against insurgent camps of the United Liberation Front of Asom (Ulfa) and the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) — which are active in Assam — and the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), operating in Bengal.

Insurgents moved into Bhutan to set up camps 12 years ago and the Indian government has been trying for long to persuade the authorities there to crack down on the rebels.

On Saturday night, King Jigme Singye Wangchuk spoke to Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee.

"Our PM gave them the go-ahead. We have alerted our security forces to intensify and moved the army in full strength. All security enforcement agencies will offer their full cooperation to the state governments," external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha told Parliament.

Formations of the Indian army's 4 Corps based in Tezpur and a division of the 33 Corps based in Binaguri, North Bengal, are being used to seal the border and intercept fleeing insurgent leaders. Two helicopters have also been pressed into service.

"We have reports that the royal army has dismantled at least four major hideouts," a Bhutan home ministry official said from Thimphu. One of these is an Ulfa area command headquarters. The army was engaged in a fierce shootout with Ulfa rebels near the outfit's central operation headquarters, he added.

The Bhutanese embassy in Delhi said the camps are "scattered across southern Bhutan bordering Arunachal Pradesh in the east to Sikkim in the west, thereby covering the entire stretch of Bhutan's southern boundary with India. Bhutan is particularly sensitive to India's security concerns in this region. The Ulfa has 13 camps, the NDFB 12 camps, and the KLO five camps."

In November, Bhutan Prime Minister Lyonpo Jigme Thinley met the insurgents and asked them to leave the country. The ultimatum apparently had little effect and the royal army began deploying its units together with the militia in batches from the middle of November.

The king was in southern Bhutan two days ago to boost the morale of the armed forces and give the final touches to a strategy to eliminate the danger that has been described as the most serious threat ever faced by the kingdom. The Bhutanese army is trained by Indians.

"Bhutan is a sovereign country and has taken the decision independently," Sinha said.

THE TELEGRAPH

16 DEC 2003

Pota issue threatens BJP-DMK alliance

HT Correspondent
Chennai, December 15

REACTING SHARPLY to BJP president Venkaiah Naidu's criticism that coalition partners should not agitate against the Centre, DMK president M. Karunanidhi on Monday announced that his party was not keen to continue to be in the NDA government.

"The DMK's high-level policy-making body will meet soon and decide if it is proper for the DMK to continue in the DMK and our nominees should remain ministers at the Centre", Karunanidhi announced at a news meet after the DMK had concluded a picketing agitation against the Central and state governments.

The agitation, initially, meant to demand the



M. Karunanidhi

scrapping of Pota was expanded to include other issues - like removal of the state government's TESMA, implementation of the Cauvery Tribunal's orders, demand to declare Tamil a classic language and also an official language of the country.

Naidu had told reporters in Chennai on Sunday that it was "nei-

ther an ideal situation, nor healthy" for the DMK to agitate against its own government. "The term 'unhealthy' is motivated and unbearable. If we're being accused of creating an unhealthy situation, we're not keen on continuing as part of the Central government", he said.

He recalled that when Indrajit Gupta was Home Minister, the CPI had participated in agitations against the economic policies of the UF government. But DMK insiders feel that Karunanidhi might have merely overreacted to Naidu's comments and a phone call from Vajpayee and the BJP chief should pacify him, since it would be politically unwise for the DMK to part ways with the BJP when the BJP is back to its winning ways.

The use and misuse of POTA

By Inder Malhotra

The curious case of the Union Minister of State for Non-conventional Energy Sources, M. Kannappan, should have woken the country to the problems being created by the use and misuse of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) but it evidently has not. At any rate, not sufficiently.

Mr. Kannappan may thank his stars that he has not yet become a POTA detainee like the leader of his party, the MDMK, Vaiko, who has been languishing in prison for nearly 15 months. The Union Government, manifestly sympathetic to him, is unable to do anything about it. But Mr. Kannappan has got only a respite, not reprieve.

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalithaa, has held her hand only until she receives the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's reply to her September 22 episode. In it she has asked Mr. Vajpayee to drop Mr. Kannappan from his Council of Ministers so that the State Government can take the necessary action against the latter under POTA for his "open support" to the banned LTTE. This, according to her, is an "anti-national act".

Ms. Jayalithaa has added, for good measure, that even if the Prime Minister, for "compelling political reasons," cannot drop the Minister, there is no law that can prevent the Tamil Nadu Government from arresting Mr. Kannappan. Mr. Vajpayee has referred Ms. Jayalithaa's letter to the Law Ministry and has again gone abroad soon after his return from an extended stay in Ankara and New York. Even so, the nettle will have to be grasped sooner or later.

Whenever that happens and whatever Mr. Vajpayee decides, he and the country are bound to learn to their dismay that POTA, once expected to be a panacea for the

scourge of terrorism, looks like turning into a classic case of the remedy being worse than the disease.

Soon after Mr. Vaiko's arrest, the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, had argued that a "mere speech" in support of the LTTE (and presumably any other terrorist outfit) was not a ground for action under POTA. But this did not pass muster in any of the POTA courts. Nor is it fair to blame special POTA judges. For, the relevant section of the law is worded so loosely that it is virtually impossible to escape its clutches. Nobody knows why the safeguard of every POTA case being reviewed by a judicial

CAPITAL TALK

board has also proved utterly ineffectual.

Here a slight digression is called for. The hyper-controversial POTA was opposed tooth and nail by the entire Opposition, all civil rights organisations and an impressive array of legal luminaries. It was rejected by the Rajya Sabha and was passed at a joint sitting of the two Houses. Remarkably, every single Tamil party represented in Parliament had voted for it, Mr. Vaiko being among its most eloquent champions. How ironic it is that he should have been POTA's first victim in Tamil Nadu.

In other States

Tamil Nadu, however, is not the only State groaning against POTA's improper use. Its misuse in some other States has been even more shocking because politicians in power there have found this extraordinarily harsh law to be the most convenient instrument to lock up their opponents. Before ceasing to be Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Mayawati, had

demonstrated this vividly in the notorious case of Raja Bhaiyya. As if to prove that provenance of action or inaction under POTA is political motivation, Ms. Mayawati's successor, Mulayam Singh Yadav, immediately released Raja Bhaiyya. But the POTA court summarily rescinded Mr. Yadav's arbitrary order that was meekly carried out even before he was sworn in.

To the BJP Ministry in Jharkhand goes the dubious distinction of having arrested under POTA over 700 persons, several of them schoolgirls whose parents are too poor to bail them out. According to a New Delhi wag, we seem to be moving "from quota raj to POTA raj".

As in other cases so in this respect, Gujarat's is a case apart. Here the Narendra Modi Government has invoked POTA against 123 Muslims arrested for the horrific Godhra outrage but not against any of the Hindus involved in the savage anti-Muslim pogrom that followed.

One painful question must be raised. Whatever the legal position, is it proper for a member of Mr. Vajpayee's Council of Ministers to proclaim his sympathy for a monstrous terrorist organisation that has committed unspeakable crimes not only in Sri Lanka but also in this country? The assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, was one of its barbaric acts.

Sadly, talking out of turn and utterly irresponsibly has become one of ministerial perquisites. Only the other day, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, made the absurd statement that the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir had not been clearly defined — a standard Pakistani line that was demonstrably demolished during the Kargil War. Would the Prime Minister please enforce some discipline on his wayward colleagues?

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POTA panel to hear Tamil Nadu's arguments

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, DEC. 3. The Central Review Committee on the Prevention Of Terrorism Act (POTA), headed by Justice A.B. Saharya, which will hear tomorrow arguments on the preliminary objections raised by the Tamil Nadu Government on its jurisdiction, today indicated that it might seek the assistance of the Union Government.

Briefing reporters after the fifth meeting of the committee, Mr. Justice Saharya said, "we considered the preliminary objections of the State Government in the case of the MDMK leader, Vaiko, Nakkeeran Gopal and eight others detained under POTA. The deliberations remain inconclusive and before arriving at any conclusion, we want to hear the three parties, viz., the State Government, Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Gopal".

(The Tamil Nadu Government on Tuesday questioned the jurisdiction of the committee to decide the cases of Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Gopal on the ground that the matter was pending before the courts and an administrative set-up could not interfere with the due process of law).

Asked whether the committee would give its decision tomorrow, Mr. Justice Saharya said, "it all depends on what transpires during the discussions with the parties concerned."

He said, "the task before the committee ema-

nates out of the notification issued by the Union Government in April defining the terms of reference and the subsequent ordinance and we will act within this framework".

When asked whether the Centre's assistance would be sought by issuance of notice to explain the powers of the committee, he said, "we are not foreclosing our options. All these things would be considered".

When a pressperson wanted to know whether adopting such a procedure would result in further delay in arriving at the conclusion, he said, "the process of taking a decision has to be gone through and there is no easy solution to this. We have to adopt a fair procedure and ensure that the conclusion is just and proper. For this purpose, we have asked the parties to address the preliminary objections of the State Government".

When asked whether Tamil Nadu had produced the case diaries as sought by the committee, Mr. Justice Saharya answered in the negative. The State Government had said the merits of the cases could be gone into only after deciding the preliminary objections, he said.

Mr. Justice Saharya said the committee had sought comments from the Tamil Nadu Government on the arrest of Nedumaran and other accused under POTA and so far no reply had been received.

Fear lifts on the Line of Control

By Shujaat Bukhari

WEAK BRIDGE LOC (URI), NOV. 29. It was a different day for thousands of residents along the Line of Control, with the absence of gunfire and a relaxed atmosphere, following the ceasefire announcement by the Governments of India and Pakistan.

"This is the first day in the past 13 years we have celebrated without fear," said Bilquees Begum of Udoosa, the last village on the Indo-Pakistani border here.

As the guns are silent on both sides, the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road gives a different look. With no fear of shells landing from across the hill, where the Pakistani posts are visible, the travel up to the last point, 114 km from Srinagar, is easy. At Chokus Post, marked by a barrier beyond which any movement towards the Pakistani occupied Kashmir (PoK) is fraught with danger, as the road is dotted with mines, the jawans are relaxing in the pleasant sunshine. "*Bahut acha lag raha hey* (we feel good)," says a soldier who has been on tenterhooks for the last 13 months since his posting here. That does not mean that the guard has been lowered. The troops are on alert to foil infiltration, though this is not the preferred route for militants to sneak in. "We have not seen any infiltration, but the shelling has been a regular feature here," says Naib Subedar N.K.S. Rangawat. Sepoy Sadashiv Gadade hopes to get a longer leave.

The smiles are back on the faces of soldiers and residents. At Lalpul, the last point where a passenger bus from Uri town makes its



Soldiers maintaining vigil along the Line of Control in Uri on Saturday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

halt, over two dozen people from nearby Isham, Dalunja and Dardkot villages wait to board the bus. "We are very happy as the conflict brings only miseries to civilians," says Mohammad Nazir of Isham adding, "we have suffered a lot, our houses were damaged, people were killed and above all we lost peace of mind." In his village with a population of 1200 several houses stand damaged.

In the neighbouring Sultan Daki village, two children died recently in the shelling. Samandar Khan, panch of Dalunja, says their land had been taken over by the Army since 1990 and the entire area mined. No compensation was given.

According to Mohammad Aslam, numberdar, civilians who had suffered in recent years had not received any compensation from the State Government. "It is only the

Army which has been helping us."

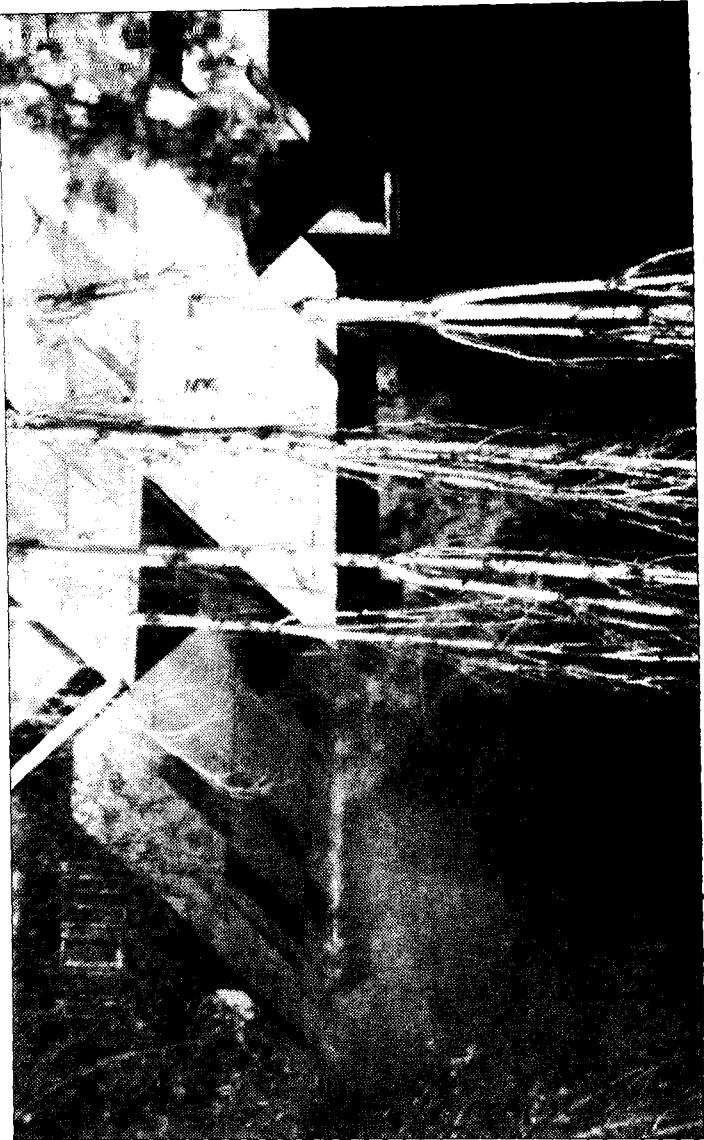
For the first time, the people in Gwalta had the benefit of electricity when a small power house was built with the active support of the Army and inaugurated in October last.

The hapless residents are jubilant over the developments, but Army officers have their fingers crossed. "It is a wait and watch situation," a senior

Army officer told *The Hindu*. "But we have no reason to be pessimistic as the ceasefire is in force on both the sides.

The real test of Pakistan's sincerity will be on stopping infiltration. The work on upgrading the road leading to Muzaffarabad from Uri is in full swing. "This indicates that something positive is going to happen," says Mukhtar Ahmed, a shopkeeper in Uri.

Army blows up BSNL exchange to flush out *fidayeen*



The BSNL exchange in flames after the Army blew it up to smoke out holed-up militants near Batwara cantonment in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PTI

Separatists huddle ahead of Hurriyat meet

SRINAGAR, Nov. 19. — Twenty-four separatist organisations met here today to chalk out the strategy for uniting the separatist platform, a day ahead of the crucial general council meeting of the Hurriyat Conference headed by Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari to discuss Centre's offer for talks.

The response was encouraging with 24 of the 27 organisations attending the meeting, former Hurriyat Chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq said.

The Mirwaiz said several good proposals on forging unity had come up during the marathon meeting, but refused to divulge any details.

He said though today's session was inconclusive, there was a general consensus that the effort for uniting the separatist camp would be continued henceforth.

Without naming Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Chairman of the breakaway Hurriyat, he said we will try to rope in even those

who stayed away from today's meeting.

"We will probably meet after Eid-ul-Fitr to continue our efforts for unity in the Hurriyat and the freedom loving leaders," the Mirwaiz said adding they would go to the masses with the names of those people who were becoming an impediment in the process.

Asked whether the Centre's offer of talks was discussed at the meeting, the Mirwaiz replied in the negative. — PTI

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Nov. 19. — As the operation to flush out the *fidayeen* squad that had attacked the CRPF battalion headquarters in Srinagar continues, the Army today blew up the BSNL telephone exchange building in which the two members of a suicide squad were holed up. One soldier was killed and seven others, including a colonel, a lieutenant colonel and a civilian, were injured in the incident.

The attack was launched by militants of Al-Mansoorain group late evening. The militants traveled in a Tata Sumo had reached near the main gate of 15 Corps headquarters. As the Army personnel on the checkpoint directed them to stop, the ultras opened fire and managed to escape. After that the ultras reached the adjoining Indranagar. They hurled a grenade towards the picket guarding the battalion headquarters of 62 Bn CRPF stationed in Sindhya Hotel. Three CRPF personnel were wounded in the explosion and the firing that followed it. Of them, one succumbed to injuries late in the night.

The area was cordoned off within minutes; the security forces took a couple of hours to launch an operation against militants. As the armed forces took position, they were attacked and many soldiers were wounded. The firing stopped around mid-night albeit the rival sides fired intermittent shots.

During the morning, the troops asked the militants to surrender. The militants immediately took control of a building of Kanya Lal, which houses the BSNL telephone exchange. Since a number of people live on either side of the building, the security forces had to evacuate the civilian population before launching an operation.

This led to a massive gun-battle. Finally the security forces used shells and the building sheltering militants came down gradually. Even though the militants were jumping from one room to another, they could target the soldiers surrounding the building.

Late in the afternoon, a deafening bang, stated to be the outcome of an IED explosion that had been planted in the building, led to the collapse of the building. However the siege around the building continues. A BSNL employee, Kuldip Kumar, who was on duty in the BSNL exchange, is still missing.

A jawan was killed and seven others, including four jawans, were wounded in the operation. The slain jawan has been identified as Shiv Kumar. The injured included Lt. Col Nair and Col Roy, who was leading the Rashtriya Rifles unit that spearheaded the operation.



TERROR HORROR: A girl crouches in terror when stopped by security personnel near the encounter zone in Srinagar on Wednesday. — AFP

Four militants among six killed in J-K

SRINAGAR, Nov. 19. — Four militants, including two Pakistani mercenaries belonging to the Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and a security jawan were among six persons killed in separate incidents, in Jammu and Kashmir since last night, a police spokesman said today. One person has also been arrested.

Two Pakistani militants of LeT- Abu Abdullah and Abu Assad- were killed in a two hour-long encounter with Rashtriya Rifles at Malpora village in Sopore area of Baramulla district of north Kashmir.

He said troops of 22 Rashtriya Rifles raided the village around midday following specific information about the presence of mercenaries, which led to a gunbattle as the ultras opened fire on the search parties attempting to escape the security dragnet.

Two militants and an army jawan were killed in separate encounters with security forces during search operations at Lah-Thanarandi and Bagla-Chingus in Rajouri district. In another encounter, security forces arrested a militant at Malpora in Gandoth area of Doda district last night. Another militant who was injured however managed to escape.

Unidentified gunmen shot dead a youth Abdul Harneed Baba at Nurnar in Ganderbal area on the outskirts of Srinagar last night.

The killing sparked off massive protests in Ganderbal town today with people alleging that he was shot by security forces without any provocation. Meanwhile, a policeman with Indian Reserve Police Sajid Ahmad was reported missing since 17 November. — PTI

Show-cause notice to T.N. Vaiko on arrests of Vaiko, Gopal

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, NOV. 13. The Central Review Committee headed by Justice A.B. Saharya today issued a show-cause notice to the Tamil Nadu Government asking it to explain whether it was "fit and proper" to apply the Prevention of Terrorism Act against the MDKM leader, Vaiko, and eight others, and the Editor of *Nakkheeran*, R.R. Gopal.

The committee, which includes M.U. Rehman, IAS (retd.) and Arvind S. Inamdar, IPS (retd.) as members, issued the notice at the end of its two-day meeting to review the cases of those detained under POTA.

The committee, which has now been empowered to provide relief to POTA victims, is said to have come to the prima facie conclusion that POTA is not attracted in the case of Mr. Vaiko and eight others (who were arrested in July 2002) as well as Mr. Gopal, who was arrested in April this year.

When journalists asked Mr.

Justice Saharya specifically whether the committee had prima facie concluded that POTA had been misused in the case of Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Gopal, he said, "I leave it to you. Draw your own inference". Mr. Justice Saharya said: "We have asked the State Government to show cause on or before December 2 whether it was fit and proper to apply POTA in these two First Information Reports [Mr. Vaiko and eight others in one FIR and Mr. Gopal in another]. We have also asked them to produce all the relevant records [from the stage of registration of case up to sanction for prosecution] in English along with the case diary."

Asked whether the Committee would proceed even without the State Government's response, he said "we want the State Government to avail itself of every available opportunity and we have made it clear in the notice itself that in case of default, the committee will go ahead to draw its conclusion".

Reacting to this, the Chairman of the MDKM presidium, L. Ganesan, told reporters that the "issue of notice whether it [Mr. Vaiko] is a fit case for applying POTA itself is a significant development. We have won the first round of the battle. Having won the semi-final, we are confident of winning the final also." Asked whether the committee was delaying a decision, he said, "being a quasi-judicial forum, it has to follow certain procedures and we have to wait till the procedures were completed."

Explaining the deliberations, Mr. Justice Saharya said that "we discussed at length all the cases and, in particular, the cases of Mr. Vaiko, Mr. Gopal and others arrested in Tamil Nadu. All the materials collected by us were perused. The Tamil Nadu Government had submitted the relevant information in respect of Mr. Vaiko and Mr. Gopal. Since the case diary is very important, we have asked the Government to pro-

duce them."

Mr. Vaiko had challenged the validity of Sec. 21 (3) of POTA [under which he was arrested for supporting a banned organisation] in the Supreme Court, which has reserved orders, and these aspects were borne in mind by the committee, he said.

The committee is now vested with powers to go into the root of the matter and decide whether invocation of POTA in their cases is warranted or not and then give its finding which will be binding on the enforcement authorities, viz., the Centre, the State and the police.

"For us, all the cases are equally important," Mr. Justice Saharya said. "The Committee expresses concern and appreciates the emotions and sentiments of each person in prison under POTA."

It had also sought the response of the Uttar Pradesh Government on complaints regarding the arrest of Raja Bhaiya under POTA and its response was awaited.

Army chief refuses to comment on base in Tajikistan

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Army chief Gen N.C. Vij on



N.C. Vij

Thursday refused to comment on a report which claimed India was setting up its first-ever military base on foreign soil at Ayni located in the suburbs of Dushanbe, the capital of the former Soviet Central Asian Republic of Tajikistan, to protect its strategic and energy interests.

However, an Army officer denied that there was any move to "station troops" in the Ayni air-base. "We have only four officers and two JCOs (junior commissioned officers) there at present, who are aiding the local authorities with technical expertise in re-constructing the runway," he said.

Defence ministry officials said India was helping Tajikistan to reconstruct the dilapidated Ayni air-base at a cost of Rs 50 crore as part of the deepening military and economic ties with the Central Asian republics.

Several IAF officers, for instance, have been advising the Tajiks on the revamping of the runway, hangers and air control tower there. IAF aircraft have also been flying to the Ayni air-base since January 2000 to ferry humanitarian aid to the region.

India has had some presence in Tajikistan over the years. New Delhi, for instance, has been operating a military hospital at Farkhor, near the Afghanistan border, which was earlier used to treat Northern Alliance soldiers when they were fighting the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Pota panel notice to TN govt

Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, Nov. 13. — The Pota review committee, headed by Mr Justice AB Saharya, today issued show-cause notices to the Tamil Nadu government asking it to explain whether the detention of MDMK leader Mr Vaiko and *Nakkeeran* editor RR Gopal under Pota was "fit and proper".

The panel asked the state government to file its reply on 2 December. The committee, set up in April last year, also forwarded to the UP government a complaint about the detention of Independent MLA from Kunda, Mr Ra-

ghuraj Pratap Singh alias Raja Bhaiyya, under the anti-terror law.

"Considering the entire material available on the Vaiko case, we've asked the state government to explain the detention of all nine persons in the case under Pota," Mr Justice Saharya said. The committee has sought police records, copies of the FIRs and papers relating to sanction of prosecution by the Tamil Nadu government.

Mr Vaiko was arrested in July last year and has been in prison ever since for allegedly supporting the LTTE in a speech at a rally in Chennai. Pota charges were slapped on RR Gopal in connection

with a missing man long after he was arrested. Gopal's bail, granted by a High Court, was cancelled by the Supreme Court.

"If case of default by the TN government, we'll proceed on the basis of the material already available with us," said Mr Justice Saharya. He was accompanied by the other two members of the committee, retired IPS Mr Arvind S Inamdar and retired IAS Mr MU Rehman.

This is the fourth meeting of the review committee since it was set up and the first since the government passed an ordinance making its recommendations mandatory.

Dhaka new security threat

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION FROM BANGLA OVER 15 MILLION NOW: IB REPORT

Chandan Nandy
New Delhi, November 5

BANGLADESH AS a security threat to India is now down in black and white. For the first time in years, the Indian security establishment has acknowledged the emerging security threats from across its eastern neighbour as next only to Pakistan.

An Intelligence Bureau document, prepared for delegates to the 38th conference of directors-general of police as part of the official agenda for deliberations, says Bangladesh "has emerged as a security threat to India since the Bangladesh Nationalist Party-led government of Begum Khaleda Zia came to power in 2001".

The document is now with *Hindustan Times*. Outlining the broad areas that pose a danger to India — including the large-scale presence of Pakistani intelligence officials in Bangladesh, the rise of communal forces and the presence of Indian insurgent groups in that country — the document has focussed on illegal immigration from across the 4,096-km-long border. The facts contained in the document form part of a new study that the Intelli-



PTI PHOTO
Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and Deputy PM L.K. Advani during the DG-IG police conference 2003 held at Vigyan Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday.

gence Bureau has conducted on the issue. The latest figures quoted in the document say the number of illegal immigrants from Bangladesh now settled in India has crossed the 15-million mark. Of these, 80 lakh Bangladeshis are in West Bengal, while Assam accounts for about 50 lakh. Saying that the "influx" of Bang-

ladeshi nationals into India has "continued unabated", the document says over 4.75 lakh illegal immigrants from Bangladesh are settled in Katihar, Sahebganj, Kishen-

Bihar, 3.75 lakh in Tripura and about 4 lakh in Delhi. West Bengal government sources said, of late, they have noticed a new trend in

the nature of immigration — Bengal is now used more as a transit point to move to other states.

Nagaland and Mizoram are two other north-eastern states where Bangladeshis take shelter. While, in 1991, there were about 20,000 illegal immigrants in Nagaland, the number is nearly 80,000 at present.

Law & order key to stability: PM

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 5

PRIME MINISTER A.B. Vajpayee on Wednesday exhorted chiefs of state police forces, intelligence agencies and security forces to maintain round-the-clock vigil. Maintenance of law and order was essential for political and economic stability, he said.

Addressing DGs of state police and senior officials at a three-day conference organised by the IB, he said: "We can acquire weapons and wealth. But what we need is to maintain constant vigil and alertness to meet the challenges to India's security."

Vajpayee was delivering an impromptu speech — after giving police medals for distinguished service — to IB officials. Praising the security forces for their supreme sacrifice in defending the nation's integrity, he said: "We're capable of defending ourselves... The police are there but there is no police raj. It is a democracy".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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POTA MUST GO

Cosmetic Changes Will Not Do

By SAM RAJAPPA

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The Ordinance promulgated by the President, APJ Abdul Kalam, on 28 October, amending the Prevention of Terrorism Act, has in no way restricted the state's power to misuse it. The only use of POTA is its misuse as it has been amply demonstrated by the governments of Gujarat, Jharkhand, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh. Besides, the draconian law has in not prevented or even made a dent in curbing terrorist activities. No amount of window-dressing or cosmetic changes can restrain POTA's capacity to encroach on fundamental rights guaranteed by Articles 19, 20, 21 and 22 of the Constitution.

Powers

Section 60 of POTA provided for the setting up of review committees, both at the central and state level, whenever necessary. But it was silent on its scope and powers. The Ordinance incorporates three more sub-sections to the existing three of Section 60, empowering the review committee to decide whether there is a prima facie case for proceeding against the accused arrested under POTA and issue directions accordingly. Such a direction is binding on the government. If there are conflicting decisions between the central and the state review committees, the decision of the central committee shall prevail. The Ordinance, however, has not fixed any time-limit for the disposal of complaints by the review committees.

Although POTA came into force on 28 March, 2002, it took one year to constitute the central review committee under the chairmanship of the former Punjab and Haryana High Court Chief Justice Arun B Saharya. Six months later, the committee is yet to be provided proper office accommodation, furniture, secretarial staff and other services. It has not completed the review of a single case so far. Persons arrested under POTA are generally denied bail. In the rare case of R Gopal, editor of the Tamil bi-weekly, *Nakkheran*, detained under POTA on highly implausible charges, the Madras High Court granted him bail but the Supreme Court struck it down.

What made the government promulgate the Ordinance was the arrest and continued detention of Vaiko, MP, leader of the Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, a constituent of the ruling National Democratic Alliance, on 11 July, 2002, for

The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.

repeating a speech he made in Parliament regarding his party's support to the LTTE at a public meeting in Thirumangalam, near Madurai. More than 300 members of the Lok Sabha signed a memorandum condemning the arrest of Vaiko. It had no effect on the central government. The MDMK collected the signatures of one crore people of Tamil Nadu in an appeal to the Prime Minister to secure the release of Vaiko. That too evok-

tical ideas could be brought under its purview. The vagueness of the definition, coupled with increased punishment based on harsher procedures, enable political parties in power with the support of local executive authorities to punish political opponents under the Act.

"Freedom to air one's view is the lifeline of any democratic institution and any attempt to stifle, suffocate or gag this right would sound the death-knell of



ed no response. When chief minister Jayalalitha threatened to arrest the MDMK Union minister M Kannappan under POTA for his pro-LTTE utterances, the Centre woke up to the blatant misuse of the Act.

Findings

The case against Vaiko is proceeding at the POTA special court near Chennai. If he is found guilty by the court and if the central review committee finds no prima facie case against him, what would be his position? The Ordinance talks of differing findings between the central and the state review committees in which case the central committee's finding shall prevail. Apart from the undergoing trial in the POTA court, Vaiko has challenged in the Supreme Court Section 21 of POTA as ultra vires of the Constitutions. According to this impugned section, a person commits an offence if he invites support for a terrorist organisation. "Invite support" is so vague that the police can justify the arrest of any person who says anything about any one of the 25 banned terrorist organisations listed in POTA. Inviting support need not involve any encouragement to commit violent and criminal acts. Even peaceful, private as well as public discussion of poli-

democracy and help usher in autocracy or dictatorship", warned the Supreme Court in the Life Insurance Corporation of India vs Manubhai Shah case in 1992. Freedom of expression protected by the Constitution under Article 19(1) cannot be held to ransom by an intolerant government of political vendetta. The restriction imposed under Section 21 of POTA is deprivation of the right to form association by way of public meetings and violative of Article 19(1) (c) of the Constitution. The Ordinance has left section 21 intact.

For the Ordinance to become law, a Bill should be introduced and passed by both Houses of Parliament. At the time of enacting POTA, the NDA government had no majority support in the Rajya Sabha. To get around this handicap, the government resorted to a joint session of Parliament to push the legislation through. At present, the NDA cannot even get the bill to replace the ordinance passed in the Lok Sabha because constituents like the DMK, MDMK and the PMK want POTA repealed in toto. Outside support like the AIADMK would not be there this time as Jayalalitha had already announced her opposition to the Ordinance. She had said that empowering the central review committee to over-rule

decisions of the state review committee was not acceptable to the AIADMK. Claiming her government had used provisions of POTA with great circumspection to put down activities of terrorist groups and individuals encouraging and abetting terrorist groups as envisaged in the Act, the Ordinance would negate and thwart the powers of the state government in maintaining law and order. The central review committee, she said, should not sit in judgment over the actions of the state governments which are duty bound to maintain law and order, a state subject. "Perhaps the framers of the ordinance have either not taken notice of Article 50 of the Constitution or the ever accepted principle of separation of the executive and the judiciary", Jayalalitha said in a statement.

Moral support

As the central review committee set up last April has not been able to dispose of a single complaint so far, there has been no occasion for any state government to disregard its decision. But that situation is bound to crop up. On the detention of Vaiko, Attorney-General Soli J Sorabjee, in a written opinion to the Government of India, has said that mere expression of moral support per se does not amount to a breach of Section 21. Jayalalitha, on the other hand says there is no justification for conferring statutory powers on the central review committee to sit in judgment over the functioning of special courts constituted under POTA. If the Centre does not resile from the Ordinance there is bound to be confrontations between the Centre and the states.

The DMK, leader of the NDA constituents in Tamil Nadu, is launching a state-wide agitation from 1 December for the repeal of POTA. M Karunanidhi, the DMK leader, is a trusted friend and ally of the Prime Minister Vajpayee. Continuation of the NDA in its present form depends on the Centre's response to the DMK agitation. If the DMK leaves the NDA, it will have a domino effect at least in Tamil Nadu. Venkaiah Naidu, president of the BJP, wants to preserve the "sanctity" of POTA. A bad law, called by any other name, will not become sanctified. The BJP's claim of providing good governance lacks credibility as long as POTA remains on the statute book. It is about time the party wakes up to the reality that the only way to save the NDA is to repeal POTA. The DMK is providing the right opportunity. Will Vajpayee make use of it?

China wants to be friendly with us: Fernandes

NEW DELHI, OCT. 31. "China wants to be friendly with India and I believe that if someone wants to be friendly with us, we should stretch our hand," the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, said in an interview to BBC's Hard Talk India programme telecast today.

Asked if there was any change in his perception on China, Mr. Fernandes said: "No, there is no question of changing one's mind. Where a nation's security is concerned, there are situations and one deals with them. There is no changing of mind here." However, he said that in the relations among nations, nothing remained static.

Asserting that the Government would take a decision on the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff within a year, he dismissed suggestions that the Air Force was opposed to the creation of such a post. "People may have different views but ultimately one has to go by what is in the best interests of the country," he said.

Mr. Fernandes admitted that it was a mistake on his part in 1991 to have promised to integrate the civilian staff of the Defence Ministry with the military. "That was a mistake on my part. I was not aware of the size of the problem. I thought this is something which you do normally in any kind of system where we have different commands, one civilian and the other military. I did not have a clue... and that is why I did make a

mistake," he added.

Denying that MiG-21 crashes were on the rise, he said, "there are no rising accidents as far as the MiG-21s are concerned... nobody supports accidents. All accidents are accidents. It is the Air Force which decides which aircraft is good enough to fly. These decisions are not taken by the Ministry of Defence."

The Minister termed as "rubbish" the former Army Chief, Gen. V.P. Malik's reported remarks that scams and acrimonious debates in Parliament had disrupted the decision-making process in the Defence Ministry. "I think he is talking out of turn and he is talking rubbish. I am sorry to use these words but he is talking rubbish," he said. He described as "another lie" allegations that money specifically raised for defence purchases had been diverted to general expenditure. When it was pointed out that these were the findings of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, he said the "standing committee has made a mistake".

"What is reported in that [the report] is not right. There is no substance in that," he said.

Decision on Sonia

The Defence Minister said that his decision to sue the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, for sedition was not just a "political threat" and it was on the advice of his

lawyers. "The way the Leader of the Opposition has been going on about this particular issue has had a very bad impact on the morale of the troops," he said.

He said that he would be suing the Congress president for her allegations against him that he had made money out of the "Coffingate."

Asked if Ms. Gandhi had got her facts wrong and if she was also maligning his name, Mr. Fernandes answered in the affirmative. On why he was not contemplating suing her for libel instead of sedition, he said: "For the simple reason that this lie is affecting the morale of the troops. However, how exactly one should proceed against her is something I am leaving to my lawyers to decide."

Asked if it was possible that on the advice of lawyers he may not sue her for sedition and may switch over to libel, the Minister said, "that will depend on what they tell me finally."

About the role of media, he said, "Well, the press is also to that extent partners in this exercise. All available material was passed on to them when this whole thing was blown up in Parliament. And yet, till date the press continues to talk about Coffingate." He said, "There is no Coffingate; a sum of Rs. 1.5 crores is what went into the purchase of this. And on this we are supposed to have made money — on the blood of martyrs." — UNI

Phone call no proof of plot role: Court

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT AND
AGENCIES

New Delhi, Oct. 29: The decisive factor that tilted the scales in favour of S.A.R. Geelani in the Parliament attack case was the prosecution's excessive reliance on the phone conversation between the lecturer and one of the accused.

"We have pondered over this evidence (the phone conversation). It is a relevant circumstance but by itself, without anything more on record, is not sufficient to draw an inference against S.A.R. Geelani that he was involved in the conspiracy," the Delhi High Court bench of Justice Usha Mehra and Justice Pradeep Nandrajog said while acquitting the suspended Delhi University lecturer.

The bench accepted the prosecution's contention that Shaukat Hussain, the death sentence against whom was upheld today, used to contact Geelani on phone. However, the court added that "there is no evidence of Geelani being in touch over the telephone with the terrorists".

The prosecution had alleged that Geelani was in touch with the two accused and said that this was prima facie evidence of his being a co-conspirator.

Police had pointed out that Shaukat made the first call to Geelani when his mobile phone was activated and the lecturer responded to Shaukat's call immediately after the Parliament raid as pointers to his involvement in the conspiracy.

But the court said: "When one acquires a mobile phone, it is but natural that one would test it for use. What other number would one connect other than that of a known person?" "By itself, with nothing more,

we are afraid that conviction cannot be sustained on this evidence," it added.

The court also rejected the prosecution's allegation that Geelani had an incriminating talk with his brother a day after the December 13, 2001, attack.

"We had, while discussing the taped conversation — even assuming the prosecution version to be correct — come to a conclusion that there was nothing which could incriminate Geelani as far as the conversation is concerned," the bench said.

Maintaining that the only evidence against Geelani was the record of telephone calls between the duo and himself, the judges said: "This circumstance, in our opinion, does not remotely far less definitely and unequivocally point towards the guilt of accused Geelani."

"We, therefore, conclude that the prosecution has failed to bring on record evidence which cumulatively forms a chain so complete that there is no escape from the conclusion that in all human probabilities, accused Geelani was involved in the conspiracy," the bench said.

Family outside Tihar

Geelani's wife was elated after the high court overturned the trial court's death sentence on her husband and acquitted him for lack of evidence. "We had firm faith in the law that my husband would be acquitted," said Quratun Arita.

"We were convinced that my husband was not involved in the crime and he was implicated in the case," Arita said.

But despondency enveloped her when Geelani was not released from the capital's Tihar jail because the court's order to release him did not reach the authorities till 7.30 pm.

THE HOUSE ATTACK CASE DOSSIER



- **DEC. 13, 2001:** Terrorists attack Parliament. Nine securitymen killed
- **DEC. 15:** Police arrest Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani, Md Atzal, Shaukat Hussain and wife Nayjot Sandhu. All four questioned
- **DEC. 16:** Delhi police say Pak supervised attack; Pak calls for joint probe
- **DEC. 25:** Jaish chief Masood Azhar arrested in Pak
- **APRIL 01, 2002:** Azhar, Jaish Kashmir commander Gazi Baba and aide Tariq Ahmad declared proclaimed offenders
- **MAY 14:** Militants target Kaluchak army camp in biggest strike since Parliament attack; 30 killed
- **MAY 19:** Cabinet flashes conflict signal; massive troop mobilisation along border
- **JUNE 04:** Special court frames charges against Parliament attack accused
- **DEC. 16:** All four held guilty
- **DEC. 18:** Court awards death penalty to Atzal, Shaukat and Geelani
- **JAN. 14, 2003:** Geelani challenges conviction in Delhi High Court; Atzal, Shaukat follow suit
- **APRIL 2:** High court begins daily hearings
- **OCT. 29:** High court acquits Geelani; confirms death for Atzal, Shaukat

Arita, along with her son and daughter, had waited outside the jail hoping he would walk free after having spent about two years behind bars. She will have to wait till tomorrow for the court order to reach the Tihar authorities.

Geelani's lawyers alleged

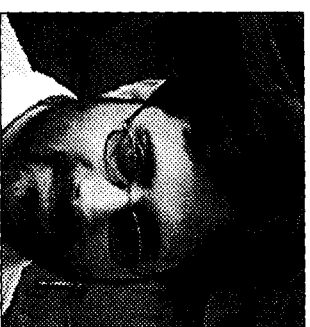
"foul play", with civil rights activist Nandita Hakar threatening to move court. She claimed that the high court had directed his release today.

Shaukat's wife Nayjot Sandhu, alias Afsan Gurnu, will also be released from Tihar jail. Sandhu's family was not to be seen

outside the jail. It was learnt that she wants to go back to her hometown in Punjab. Her son, who was born in custody, also stays with her in the jail.

"We are relieved and happy that Geelani was acquitted as there was not a shred of evidence against him," said Triptia Wahi,

Geelani's university colleague. Ram Jehmalani, Geelani's counsel, applauded the acquittal, saying it "will restore the confidence of the entire world, particularly the inhabitants of Jammu and Kashmir, in the integrity and competence of Indian judicial system".



(From top) Geelani, Nayjot Sandhu, Mohammad Atzal, Shaukat Hussain

Agni test-firing put off till Jan

9. D S W S

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HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 29

THE TEST-FIRING of the over-3,000-km range Agni-III surface-to-surface nuclear capable missile has been put off till January next year, chief of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) Dr V.K. Aatre said here on Wednesday.

The Agni-III is expected to be the precursor to India's inter-continental ballistic missile. While announcing the delay of the Agni-III launch programme, the gov-

ernment also declared the fourth successful test-firing of the 290-km-range Brahmo supersonic Cruise missile at the Balasore Test Range.

Brahmos is an Indo-Russian joint venture. It was first test-fired on June 12, 2001. The Agni-III test-firing was due in 2003. Dr Aatre did not specify the reasons for the delay.

"The preparations are on in full swing, but the tests will be carried out early next year", he said on the sidelines of a seminar on disaster management with

specific reference to landslides and avalanches.

Dr Aatre confirmed that the process of induction of the 700-km-range Agni-I and the 2,500-km-range Agni-II missiles into Indian Army units had begun.

It has been reported that two Army missile groups, the 444 and 555, have been raised for the induction of the Agni-I and Agni-II.

An Artillery division headed by a major-general has also been raised in the Southern Command to take charge of the Agni groups.

Dr Aatre denied reports about plans to make the 150-km Prithvi short-range ballistic missiles solid fuel propelled. He clarified that liquid fuel posed no targeting problems in short-range missiles.

On the subject of disaster management in a nuclear context, the DRDO chief said the government recently set up a high-level committee headed by the Cabinet Secretary to take concrete steps for nuclear disaster management, including building of nuclear shelters.

Jayalalitha against Pota amendment

Statesman News Service

CHENNAI, Oct. 27. — The Tamil Nadu chief minister, Ms J Jayalalitha, today opposed the move to amend the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota) and vest statutory powers in the Central and state review committees.

“Such a step would set at naught the very purpose for which the Pota was legislated and nullify the efforts taken by progressive state governments such as Tamil Nadu in putting down terrorist and subversive elements trying to disrupt peace and tranquillity,” the chief minister said in a statement here.

Ms Jayalalitha said the amend-

St on Gopal chargesheet

NEW DELHI, Oct. 27. — The Supreme Court today extended its earlier stay on the Tamil Nadu government restraining it from filing a chargesheet against Nakeeran editor Mr R R Gopal in a Pota case. The Bench issued the order after Mr Gopal's counsel assured the court that he wouldn't seek bail under the relevant provisions of the CrPC on grounds of delay in filing the chargesheet against him. The court had recently cancelled the bail granted by the High Court. — Our legat correspondent

ments would “amount to demeaning the independence of the jury”, as they would allow the review committees

“to intervene in and interfere with” the functioning of the special courts trying Pota cases set up by the state governments and call for records of ongoing trials. And, conferring statutory powers to the Central review committee to sit in judgment over the functioning of special courts constituted under the Pota, would amount to interfering with the due process of law, she added.

DMK repeal demand: Union environment and forest minister Mr TR Baalu today said his party, the DMK, had demanded repeal of Pota only because the corrective measures sought to be taken by the Centre were not adequate for curbing the misuse of the Act, adds PTI from Coimbatore.

Centre fears Dawood-Naxalite nexus

Statesman News Service

PATNA, Oct. 22. — Underworld don Dawood Ibrahim can form a nexus with the Naxalites in Jharkhand and Bihar, and the Maoists in Nepal to destabilise the country, Swami Chinmayanand said today.

The MoS for home told reporters here that the ISI, Dawood Ibrahim and Maoists were "active" in Nepal, which borders Bihar. "There is possibility of the Naxalites in Bihar and Jharkhand forming a nexus with the disruptive forces in Nepal," he said.

The minister said efforts were on to bring Dawood Ibrahim to India. "Pakistan has been denying that Dawood is there. But India and the USA have furnished enough evidence to prove

that he is in Pakistan," the minister said.

Mr Chinmayanand, who met Bihar chief minister Mrs Rabri Devi and RJD chief Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav to discuss ways to curb the "menace of extremism", cautioned the state government and security agencies about the growth of Naxalism.

The MoS said the Centre would provide adequate funds for the modernisation of Bihar police. He also said the Centre would assist the state in setting up a modern communication system to check the movement of Naxalites.

Mr Chinmayanand was of the opinion that the Naxalites in Jharkhand and Bihar were working in tandem. "They keep on crossing over from one state to another."

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The minister said, "The Central Sugar Fund will assist the state government in opening sick sugar factories in the state." He felt that the opening of the sugar factories would improve the condition of the farmers and workers in north Bihar, and in the process would help curb the growth of Naxalite activities in the region.

"We all know that economic deprivation was one of the main factors behind the rise of Naxalism."

Asked if the BJP would make a law to build a Ram Temple in Ayodhya if it attained majority at the Centre, Mr Chinmayanand said: "The Temple will be built only by consensus. We favour consensus to ensure unity and integrity of the country. We want harmony."

Committee's Findings Will Now Be Binding On Centre, States

Pota panel to get more teeth

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 21 OCTOBER

CONCEDING the vulnerability of Pota to misuse by certain state governments, the Centre on Tuesday decided to confer statutory powers on the existing Pota review committee. This will make its findings binding on the Centre as well as the states. With the winter session due to begin only in December, the government will take the ordinance route to give teeth to the review committee. This will then be replaced by a Bill to be moved in the winter session, parliamentary affairs minister Sushma Swaraj told newsmen after the Union cabinet meeting which cleared the proposal.

Although the Pota review panel was set up in April under former chief justice of Punjab and Haryana High Court Arun Sahaya, it has been largely ineffective in getting the states to part with information regarding Pota cases or even accept its findings. The states have been uncooperative, citing their review mechanism at the state level—at least 7 states have set up their own review committee — and

With complaints of alleged misuse of the anti-terror law continuing to pour in — be it the slapping of Pota cases by the Jayalitha government and the then Mayawati regime against their respective political rivals, MDMK's Mr Vaiko and independent MLA Raja Bhairya, or the recent move by the Tamil Nadu government to book Union minister M Kannapan — the government has been feeling the need to give more powers to the review panel to make its findings binding on the Centre, state government and the investigating officers. It was to achieve this end that the Cabinet on Tuesday cleared statutory status for the panel.

Ms Swaraj told reporters that in case a petition seeking review of Pota charges was moved both before the central and state review panels and there were conflicting findings, the decision of the central committee will be binding on the central, state and the investigation officials. The promulgation of the ordinance is aimed at ensuring that Pota is used against those charged with terrorism, she said adding that the government wanted to ensure that the law was not misused.



FEAR FACTOR

contesting the central panel's jurisdiction over the cases since law and order is a state subject. The reluctance of the states to aid the central review committee in reviewing Pota cases registered by them has forced the panel to turn to NGOs, citizen groups and complainants themselves to get a copy of the FIR. In any case, since the panel was only advisory in nature, none of the states have bothered as yet to accept its findings or recommendations for a review.

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Not Far Enough

Centre admits to POTA misuse,
gives review panel more teeth

11-16
2003

Anti-terror legislation in India have a long and well-documented history of official misuse: From its earliest avatars as NSA (1980) and TADA (1985) to its latest incarnation in the guise of POTA, or Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002. On the face of it, then, there can be little disagreement with the Union government's decision to introduce new safeguards, aimed at preventing the misuse of POTA. In the main, the reform consists of giving the existing POTA review committee at the Centre more teeth. From being a purely advisory body, the committee will henceforth act in the capacity of a de facto final court of appeal, with powers to override the decisions of the Centre as well as state governments and the investigation agency in individual POTA cases. The question is whether the proposed reforms go far enough. For starters, the official rethink has been motivated less by concern for human rights violations and more by the damaging political fallout of POTA's "misuse". Since its controversial enactment at a joint parliamentary session last year, the uses of POTA have not remained confined to ordinary citizens, as was the norm with earlier anti-terror laws, but also included privileged members of the political class: From MDMK leader Vaiko to Tamil nationalist leader P Nedumaran to independent UP legislator Raja Bhaiyya.

Yet, while these high-profile cases have received all the media and political attention, the more shocking, everyday uses — or misuses — of POTA have taken place elsewhere in the country. In Jharkhand, for instance, where the BJP-led state government indulged in a mass frenzy of POTA terror, booking hundreds of supposed "terrorists" — from young boys as old as 12 or 13 to old men in their seventies. Or in Gujarat, where another party government has booked every single accused in the Godhra case under POTA, while failing to invoke it even once in the case of any of those involved in the post-Godhra carnage. The message in both cases is clear: Whether a particular crime is recognised as an act of terror depends not on its intrinsic gravity but on the identity — religious or otherwise — of the criminal. The proposed course-correction, unfortunately, takes no account of this. The official reasoning that justified POTA — namely, that terrorism cannot be fought without ever more sweeping and arbitrary state powers — remains wholly in tact. As we have repeatedly argued in these columns, unless this premise behind the enactment of POTA is radically questioned, there is a certain inevitability about the excesses and the misuse, which no review committee, however well-meaning, can put a stop to.

More teeth for Pota review panel

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 21. — The Centre today decided to accord statutory powers to the Pota Review Committee that looks into complaints by those booked under the law.

The decision, approved by the Cabinet, came after allegations that a few state governments have misused Pota. Parliamentary affairs minister Mrs Sushma Swaraj said an Ordinance would be promulgated to strengthen the review panel headed by Mr Justice Arun Saharya.

A Bill will be tabled in Parliament during the winter session.

States will be allowed to set up committees to deal with complaints by those held under Pota, Mrs Swaraj said. In

case of a difference of opinion between a state committee and the Central Committee, the latter's decision will prevail.

The CRC's powers have been advisory till now. Also, in spite of the Centre taking steps to prevent Pota's misuse, there have been complaints of its misuse like in case of the Tada.

The promulgation of the Ordinance will try to ensure that Pota is used only against those charged with terrorism, the minister said. Since those charged under the law do not have a redressal forum, the NDA government decided to make a provision so that the findings of the Central Review Committee were binding on the Centre, state governments and the

investigating officers.

The Pota review panel had itself been facing a number of problems. It had asked for two officers on special duty, one of whom would be an additional sessions and district judge and the other, an inspector-general of police or someone of equivalent rank.

Both the requests have been sanctioned. The panel is also short of office space and computers, which is not only embarrassing for the government, but is also hampering the committee's work.

The committee also wants to be provided with more information because many state governments have not been providing sufficient information to it.

Poll expenditure ceiling

NEW DELHI, Oct. 21. — The Cabinet today decided to increase the expenditure ceiling for candidates in Assembly and Lok Sabha elections.

The revised ceiling for a parliamentary poll candidate is Rs 25 lakh and for an Assembly poll candidate, Rs 10 lakh. The earlier figures were Rs 15 lakh and Rs 6 lakh. The changes were made because of the inflation and also the fact that actual expenditure by many candidates is often much more than the figures they submit. The new ceilings, the Centre believes, are more realistic. The Election Commission too agrees with this view. The new figures will not apply in J&K, where a separate legislation will be necessary for amending Rule 90 of J&K Conduct of Election Rules, 1965. For other states, Rule 90 of the Conduct of Election Rules will have to be amended. The last revision of poll expenditure ceiling was made in 1997.

The Cabinet today asked the Delimitation Commission to remove disparities in the sizes of constituencies and redraw reserved constituencies on the basis of the 2001 Census. The Cabinet also approved the inclusion of nominees of the Governors of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland in the commission. — SNS

Perfect launch for PSLV-C5

Statesman News Service

SRIHARIKOTA, Oct. 17. — Even as heavy rains lashed the spaceport at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, the PSLV-C5 took off smoothly at 10.22 a.m. this morning, carrying the Resourcesat-1, one of the most sophisticated and heaviest remote sensing satellite launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation.

"We had a remarkable mission and the launch was 100 per cent success. This is a tremendous achievement as far as the nation is concerned," a highly elated Isro chairman, Mr G Madhavan Nair, declared after the satellite was placed in a precise orbit, 18 minutes after the PSLV's take off from the launch pad here.

Mr Nair, who took over recently as the Isro chief, said it was a successful flight, meticulously performed with precise instrumentation on board for improving the earth observation capabilities for years to come.

With the inclement weather causing much worry, the nail-biting tension in the control room eased only after the "more than textbook" flight of the PSLV successfully placed the satellite in polar sun synchronous orbit, 821 km from the earth.

PM pleased

NEW DELHI, Oct. 17. — The Prime Minister hailed the launch. He watched it "live" on TV at his residence. Following the successful operation, he called Isro chairman Mr G Madhavan Nair and congratulated him and his team for their efforts in this connection. — SNS

"Normally we would not have attempted the launch in such weather. The weather prediction has not been good for the past two days. But our scientists have been assessing the pros and cons and the launch facility strengthened our resolve to face the situation," Mr Nair told mediapersons during the usual briefing session after the launch. The Isro team's gamble paid off and "today's remarkable launch has proved that the vehicle is all-weather proof."

Mr Nair said the Isro's ground station at Mauritius had already received signals from the spacecraft. "We hope to receive the first signals over Sri-



A TV grab of the PSLV-C5 launch from Sriharikota on Friday. — PTI

harikota soon," he said. Detailing the uses of the Resourcesat-1, which cost Isro Rs 150 crore, Mr Nair said the three cameras it carried would be used to

obtain stereoscopic imagery with very high resolution imaging capabilities. The world market for resource images today was \$120 million. The satellite

also carried a solid state recorder with a capacity of 120 giga bits to store images taken by its cameras which can be read out later to the ground stations.

The Resourcesat-1, Isro's 10th satellite in the IRS series is intended not only to continue the remote sensing data services provided by IRS-1C and IRS-1D, "both of which are at their fag end of their lives," but also to vastly enhance the data quality, Mr Nair said.

Moon mission

CHENNAI, Oct. 17. — The Isro chief, Mr G Madhavan Nair, today ruled out any manned missions to space, saying that India was content with its proposed first moon mission Chandrayan-1, which is likely to be completed in five years' time. "India's space programme is well conceived and going about in a well-planned manner. We do not have plans to put a man in space," he told scribes at Sriharikota after the PSLV-C5 launch this morning. — SNS

Militants attack Mufti's house, 2 BSF men killed

Our Correspondent
SRINAGAR 17 OCTOBER

WELL before authorities could complete the fortification of chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's official residence on the busiest and most vulnerable Moulana Azad Road, militants carried out a sensational attack on Friday morning.

So far two paramilitary BSF men have been killed and 11 others, including photo-journalists, were wounded.

After the attack, militants took refuge in a shopping plaza. Security forces that had cordoned off the entire area and engaged holed up militants in intermittent firing have finally started the operation at around 1800 hours.

Well placed sources at least eight children were trapped in the building. One young man also trapped in the complex, police said, has offered security men some information that has helped them to plan the operation. The incident occurred around 10 a.m., an hour after chief minister had left his residence for Aligarh (Uttar Pradesh).

The attack created ripples in the entire city as security forces sealed all the entry and exit routes paralysing the routine life in the city. Though Mr Sayeed was out, his other family members including daughter and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti were trapped inside the residence. They were safely rescued.

Shadowy outfits al-Mansoorain and Farzandan-e-Milat have staked the claim for the attack. They claimed the attack



Action Aid: Border Security Force soldiers in action during the attack in Srinagar on Friday. — Reuters

was carried out against Mr Sayeed. Reports said the ultras wearing traditional Kashmiri "phirans" (long and loose gowns) and moving on the Moulana Azad Road surfaced at Banquent Hall (chief minister's private secretariat and part of Mr Sayeed's official residence). The militants targeted the BSF personnel guarding the Hall and killed a soldier there. The other security men deployed there opened fire towards the ultras, who crossed the Moulana Azad Road and reached the Dr Ali Jan Shopping Complex, that is facing the hall. Before taking shelter into the complex they resorted to another attack killing another man. Police identified the slain para-

militarymen as Rajinder Kumar and Shri Gopal.

On hearing the blast and firing, some security officials and photo journalists also reached the spot.

Unaware about the ultras taking shelter in the complex, the security men started removing the corpses and injured colleagues to hospital. The photo journalists were also engaged in covering the event.

"I had taken a picture and was about to take another one, when there was a bang and I thought I lost my legs. Then I fled towards the college as the two sides were targeting each other," said Syed Muzafar, one of the two wounded photographers.

Hunt for stolen defence disks

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 11: A major general with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has been asked to probe into the security lapse in one of the military think tank's premier establishments after 18 personal computers were spirited away over the last weekend.

The scientific adviser to the defence minister, V. K. Aatre, has taken the view that irrespective of claims by the defence establishment that the DRDO has not lost sensitive material, there has been a major security lapse.

Defence minister George Fer-

mandes, too, has called it an "inside job", pointing the needle of suspicion at the scientists and technical staff of the Scientific Analysis Group and the Institute for System Studies and Analysis (ISSA). The two establishments are housed in Metcalfe House in North Delhi.

Defence ministry sources claimed that the master computer in Metcalfe House was "untouched" and most of the data that has gone missing is "educational and training material for DRDO staff".

The Scientific Analysis Group is partly responsible for encrypting communication signals for the army and the ISSA

monitors equipment bought by defence services in other countries and evaluates their usefulness. "Some of the material that has been missing are data on human resources in the service. It is not classified information. However, it was not information that we made public," one official said.

The scientific adviser was told by DRDO officials in Metcalfe House that academic papers of some scientists were stored in the PCs.

The PCs had access to the Internet and the DRDO intranet. But master computers in DRDO establishments are more secure because they are stand-alone.

Two of the 18 PCs had data on wargames that were archaic and no longer in use. The sources said all the PCs that were missing were in the "front office".

They said the investigations had been entrusted to the special cell of Delhi police, that usually investigates acts of terrorism, and that intelligence agencies would assist the police.

Asked why there had been no prosecutions despite the suspicion that it was an "inside job", the sources said "investigations are on". "At the moment we can only say that there was an obvious security lapse but since the loss is not major we are proceeding cautiously."

Defence leaves secrets

open

DALIPSINGH

New Delhi, Oct. 10: The defence ministry is lurching from one scandal to another — the latest a theft that raises questions about its ability to protect the country's biggest secrets.

A burglary, initially passed off as an ordinary crime, was transferred to a special police cell after it emerged that 17 computer hard disks were stolen from a section that develops codes for sending "super-secret" data.

The shift was prompted by suspicions of a hush-up attempt at the police-station level.

Computers holding the missing disks were installed in the office of the Special Analysis Group in north Delhi's Metcalfe House, which also houses the Defence Documentation Centre and the Defence Terrain Research Laboratory. Metcalfe House belongs to the Defence Research and Development Organisation.

The analysis group is in charge of cryptography and development of codes for secured communication — used by the army, intelligence agencies and the foreign ministry.

Cryptography involves the making of one-time ciphers — a code used only once to send super-secret information.

The Congress, which had targeted defence minister George Fernandes over the Tehelka and coffin scandals, demanded a joint probe by the Research and Analysis Wing and the Intelligence Bureau. "We demand that the Prime Minister make a statement," chief spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said. (See Page 7)

The theft is believed to have occurred over the last weekend. According to North district police, scientists at Metcalfe House said the computers were intact when they locked the offices on October 3.

On the next working day on October 6, they discovered 17 missing. The central processing units were discarded near a boundary wall, but the hard disks containing secret documentation, said to be vital to the country's security, were missing.

Defence ministry sources said a DRDO inquiry had concluded that sensitive data was not stolen. But government officials are asking why the ministry did not inform the Intelligence Bureau, the RAW and the foreign ministry till yesterday.

AWACS pact with Russia, Israel

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Oct. 10. — The decks were today cleared for India's acquisition of a high-performance eye-in-the-sky, the Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft, after the defence ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with Russian and Israeli officials.

The AWACS would consist of a Russian platform — the Il-76 transport aircraft — fitted with an Israeli Phalcon radar.

It would help the Indian Air Force to detect enemy aircraft or incoming missiles much earlier. The IAF is likely to have three such aircraft, allowing full coverage of large parts of Indian airspace. If necessary, one of them can always be in the air to ensure 24-hour coverage. Early detection, because of the radar being on a patrolling airplane, will mean quick reaction, a necessity in the age of missiles.

The MoU is for the implementation of the AWACS proj-

ect but the deal (of approximately \$1 billion) is yet to be signed as the negotiations are still going on. The memorandum roughly says what India, Russia and Israel have to do to develop the system, a complex and difficult one.

The MoU was signed by the defence secretary, Mr Ajay Prasad, Mr Mikhail Denison, the first deputy chairman of the Committee on Military and Technical Cooperation, Russia and Major General (Retd) P Yo-

si Ben Hanan, director, Sibat, Israeli ministry of defence.

Much work remains to be done. After the price negotiations are finalised, Israel will buy the Il-76 aircraft from Uzbekistan. They will be fitted with more high-powered engines and after some structural changes, they will be taken to Israel. The planes will be fitted with the Phalcon radar and other equipment and transferred back to India. This could take a considerable while.

There have been delays in getting the project off the ground. It was learnt that the USA had some objections to the Israelis transferring the Phalcon to other countries. Later, there were also differences of opinion between the signing parties on the nature of the deal.

The Russians wanted India to buy their A-50 radar instead of the Phalcon. When the AWACS finally arrive, India will be one of the few countries in the world to have such a system.

Computers with key defence data stolen

1971 10/10 DSN
HT Correspondents
New Delhi, October 9 *Securities*

NINETEEN COMPUTERS belonging to top-secret establishments of the Defence Research and Development Organisation here have been stolen. The computers — installed at the offices of the Scientific Analyses Group and the Institute for System Studies and Analyses — contained strategic data vital to India's security.

The SAG handles cryptography. All codes and ciphers to ensure communication security for the defence forces have an SAG stamp. The ISSA analyses competing weapons systems for induction into the armed forces.

"We don't know the extent of loss of strategic data," said defence ministry sources. The DRDO has provided the encryption back-up for protecting strategic communications in the context of India's nuclear arsenal.

Detailed report on Page 4

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 OCT

IAF: High-flying global role model

Statesman News Service

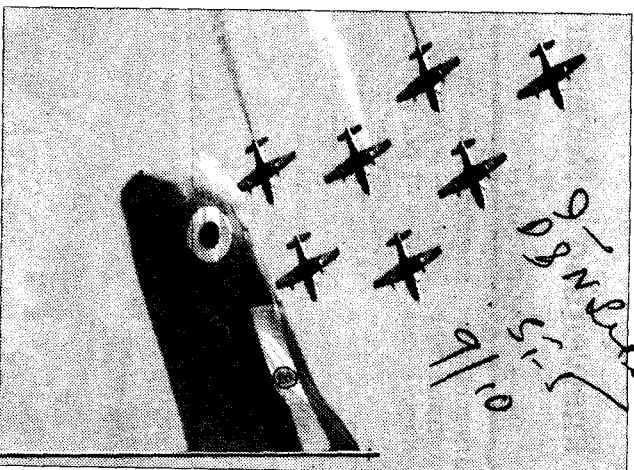
NEW DELHI, Oct. 8. — The Indian Air Force needs no role model to transform itself from a "professional service" to an "elite service". Its track record speaks for itself.

On the IAF's 71st anniversary today, the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy, said that the force has a global reputation and is deemed a role model by various countries. The Chief was addressing the impressive Air Force Day Parade which was organised at the IAF Station, Palam. Parades were held in other stations across the country as well.

"It is a tough job to manage an air force of this size, spanning all phases of activity. We have everything from industrial functions, as seen by our Base Repairs Depots to production and design establishments. It is necessary to acquire an elite way of thinking, by enhancing the professionalism already present in the force," said the Air Chief Marshal. "As proud air warriors, we stand committed in the service of the nation by giving our best," he added.

The air display began with the giant Mi-26 helicopter, leading two Mi-17's in a vic formation. They were followed by the three Mi-35 attack helicopters that were flying at a height of 100 m.

The recently acquired unmanned aerial vehicles — Heron and Searcher Mk II — made their first public appearance at this air show which was attended by various dignitaries, including Marshal of the Indian Air Force, Arjan Singh, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Madhendra Singh and the Chief of the Army Staff, General N C Vij. A special feature of the display was the IAF's just-attained mid-air



FLYING FIRST: MK-11 aircraft fly a formation above an IAF flag to mark the 71st anniversary of the IAF in New Delhi on Wednesday. — AFP

refuelling capability. The spectators gazed in awe as two Sukhoi-30s replenished themselves from an IL-78 tanker.

But it was the IAF's Aerobatics Team — the Surya Kirans that held the audience spellbound. The nine Kiran Mk-II aircraft presented some enthralling aerial choreography, when they crossed each other with just inches between them as they created various patterns in the sky. That too at speeds ranging from 150 to 650 kph. The chief also presented 19 Vayu Sena Medals, 26 Vishisht Seva Medals, including one posthumously, and prizes to various units for their recent professional showing.

Hasimara blips on upgrade radar

Soma Mookherjee in Hasimara

Oct. 8. — The ministry of defence is planning to upgrade the Hasimara air base to enable sophisticated fighter aircraft like Mirage-2000 and the recently acquired SU-30 MKI Air Dominance Fighter to operate from it.

Keeping in mind China's plans of gaining a presence in the Indian Ocean and its growing intimacy with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar for that purpose, the defence ministry is upgrading its strategic air base here. Moves are also afoot to install precision radars for enhanced surveillance and physical infrastructure like security wall are being built up. "It's only a matter of time before we are able to accommodate all kinds of advanced fighter aircraft and deploy them at various locations as and where necessary," Air Commodore KK Nowhar, Air Officer Commanding, Hasimara Air Force Station, told reporters visiting the station on the eve of IAF's 71st anniversary.

"The Chinese have said on various occasions that the Indian Ocean is not India's Ocean. Nearly 80 per cent of the world trade is carried out using this region. China wants a presence here with some say in world trade," Air Commodore Nohwar said. "This is a long-term design of China. It is a matter of concern for us."

"Hasimara airfield is strategically located and is suitable for providing air defence cover to the chicken-neck corridor across Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan," he added. This airfield base has two Squadrons, 22 and 222, and at present another Squadron from Kalatkunda air-

base has been flown to Hasimara as the runway of Kalatkunda base is under renovation. The base has about 50 MiG-27 supersonic fighter aircraft which requires 8,000 litres of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) and can fly at an altitude of 51,000 feet at a speed of 2,500 metres per second.

Air Commodore Nowhar said the ground compatibility of this airfield would be upgraded in order to make it operational for more sophisticated aircraft, including SU-30 and others like LCA, ALH and HJT that are already in the pipeline. Besides, infrastructure facilities will be upgraded by installation of precision radar and hi-tech technical base for maintaining new generation aircraft. Now Hasimara has Indra II Radar manufactured by Bhel near Gazipur has the capability to track down enemy aircraft flying at a very low altitude.

On the "strategic encirclement" of India by China, Air Commodore Nohwar said: "China wants a greater presence in the Indian Ocean and is befriending our contiguous countries — Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan — so this is a matter of great concern to us. There is no indication, however, to suggest that China is using the neighbouring countries of India as launching pads."

Asked why the sophisticated fighter aircraft are only earmarked for Western airfields, the Air Commodore said: "It's only a matter of time." He said operations from Hasimara would involve flying and engaging targets in varied terrain, in tropical forests and steep mountains over the Tibetan plateaus. Pilots are constantly being trained for these contingencies.

Development Carrot Also Part Of Deputy PM's Plans

Advani for tough action to combat AP Maoists

Hyderabad
3 OCTOBER

DEPUTY prime minister L.K. Advani on Friday urged "strong" steps against Maoists after calling on Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who survived an assassination attempt by the rebels. Mr Advani, met Mr Naidu at his residence, told reporters before leaving for New Delhi suggested a two-pronged approach to deal with the left-wing extremism.

"There should be two simultaneous courses. The areas affected by violence should be developed rapidly and at the same time those indulging in violence and sabotage should be dealt with strongly," Mr Advani said.

Mr Advani said it was at the initiative of the Andhra Pradesh government that a coordination committee of states affected by Maoist violence was formed under the federal home secretary in 1998. He said the Andhra Pradesh government had been



TAKING STOCK: Deputy prime minister L.K. Advani with Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu in Hyderabad on Friday. — PTI

confronting Maoist violence for a long time but Wednesday's assassination attempt was a major incident that caused concern to everyone.

During his 25-minute meeting with Mr Naidu, Mr Advani enquired about the sequence of events. "I thought it was some accident," Mr Naidu told Mr Advani while recalling the mo-

ments after the blast. For the first time since the Wednesday's incident, the electronic media was allowed to come close to Mr Naidu.

"I wish him (Naidu) speedy recovery. Last evening, I tried to talk to him over phone but doctors told me that he was under sedation. Today he spoke to me very well and I am very happy," said Mr Advani. — IANS

CHANCE DECISION ON CAR SEATING SAVED NAIDU'S LIFE

Providence beat PWG precision

Statesman News Service

HYDERABAD, Oct. 2. — The claymore mine explosion that nearly killed Mr N Chandrababu Naidu outside Tirupati yesterday, is a pointer to the PWG's unbelievable timing and precision in planning the attack.

Official sources said it was no coincidence that the left rear of the bullet-proof car in which he was travelling, took the maximum impact. Mr Naidu was on his way to Tirumala to offer silk clothes to Lord Venkateshwara on behalf of the state during the sacred Brahmotsavams and it is a tradition with the chief ministers to have their wife along.

Mr Naidu usually sits in front. But here he was expected to travel, as in the past, with his wife. And, the couple would have sat in the back as usual with Mr Naidu seated towards the left — his preferred position in the back seat.

The claymore mine, packed with gelatine and metal balls the size of shotputs was positioned such that it hit the left rear seat. It was here that TDP MLA Mr R Rajashekar Reddy — now in hospital on the critical list — was sitting. What helped Mr Naidu survive the attack was his decision to ask wife Bhuvaneshwari to leave for the temple before him. He wanted to use the journey to chat up with the local MLAs and minister Mr B Gopalakrishna Reddy.

Obviously, the PWG was unaware



Naidu's car wrecked after Wednesday's blast. (Right) The chief minister in Tirupati before flying to Hyderabad on Thursday. — PTI & AFP

of the change in plans and that the chief minister had chosen the front seat. Otherwise, the bomb could have been made to detonate just a microsecond ahead to smash into the windshield. Though the windshield is multi-layered and shatter-proof, its ability to held on to the frame and not cave in to the front seat in face of such an impact is suspect.

The claymore mine was found linked to electrical wires around 200 m away and connected to the leads of a camera flash powered by regular batteries. This kind of explosion sets off shrapnel that fly faster than bullets from an AK-47 rifle.

Another report on page 4

More mines found, Centre offers NSG cover

HYDERABAD, Oct. 2. — Combing operations around the blast site yielded eight more unexploded claymore mines. Found in two batches of four each these were planted about 50 m away ahead of the site.

Six civil rights activists from Tirupati, three of them members of the AP Civil Liberties Committee, are being interrogated in this connection. Police suspect they have links with Naxalites who triggered the blast. In view of the latest development, the Centre is willing to provide National Security Guard cover to Mr Chandrababu Naidu. — SNS

Blow to terror law review

D S N documents

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Oct. 2: The national committee set up to review the Prevention of Terrorism Act has run into hurdles, with several states questioning the need for such a scrutiny.

The BJP has been stressing that the committee should speed up its work and claims this will prevent misuse of the anti-terror law.

But more than a dozen states, including Bengal, have written to the committee, headed by Justice A.B. Saharya, that they have not implemented the anti-terror law so there is no question of review of its implementation.

States like Tamil Nadu that have invoked the anti-terror law also said there was no need for a national review committee as state-level committees were already on the job.

Under the law, state-level review committees were to be established. Tamil Nadu, which has invoked the law to arrest MDMK leader Vaiko, Tamil Na-

tionalist Movement leader P. Nedumaran. Tamil bi-weekly *Nakkaran* editor R.R. Gopal and a few others, has refused to send the information sought by the national committee, saying the state panel would do the job.

Justice Saharya said the committee would again write to various parties to submit details like the FIRs lodged, chargesheets filed and offences made out under the anti-terror law.

The national committee held a meeting in New Delhi yesterday. "During the third meeting of the committee, it was felt that additional information and materials are required to proceed further," Justice Saharya said.

BJP president M. Venkaiah Naidu had said a mechanism was needed to ensure that the anti-terror law was not misused and added that state review committees should also expedite their work.

On this point, Tamil Nadu said its state committee was handling the review and no information needed to be given to the

national committee.

But Justice Saharya said the national committee would go ahead with the review despite the state's stand. It has sought information from the other parties, too — the accused, their lawyers and relatives.

"We have already commenced the work of analysing the cases. If states do not help us in the process, we will go ahead on the basis of the materials and information available with us and draw our own conclusions," he said.

The states and Union territories that do not want a review because they have not invoked the

anti-terror law are: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Orissa, Tripura, Uttaranchal, Bengal, Andaman and Nicobar, Chandigarh, Goa, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry.

Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra and a few other states have given the details of cases filed under the anti-terror law.

The national committee will resume work once Justice Saharya is back in Delhi on October 7.

Insat-3e satellite sends first signal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: India's space programme soaked higher still with the successful launch of a communication satellite, Insat-3e, by an Ariane-5 rocket from the European spaceport of Kourou in French Guyana early on Sunday morning. This is the fourth indigenous satellite in the Insat-3 series to be launched by an Ariane rocket.

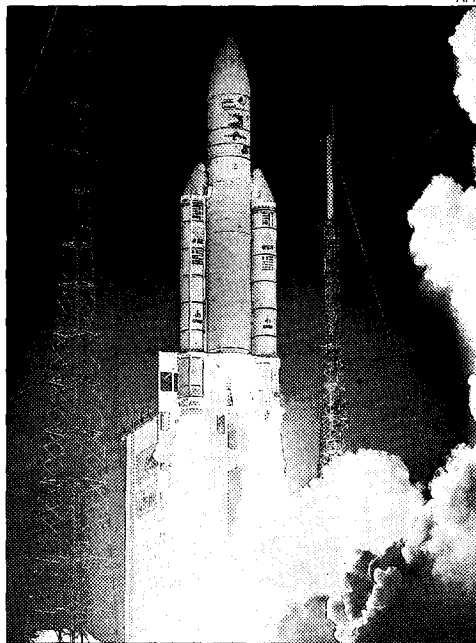
With a 12-year life span, the satellite, once operational will be used for communication and broadcasting purposes. As the hi-tech rocket took off with a loud and awesome roar at 4.44 a.m. (IST) Indian scientists and engineers gathered in the Arianespace's Jupiter control room broke into a loud applause.

Along with Insat-3e, Ariane-5 was also carrying Europe's e-Bird satellite which will be used for internet purposes and the moon-bound Smart-1 spacecraft. The weather at Kourou was excellent enabling tracking cameras to follow Ariane's ascent and the final phase of the flight including the much-awaited separation of the two solid rocket motors two minutes and 21 seconds after it took off.

For Insat-3e project director V.R.Prathap and Isro's new chairperson G. Madhavan Nair it was a nail-biting moment followed by visible relief as Ariane lifted off without any problem.

Mr Madhavan Nair observed the rocket's flight path on a giant monitor while Mr Prathap was glued to the computer analysing the flow of data. About 30 minutes into the flight at 5.14 a.m. (IST), when the velocity of the rocket attained a particular speed the satellite was placed into the geo-stationary transfer orbit. Immediately, the master control facility (MCF) at Hassan in Karnataka received the first signal from Insat-3e. It was now time for the Isro team to celebrate.

The satellite is currently orbiting the earth



India's communication satellite Insat-3e is launched by Europe's Ariane-5 from the Kourou space centre in French Guyana on Saturday.

with an orbital period of about of about 10 hours and 50 minutes. Initial checks conducted from MCF showed that the satellite was performing normally. The Hassan facility transmitted a signal to the satellite to make it face the earth. Insat-3e is being tracked, monitored and controlled from the MCF. In the initial phase of the operations, MCF will utilise the telemetry, tracking and command ground stations at Beijing, Fucino in Italy and Lake Cowichan in Canada.

Europe's first moon mission launched

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Europe's first mission to the moon got off to a smooth start on Saturday, with the successful launch of an Ariane rocket from a base in South America that released the European Space Agency's (Arianespace) Smart-1 probe toward the lunar surface.

The Ariane-5 rocket lifted off from a launch pad in Kourou, French Guinea at 8:14 p.m. local time (2314 gmt), and placed the unmanned spacecraft on its trajectory 41 minutes later, Arianespace said. The rocket also released two satellites — India's Insat 3e and Europe's e-Bird into Earth orbit.

The Smart-1, short for "Small Missions for Advanced Research and Technology," is off for a long voyage: It's expected to reach the moon by December 2004. The core mission of the probe is to test a new solar-electric propulsion technology. The craft, weighing only 367 kilograms (807 pounds), will also pioneer minute instrumentation to be used to explore the origins of the moon, look for water there and examine the prospect of building a permanent human base on the lunar surface.

Diplomarch: Army plans new offensive

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: After the PM, it's now the army's turn to launch a diplomatic offensive to show how exactly Islamabad "continues to fuel cross-border terrorism" in Jammu and Kashmir despite its public posturing.

Sources say the army will be taking about 25 defence attaches from foreign missions in the national capital to Srinagar and some areas along the contentious 740-km-long Line of Control (LoC) in the next few days to give them a "feel" of the ground situation in the strife-torn state.

The intent is to acquaint the foreign military officials, who are likely to receive a detailed briefing at the 15 Corps HQ in Srinagar, with the "duplicitous" game being played by Pakistan.

"It will be explained to the de-

fence attaches how infiltration across the LoC takes place with the Pakistan army's active connivance," said an officer. The army will also emphasise that militancy-related incidents have shown a big jump in recent months, with July and August recording almost 700 such incidents.

The army is also gearing up to face an increase in fidayeen attacks. An explosive-laden car with 300 kg of RDX (research developed explosive) and five IEDs (improvised explosive devices) was detected by the security forces in Doda district on Friday.

"The RDX and the IEDs were hidden in an abandoned white Ambassador car near the government district hospital building in the area. The IEDs were defused and destroyed, thus averting a major terrorist attack," said the officer.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 SEP 2003

Army set to deploy Agni N-missiles

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

5/ *29/9*
New Delhi: After raising new units to handle the Agni group of nuclear ballistic missiles, the Army is now gearing up to deploy Agni-I and Agni-II. Agni-I has a range of 800 km, while Agni-II can cover 2,000 km.

Agni-III, with a range of 3,000 km, will be test fired by year-end. Although the Strategic Forces Command (SFC), entrusted with the handling of nuclear assets, was announced in January this year, it is yet to find its feet.

Consequently, the Army is raising two Agni units—334 Missile Group for Agni-I and 335 Missile Group for Agni-II near Secunderabad—till the SFC takes concrete shape. Agni missiles constitute one crucial leg of the nuclear weapon triad—land-based mobile missiles, fighter bombers and sea-based platforms—which India hopes to operationalise in the coming years as part of the “credible minimum deterrent” against Pakistan and China.

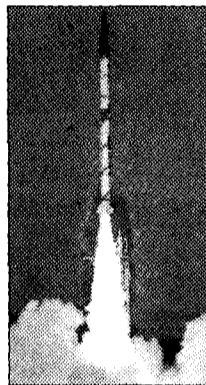
Speeding up the indigenous missile programme has become important since the Pakistan Army inducted the 1,500-km nuclear-capable Ghauri-I missile, considered to be a derivative of the North Korean Nodong mis-

D & N Security
sile, into its armoury earlier this year. The Pakistan Army already has the 750-km range Shaheen-I missile of Chinese origin in the Agni-I range.

The 15-metre-long Agni-I, which can carry one-tonne nuclear warhead, can be fired from both rail and road-based launchers. The armed forces already have the 150-250 km range Prithvi tactical missile in their armoury. The Army, for instance, has the 222 and 333 Prithvi Missile Groups. The government has now also cleared the raising of another two Prithvi groups for the Army, which will be named 444 and 555 Missile Groups.

While announcing the country's nuclear command and control structure in January, the government had declared that “nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage”.

In a significant departure from the earlier stand, the government warned that India would retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons if attacked with chemical or biological weapons by even non-nuclear adversaries. It also said that a WMD attack on Indian forces outside Indian territory would result in a nuclear response.



Sharp rise in J&K infiltration: army

By Rajat Pandit
 TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: There has been "a quantum jump" in infiltration across the Line of Control (LoC) as well as terrorist violence in the hinterland in Jammu and Kashmir in the last three months.

Army officers claim Pakistan is desperate to push in as many heavily armed militants as possible before snow blocks the mountain passes and traditional infiltration routes along the 740-km-long LoC.

Anticipating more 'fidaveen' (suicide) and "stand-off" terrorist attacks against "high-value" targets in the coming days, the army does not want to reduce force levels in J&K.

Army vice-chief, Lt-Gen Shan-

tonu Choudhary, said on Wednesday that Islamabad had "revived" terrorist-training camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

"We have photographic evidence of this," Lt-Gen Choudhary said, rejecting Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf's claim that his government had clamped down on "jehadis".

The Army also has other "evidence" to show an estimated 3,000 terrorists are being trained in these camps, with Lashkar-e-Toiba and other "tanzims" running scores of recruitment centres. Left

district commander Mohammed Shahzad, captured in Banihal on September 13, for instance, has given a detailed account of this.

Latest army statistics show the total number of terrorist incidents have shot up from 130 in September 2002 to almost 180 in just the first half of this month. The comparative figures for July and August have also jumped by 70 per cent and 35 per cent, respectively.

Similarly, the number of IED (improvised explosive device) blasts have registered a sharp increase. Compared to four IED blasts in September 2002, over 15

have already taken place this month. The security forces, of course, are also notching up more successes against terrorists. The "kill ratio" has improved, with roughly five terrorists being killed for every soldier.

Ninety-two militants, including some key leaders like Gazi Baba and Nasir Mehmood Ahwan "Ansar" of Jaish-e-Mohammad, have been killed by the security forces so far this month. In all, around 560 militants have been killed since January.

With a large number of battle-field surveillance radars and hand-held thermal imagers now being inducted, which can detect movement almost 2.5 to eight km away, army troops are also better equipped to detect infiltration bids across the LoC.



Muslims in the Valley

Pota chargesheet against 39 in Gujarat

Press Trust of India

AHMEDABAD, Sept. 10. — Nearly five months after slapping the Pota on five alleged ISI agents and several others arrested, the state police's crime branch filed chargesheets today against 39 accused for their suspected involvement in "the conspiracy to foment large-scale terrorist activities in Gujarat" and "waging war against the nation".

Apart from the five ISI agents, arrested by the crime branch on 4 April this year, the accused include persons allegedly involved in the assassination of former Gujarat minister Haren Pandya. The ACP (Crime Branch) Mr GL Singhal, who filed the chargesheet, said all the accused were also charged for "striking terror in the minds of a large section of a particular community". In a related development, the Crime Branch moved

an application requesting "secrecy" of names and addresses of 43 witnesses.

Special prosecutor Mr HM Dhruv submitted to the court that the investigating agency had received intelligence inputs that several witnesses were being threatened and many had drawn the crime branch's attention in this regard. The crime branch also submitted two sealed envelopes containing statements of those witnesses who had reportedly been threatened, though their names were in a "coded" form.

Pota court judge Ms Sonia Gokani said the prosecution should have taken permission before deciding on the format of the chargesheet. She posted the order on the application for tomorrow. Mr Dhruv said 43 persons were absconding in the case, including the alleged mastermind of the "tiffin bomb blasts" in buses and Pandya's killing — Mufti Sufiyan Patangia.

THE STATESMAN

1 SEP 2003
1 SEP 2003

SIMI has taken wrong turn, says its founder

By Chidanand Rajghatta
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Washington: Mohammed Siddiqi knew the organisation he co-founded and led at its inception had gone off track when he received an invitation in 1992 on a letterhead showing a clenched fist.



M. Siddiqi

Having migrated to the US in 1981, Mr Siddiqi had been out of touch with the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) for more than a decade, but the mailed fist told him more than

he needed to know. The basis of founding SIMI in 1977 was to see how Islam could contribute to a pluralistic India, the Gorakhpur (UP) native recalled in an interview from his home in Illinois last week. Militancy and violence was anathema. In the early days, we organised seminars and workshops at which we invited even the RSS and Arya Samajis."

He wrote back to the organisers declining their invitation to the annual convention in Bombay and telling them that they should not be showing fists if they were true followers of Islam. He did not hear from them for another decade.

Govt nod to 30 more Prithvi missiles

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, September 7

157-1
8/9

Defence & Ministry

WITHIN A week of the crucial meeting of the Nuclear Command Authority under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the government has given the go-ahead for procuring 30 short-range surface-to-surface Prithvi missiles.

The move coincides with the final preparations being made by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to test-fire the 3,000-km version of the Intermediate Ballistic Missile, Agni III, highly placed Defence Ministry officials said.

The new Prithvi missiles will have a new solid propellant instead of the present liquid fuel

motor. The solid propellant, which the DRDO has developed for both the Prithvi and Agni ranges, is more reliable and target oriented.

Officials said the initial trial of Agni III will be undertaken in the first week of November. The government has also cleared the induction of the shorter-range, 700 km Agni I and 1,500-2000 km Agni II missiles. They added that Agni I and Agni II will first be given to the newly set up Strategic Forces Command. The DRDO has announced that after the recent successful trials, the ground-to-air Trishul missile is ready for user trials. The missile, aimed at multiple targets, had been shelved after the army found its performance unsatisfactory.

AMMUNITION SEIZURE

Tip of the iceberg? *MA*

THE biggest ever seizure of ammunition in Kolkata, 25,000 AK-47 bullets concealed in a truck in the port area, has forced the city's police commissioner Sujay Chakraborty to concede what has been known for some time, that the city has been a transit point for shipment of arms and ammunition and not only to terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir. It comes close on the heels of reports that explosives for the Mumbai blasts may have been sent through the city as well. While discovery of the ammunition haul by the Kolkata police is commendable, it remains the case that the tip-off that led to the seizure came a month ago, and it is only a stroke of luck that the truck hadn't left for its destination by this time. There is another theory doing the rounds, though, that the shipment may have been meant for West Bengal itself. Although Kashmir had been enjoying a lull in violence since Prime Minister Vajpayee's Srinagar peace initiative in April, it appears to be ending now. That violence has not been confined to Kashmir, as the Mumbai blasts showed, and one cannot simply assume that an expanded target list will not include Kolkata.

West Bengal, therefore, cannot continue to act as India's soft underbelly; it must take security issues seriously. The border with Bangladesh remains porous. Police and security forces get the signal and wink at cross-border traffic, making things easy for mischief-makers. The police themselves are hopelessly politicised and their ranks studded with yesmen; training, equipment and leadership have long been given the go-by. The seizure of a truckload of ammunition in Kolkata's heart, where it had been sitting in the open for close to a month, must act as a warning to authorities that things have to change.

India will sell LCA



DEFENCE MINISTER: Mr George Fernandes during the inauguration of Kshitij 2003 at Territorial Army Institute in Kolkata on Friday. —The Statesman

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Sept. 5. — India plans to sell its Light Combat Aircraft to friendly nations, once it is ready. This was announced by the defence minister at a press conference in the city. Mr George Fernandes inaugurated an exhibition and seminar on defence needs on the Maidan, organised by the Indian Council of Small Industries and sponsored by his ministry.

Mr Fernandes said the LCA would be ready for the market within next four to five years. "I am looking forward to a global market," he said.

The first lot of Advanced Jet Trainers (AJT) are expected to be ready within three years. But the training programme for pilots will begin immediately after the contract is signed. Mr Fernandes also announced that the indigenous aircraft carrier, which can hold a dozen fighter planes, had been designed and production would begin soon.

The defence minister praised the role of small and medium-scale industries in

the defence sector. Some 120 such firms are involved in the LCA project and around 60 to 70 SSI units contributed to the manufacture of Advanced Light Helicopter. He rued the fact that not many in the city were aware of the business SSIs can do in the defence sector in this part of the country.

Mr Fernandes, also NDA convener, did not let go of an opportunity to take a snipe at the Left Front government. Industries, he said, have been leaving West Bengal. "The inflow of capital has stopped since there is no security for life and property in the state."

He refused to speak about the LF's decision to continue boycotting him in Parliament. "It's their pleasure and they can carry on."

'Step up vigilance'

Mr Fernandes said the state government should step up vigilance in view of the recent arms haul in Kolkata. Citizens should also be involved to identify strangers loitering around in their neighbourhoods.

Bullet holes in J&K ammo theory

Kinsuk Basu
Kolkata, September 4

THE AMMUNITION seized from a truck in the city on Wednesday are meant for SLRs and not AK-series rifles which Kashmiri militants use. Therefore, they couldn't be meant for Jammu and Kashmir, ballistic and forensic experts said on Thursday, contradicting city police claims.

AK-series bullets have the same diameter — 7.62 mm — as those found in the truck; but overall, they have a smaller volume and a different shape.

The finding led home secretary Amit Kiran Deb to contradict city police commissioner Sujay Chakrabarty's claim and declare the truck was not bound for Kashmir. Central intelligence agencies went a step

- Why should the truck carry SLR ammo and not AK-series bullets if it's bound for Jammu & Kashmir?
- Why should it park in congested Dhobitalao for four weeks?
- Why should 25,000 bullets be bundled into one truck, the equivalent of putting all your eggs in one basket?
- Why doesn't the ammo carry the maker's name — a worldwide practice?



further and suggested that the ammunition was possibly meant for distribution among gangs in the city and its neighbourhood, who do use SLRs.

Intelligence officials wondered why a truck laden with ammunition should park itself in congested Dhobitalao, where it was discovered and seized,

for such a long time (since August 6) if it was meant to travel to Kashmir.

They also questioned the recovery of such a huge cache of ammunition from one vehicle. "The practice — whether it's drugs, ammo or arms — is to divide the consignment among various trucks. Then, if one truck

is seized, the loss isn't much," an expert said.

Apart from the destination, there is another big mystery about the ammunition — neither the bullets nor the olive green bags in which they were found carry the name of the maker. "This is unusual. It's a universal rule that all ammunition carry the name of the maker, whether it's a private manufacturer or a government-owned ordnance factory," an expert said.

The bullets only carry a number — 99 — but experts believe this merely signifies the year of manufacture. "We must find out which country has been making such ammo (which doesn't carry the name of the maker)," an intelligence official said.

See also Kolkata Live

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

Huge Calcutta haul follows blast link

ASTAFFREPORTER

EXPLOSIVE TRAIL

Calcutta, Sept. 3: The single-biggest haul of ammunition in Calcutta was made today when police seized a truck and found 25,000 AK-47 bullets hidden inside a false ceiling in the driver's cabin.

The truck had been parked in a lot in the port area for the past one month. An intelligence tip-off led the police to it.

Coming a day after another revelation — that the explosives used in the August 25 Mumbai blasts were routed through Calcutta — the discovery set alarm bells ringing, with senior Union home and defence ministry officials closeted with counterparts in the state home department till late evening.

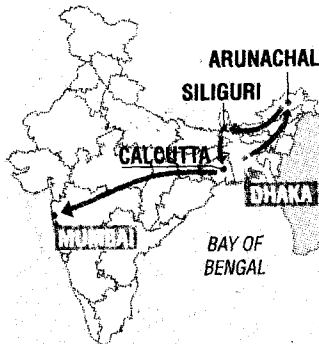
"I have to admit that the city has become a transit point for militants," city police commissioner Sujay Chakraborty said. But it had more to do with its strategic location (biggest city near the Northeast) than anything else, he explained.

Chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, without going into the reasons for the police delay in finding out the rogue truck, said the force should be congratulated for a job well done.

Calcutta police started raids after receiving the central intelligence tip-off last month about a truck that had arrived from the Northeast with a huge cache of ammunition on August 6.

The areas scanned initially were places in central Calcutta, like Burrabazar, Posta and Kolay market, where most of the state's long-distance consignments arrive. Nothing, however, came out of the raids until today.

Around noon, the police



The route of explosives by road according to intelligence sources

headquarters at Lalbazar received information about a truck parked at Dhobitala on Hyde Road.

A team led by Soumen Mitra and Pijush Pandey, two top detective department officers, reached the spot in a few minutes. The *chowkidar* of the parking lot, Mohammed Alamgir, was questioned and he led the team to the truck.

The driver and the cleaner brought the truck last month, Alamgir said. It was laden with bamboo poles and, for the first few days, the two removed the cargo to light commercial

Hostage crisis

Birbhum, Sept. 3: An armed youth held patients at the male ward of the Suri State General Hospital hostage today, demanding that he be allowed to leave with two of them in a Tata Sumo. The standoff was continuing well past midnight.

■ See Page 9

vehicles. For the last fortnight, however, they were nowhere to be seen.

But two persons, who "looked like Kashmiris", appeared on the scene on August 21. They changed the number-plate (from AS-01/C-6924 to ML-07/5859). "When I asked them what they were up to, they told me that the truck's Assam registration had lapsed and it had got a new Meghalaya registration," Alamgir said.

The initial search did not yield anything. But the unusually low ceiling of the driver's cabin struck the sleuths as suspicious, leading them to first tap the plywood exterior and then bust it.

Forty-eight cloth-bound parcels, olive-green in colour and neatly sewn up, and 14 smaller brown-paper packets were found. A few tugs and pulls at the packets yielded the bullets — all of foreign make. Some of the bigger parcels had as many as 600 bullets and the smaller 25 each.

Officials said it appeared that the plan was to take the truck to Jammu and Kashmir. The truck was waiting possibly because the militants were trying to arrange another decoy consignment, they said.

Yesterday, it appeared that the Mumbai blast explosives had been routed through the city. They came here on the Dhaka-Arunachal Pradesh-Siliguri trail, officials said, adding that the decoy used while entering the city was a consignment of fruits.

The explosives were loaded on to another truck "in central Calcutta" and that truck used computer parts as the cover, the officials added. Eight persons have been rounded up.

Bearded terror twins holed up in city

Rahul Das & Soumen Datta
Kolkata, September 3

TWO MIDDLE-AGED Kashmiri militants are hiding somewhere in the city. They have possibly shed their shervanis and long beards, making identification difficult, but the police are confident that they haven't had the time to escape.

"They had arrived in the ammunition-laden truck that we seized on Wednesday," said detective department chief Soumen Mitra. "We can't tell you their names yet, but one of them is aged around 50 and the other around 45."

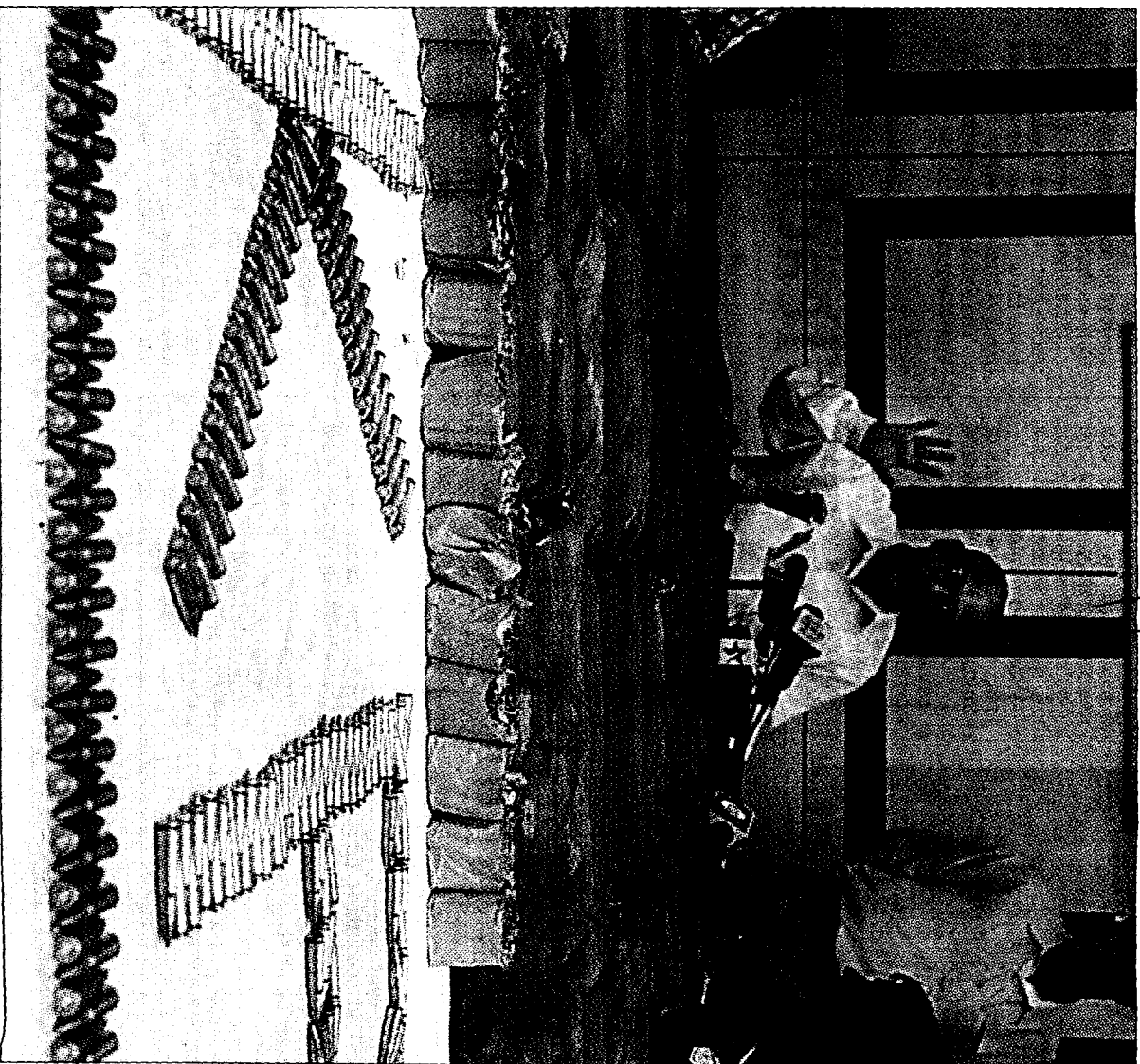
The two men were first seen on August 6, when the truck arrived with the ammunition strapped to its false ceiling.

They surfaced again 15 days later. "They went to the garage where they had parked the truck," said an officer. Guard Mohammed Alamgir saw the two bearded men, one in a deep blue shervani and the other in brown, on August 21. They had sneaked into the garage and were changing the number plates on the truck.

It was not the first time they had changed number plates. The police say they did so twice on the way from Meghalaya. The cops, however, have identified only two of the numbers — ML07-5859 and ASOIC 6924 — one used during arrival, the other after the change of plates in the garage.

The police have recorded the statement of the guard, who has described the features of the militants. The police say several people claim to have seen two men matching the description. They haven't left the city since their arrival and were spotted loitering at public places. The police have had sketches prepared by experts and are circulating these in efforts to track down the militants.

They had loaded their truck with bamboo to ward off suspicion. Once they had disposed of this load, they kept the truck parked, the ammunition still in place, waiting for another legitimate consignment that would give them an excuse to drive on to



ASHOK NATH/DE/HT

INITIAL GLITTER: Police commissioner Sujay Chakraborty displays the Kolkata Police's seizure.

their eventual destination. "The raid must have caught them by surprise," a police officer said. "We are confident that they are still holed up in the city as we are monitoring all exit routes."

Detectives say the two fugitives had brought the consignment from a firm based in Dhaka, Al-Hamza Shipping Company, Dohiruddin Ahmed Siddiqui, one

of its directors, is known to be close to Hizb-ul-Mujahideen chief Syed Salauddin while another official, Bashir Ahmed, also has links to various militant outfits.

Pakistan-born Bashir Ahmed is close to leaders of the radical Islami Qiyam Jote. The company's vessels regularly visit ports in Myanmar and Thailand, where Chinese arms and ammu-

munition are easily available. The company is on the watch list of several national intelligence agencies.

The ammunition had no markings, though that is a universal rule. Neither have the olive green packets recovered from the false ceiling. This has puzzled the cops, since one would expect the manufacturer to advertise its name.

Common stopover for arms couriers

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 3

AN ARMS haul in Bangladesh, the blasts in Mumbai and the seizure at Hyde Road — militants in Bangladesh have made at least three recent attempts to ferry arms and ammunition through the city.

All you have to do is to load a truck with legitimate goods and hope that no one will check it for concealed arms. It worked with the Mumbai-bound explosives. An innocuous truck from Dhaka reached Arunachal Pradesh, where it was loaded with fruits and sent to a market in central Kolkata. The fruits were unloaded, computer spare parts took their place and the truck left for Mumbai. It didn't work at Bagore in Bangladesh in July. Militants were to smuggle a similar consignment when authorities there seized it, sending alarm bells ringing across borders.

The state intelligence branch alerted the CID and city police to be ready for a huge consignment of ammunition. The tip-off led to the latest seizure.

"The police had prior information about the truck, but it took us sometime to locate it in the parking lot," commissioner Sujay Chakraborty said.

The ammunition had been smuggled from Cox's Bazar to Meghalaya, where it was loaded on to the truck. What the police find inexplicable is why militants use this route when other options exist.

The smugglers could have taken the Siliguri corridor to Baruni Road and moved on to NH-2, Burabanki route and

KOLKATA CALLING

- ▶ Mumbai blasts Explosives from Dhaka went via Arunachal Pradesh and Kolkata to Mumbai
- ▶ Suspect Irfan Zaid Md Ali arrested near US Embassy for not carrying valid papers
- ▶ Arrested Bangladeshis Five flight passengers, one of them with eight daggers in his luggage, detained at airport

Jammu and Kashmir. They might also have reached NH-2 via Birbhum. Otherwise, they could have gone to Jammu and Kashmir via Kishanganj or Bhagalpur.

Yet they selected busy Hyde Road, while others before them had sent explosives to central Kolkata.

Apart from arms dealers, suspect foreigners too have kept cropping up in the city. On Tuesday, eight daggers surfaced in the flight luggage of a Bangladeshi, who was detained along with four compatriots. The same evening, an Iraqi without travel papers was nabbed near the US embassy.

Zaid Md Ali, whose passport has been impounded by the UN High Commission for Refugees in Delhi, was loitering suspiciously near the embassy at Ho Chi Minh Sarani. Though he had no travel papers, he had a valid driving licence issued by the Kolkata Motor Vehicles Department.

The police suspect that he entered India via Pakistan. He was remanded in police custody till September 15.

Cabinet clears *Hawk* deal

9-08-2003
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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — Nearly two decades after the *Hawk* Advanced Jet Trainer was first short-listed, the Cabinet Committee on Security cleared the Rs 8,000-crore deal that will ensure 66 planes for the Air Force.

The AJT's presence should ensure better flying facilities for trainee pilots. Of the 66 *Hawks*, 42 will be made in India by Hindustan Aeronautics (HAL) under transfer of technology. All the planes should arrive in six years. Till the new planes arrive, pilots will be trained in Britain. Initially, British Aerospace was going to charge for the training but they waived it. Each plane will cost Rs 85 crore and total disbursement to BAE is about Rs 6,000 crore.

The La Fontaine (named after an Air Force chief) committee as well as the President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam had called for AJT. Defence secretary Mr Ajay Prasad pointed out that *Hawk* is flown by 17 countries, including Britain, USA and Australia, but this is *Hawk 115Y*, not the latest — *Hawk 128*, but added "it meets our requirements."

Britain today welcomed the CCS decision on the *Hawk*. In a press statement, British foreign secretary Mr Geoffrey Hoon said: "This decision by India... is excellent news for the UK, which follows on from our own recent decision to buy *Hawk* for the Royal



A long time coming

- 1982 — The La Fontaine Committee calls for Advanced Jet Trainers for the Air Force.
- 1986 — *Hawk* and Dassault's Alpha Jet shortlisted.
- 1997 — Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, then scientific advisor to the defence minister, calls for AJT.
- 2002 — *Hawk* virtually finalised but IAF wants to look at L-159 Czech-US trainer.
- 2003 — CCS clearance.

Air Force... a successful Indian contract will... extend the industrial collaboration between India and the UK".

VIP jets from Brazil: India will also buy five VIP *Embraer* jets from Brazil — four for the Air Force for VIP movements and one for the BSF — for Rs 727 crore. These 14-seaters (can be made into 19-seaters) will start arriving in 19 months.

Fierce Dragon (FC-1), the third generation fighter aircraft jointly developed by Pakistan and China, successfully undertook its maiden test flight, adds PTI from Beijing.

Photograph on page 4

THE STATESMAN

4 SEP 2003

Rs 3290-cr package to counter terror

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — In a vigorous bid to combat terrorism, the government today announced a massive modernisation programme worth Rs 3,290 crore for the armed forces, including raising of specialised "lethal units" for counter-insurgency.

It will include electronic warfare suites for seven naval ships from Rafael, an Israeli firm, for \$105 million. This allows for surveillance and counter measures if there is an offensive intention. An indigenous programme to build similar equipment is being readied and should be cleared for user trials very shortly.

Army battalions, some of which are in the forefront of the fighting on the Line of Control, are also going to be modernised. Each battalion's specialised "ghatak" platoon will get new surveillance, lethal firepower and night-fighting equipment. It is expected to be cleared during the 10th Plan.

The Army is also building specialist units to detect explosive devices and take counter-measures against them.

These units will be part of different formations, including the corps of engineers and the Rashtriya Rifles. These units will be ready in two years and cost Rs 290 crore. The equipment will be partly indigenous and partly imported.

THE STATESMAN

4 SEP 2003

Gunbattle rages in Kathua

SNS and PTI

JAMMU, Sept. 3. — In the longest gunbattle this year, security forces and Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants remained engaged in the forests of Kathua for the second day, even as the forces killed seven militants and lost three of their men in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir today.

One soldier was killed and four others injured as the operation to flush out the LeT militants, believed to be seven in number, holed in Ghati area of Kathua, 70 km from here, continued late into the night. A village defence committee member and two ultras were also wounded, they said.

The encounter began yesterday afternoon when a series of attacks were witnessed across the state. These strikes are being seen as a coordinated set of attacks to revenge the killing of Jaish leader Gazi Baba. The operation came following a tip-off from members of the village defence committee at Ghati village in Kathua, Jammu. They had spotted an unusual set of footprints near the village and the trail led them to the terrorists.

The villagers learnt about the terrorists in the morning and they passed on the information to the police.

Militants fired a rifle grenade and opened indiscriminate firing at the forces as they moved close to the holed up area.

"It was too dark to launch a flush-

ing operation in the evening, so we began in the morning. We have already laid the cordon," Mr Manish Sinha, SP, Kathua said.

Reinforcements have been called in for the final assault with the Army and the CRPF personnel being part of the operation. The sources said there could be as many as seven militants holed in, believed to belong to the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba.

Since last evening, the security forces have been trying to track them down. Meanwhile, traffic has been stopped on Jammu-Pathankot National Highway near Sambha after a gas tanker overturned. It is feared that the tanker could catch fire. The highway is the only one that links the state with the rest of the country.

While four policemen of the Jammu and Kashmir Police and the VDC member identified as Prithvi were injured in the gun battle yesterday, a special police officer and two militants were injured in the gunbattle which resumed this morning after the night halt, the sources said.

Mr Subhash Raina, SSP, Police Control Room, Jammu told The Statesman that the operation may continue for another day as it was quite late in the evening and they might have to suspend the operation and resume it again tomorrow morning.

He also informed there was an intermittent exchange of fire between the militants and the forces.

Meanwhile, 10 Bangladeshis, including three women and four chil-



Jawans in action in Jammu's Ghati area on Tuesday during an encounter with ultras. — PTI

Delhi door ajar for Hurriyat

JAMMU, Sept. 3. — The All Party Hurriyat Conference today kept its option of entering into negotiations with New Delhi open and said it would wait for a formal invitation from the Centre for talks. The decision was taken at a seven-member executive council meeting of the Hurriyat which was convened in Srinagar today to discuss the talks offer made by Mr LK Advani during the inter-state council meeting in Srinagar. — SNS

dren, have been arrested near the border in the RS Pura sector when they were trying to exfiltrate to Pakistan.

The group was intercepted by the

Army about four km inside the Indian territory when they were on their way towards the border. They were later handed over to police for interrogation.

1 4 SEP 2003

Police explores Simi links with D-Company

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI | SEPTEMBER

ALTHOUGH the four suspects in the Gateway of India and Mumbadevi blasts were arrested by the Mumbai Police on Monday, intelligence agencies are busy tracking the alleged role of ISI and underworld dons including Dawood Ibrahim in hatching the conspiracy.

According to information available with the central intelligence agencies, the ISI had held a meeting of top terrorist leaders and underworld dons last month to take stock of their anti-India operations. At the meeting, the ISI is said to have admonished Dawood Ibrahim and Chhota Shakeel, both of whom have sought refuge in Pakistan ever since the Dubai authorities toughened their act against the underworld operators, for "not doing enough to carry out its subversive agenda against India."

The central agencies here suspect the meeting led the terrorist outfits and underworld to coordinate their resources to carry out a major strike, which turned out to be the twin Mumbai blasts. The D-Company, which was solely responsible for the 1993 blasts in Mumbai in the aftermath of the Babri demolition, is believed to have pitched in by activating its links with the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) — the mastermind of the Mumbai blasts is said to be a SIMI leader based in Dubai — and possibly even arranging the hardware used to carry out the explosions.

Although it was mainly the LeT-SIMI network that executed the blasts, intelligence agencies believe that the D-Company's strong base and local links in the country's financial capital may have come in handy for the operatives in arranging the logistics.

DRAMATIC BREAKTHROUGH; NEW MODULE UNEARTHED

4 held for Mumbai blasts

By Lyla Bavadam with agencies

MUMBAI, SEPT. 1. The Mumbai police today arrested four persons following a dramatic breakthrough in the investigation of the two bomb explosions of August 25 in the city.

The four arrested are Syed Mohammad Hanif, 45, his wife Fehmida Hanif, 37, their 18-year-old daughter Farheen Hanif, and Arshad Shafiq Mohammad Ansari, 26. The arrests were made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

Addressing a press conference here today, the Mumbai Police Commissioner, Ranjit Singh Sharma, said it was Hanif, his wife and daughter who had hired a taxi that carried the explosives to the Gateway of India. Ansari, and another person who is absconding and whose name the police have not revealed, had engaged another taxi to carry out the other explosion at Zaveri Bazar. Ansari is now in custody in hospital with high blood pressure.

The Additional Commissioner of Police (Crime), Rakesh Maria, said Hanif was originally from Mangalore, while Ansari hailed from Bairelli in Uttar Pradesh.

In an interesting turn, the Mumbai police said that gelatine, and not RDX as earlier believed, was used in the explosions, according to the arrested persons. Mr. Sharma said the devices were assembled at Hanif's place in suburban Andheri. Dr. Satya Pal Singh, Joint Commissioner (Crime), said that about 25 kg of gelatine was used at each location. Mr. Sharma said forensic experts were ascertaining the nature of the

explosives used. During the arrests the police also recovered 235 sticks of gelatine, 13 alarm clocks, 22 detonators and related equipment from Hanif's house. All the bombs were apparently "home made".

Suspect arrested

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, SEPT. 1. Immigration officials at the Bangalore Airport have taken into custody Mohammed Shaheen (30), suspected to be involved in the August 25 bomb blast in Mumbai, as he was boarding an Air India flight at 5.30 p.m. today.

Police said that there was a "search notice" against Shaheen. He would be handed over to the Mumbai police tomorrow, they added.

Mr. Sharma and the Deputy Minister of Maharashtra, Chhagan Bhujbal, who was also present at the press conference, said the arrest had smashed the second module of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) in Mumbai. "The August 25 blasts were carried out by the Hanif group." The group calls itself the "Gujarat Muslim Revenge Force".

According to police, the accused are also involved in the July 28 blast in the BEST bus in the northern suburban Ghatkopar as well as in the discovery of a cache of gelatine

sticks on December 2, 2002 in a bus at a depot in Andheri suburb.

Police said that Fehmida was suspected to have left the explosives with a timer device on the Ghatkopar bus.

The announcement of the arrests came even as other official sources spoke of the presence of a network of Indians living in Dubai and Saudi Arabia, which has established links with the LeT and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). This, the sources said, is as important as the arrest of the four persons.

The focus is also on the whereabouts of the network of Indians. Some of them are people who had left their jobs and have moved to Maharashtra while "a few of them remain in the Gulf". These people could constitute dormant terrorist cells waiting to be activated.

Dr. Singh said that the "common thread of Dubai" was what held together the recent blasts in Mumbai as well as the connection between the Hanif module and that of Saquib Nahan, another LeT operative now in jail.

While Nahan clearly had connections with the banned Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI), it is not yet clear if the Hanif module had similar assistance.

Hanif has had no police record; he used to work as an electrician in Dubai (other sources say he worked as an electrician with a sheikh in Saudi Arabia as well as with a major hotel) where it is believed he heard fiery speeches in mosques and was inspired to leave his job with an intent to avenge the massacres in Gujarat.

Ghazi Baba not among the slain, claims Jaish ■ Parliament accused to identify body: minister

House attack brain killed

9-13 November 5F-1 24/8

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Aug. 30. — The mastermind behind the attacks on Parliament and J&K Assembly, Ghazi Baba alias Shahbaz Khan, was killed in a pre-dawn swoop on his hideout by the BSF and police today.

Besides Ghazi Baba of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, his deputy Rashid Bhai and four other militants were killed in the encounter. And in accomplishing the "Mission Impossible", the BSF lost one jawan. Eight persons, including two deputy commandants and one assistant commandant, were injured.

Ghazi Baba's body was identified by a Srinagar resident, but the Jaish claimed that the body was of Saiful Islam, an area commander of the outfit. A Jaish spokesman denied that Ghazi Baba, who was

from Bhawalpur in Pakistan, was among the militants killed. (In response to the denial, Union minister of state for home Mr ID Swami said the accused in the Parliament case attack, now lodged in Delhi jails, would be asked to identify the body, PTI adds)

BSF IG (Kashmir Range) Mr Vijay Raman said a joint team of BSF and police stormed the house at Danamazaar in Srinagar at 4 a.m., following a tip off that a group of Jaish militants were hiding in it.

After the securitymen surrounded the house, two BSF men climbed to the rooftop and supplied the rest of the force with information on the militant's movements. The securitymen then started firing at the house. In response, the holed-up ultras lobbed grenades, triggering a

series of blasts in the house, which was "full of RDX and rockets". In the midst of firing and counter-firing, the securitymen stormed into the house.

Once inside, the securitymen first evacuated two women and four children. Among them were Ghazi Baba's wife, who was from Tral in south Kashmir, and their three-month-old daughter.

BSF DIG Mr K Srinivasan, who was in charge of the operation, said that besides being the mass-terminand in the attack on Parliament on 13 December 2001 and on the Assembly on 1 October the same year, Ghazi Baba was also involved in two car bomb blasts at 15 Corps headquarters of the Army at Badami Bagh on 19 April 2000 and 25 December 2000.

■ More reports on page 10



The body of Ghazi Baba, who was gunned down early on Saturday in Srinagar. — AFP

Akshardham attack was planned in Riyadh, 5 held

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: The Ahmedabad city crime branch on Thursday arrested five persons, claimed to be conspirators and executors of the terror attack on the Akshardham temple on September 24 last year which killed 33 persons.

Two of those arrested are clerics, who ran relief camps in Ahmedabad after the riots.

Investigations revealed that an autorickshaw was also used to transport two of the accomplices to Akshardham, besides the taxi which brought the slain terrorists. They also reveal a different identity of one of the slain terrorist, identified earlier as Mohammad Amjad, now thought to be Mohammad Faroukh of Rawalpindi.

The crime branch revealed that before the reconnaissance mission on Akshardham, the group explored the possibility of an attack on the BJP headquarters in Khanpur, the VHP headquarters in Paldi, the state assembly building and secretariat in Gandhinagar. The terrorists settled for Akshardham because it was a crowded venue and a "soft target".

The terrorists armed with AK 56s, explosives and rations entered the temple complex right opposite the VIP enclave in Gandhinagar and gunned down 33 people that fateful day till they were done in by the NSG commandos.

Police commissioner K.R. Kaushik told newsmen that the crime branch picked up

Salim Hanif Shaikh, a resident of Dariapur who now works in Riyadh, late on Thursday evening which led to the arrest of four others through the night. He said Salim provided logistic support to the two terrorists who had come from Pakistan.

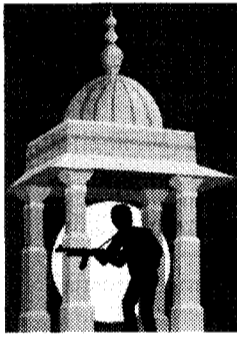
"Preliminary interrogation and investigation reports suggest that the attack was a joint operation of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) with support from the ISI. The plot was hatched in Saudi Arabia and discussed in Hyderabad (Andhra Pradesh) after last year's communal violence," asserted Mr Kaushik.

Shaikh's confession led to the arrest of four others—Altaf Akbar Hussain Malek, who works in Riyadh, Aadam Suleman Ajmeri of Shahpur, Mufti Abdulqayyum Mansuri and Maulana Abdullamiya Sayyed of Dariapur.

Crime branch officials say that the threat letters recovered from the terrorists carried the name of the organisation, "tehreek-e-Kasas (Movement for Revenge), and were written by Mufti Mansuri and drafted by Maulana Abdullamiya Sayyed. The clerics, who ran riot-relief camps in Bawahir Hall in Dariapur, have allegedly confessed that the arms used by the terrorists were delivered to them a day before the attack.

According to joint commissioner of police (crime) P.P. Pandey, "Salim has confessed that terrorist attacks were planned in Gujarat after the riots by Abutallah (linked to JeM), a resident of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, Abu Sifiyan and Abu Hamza of LeT in Riyadh."

The police say that the conspirators got in touch with Ahmedabad's Salim and Rashid Suleman Ajmeri in Riyadh. Rashid persuaded his brother Aadam to get his house in Dudheshwar vacated for sheltering the terrorists.



State plans intel panel to fight terror

By Nitin Yeshwantrao
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: With the serial blasts in Mumbai exposing lapses on the intelligence front, the state government has decided to constitute a security review committee to coordinate intelligence inputs from the state and central agencies.

Coordination between intelligence agencies is generally said to be poor because they jealously guard their information and are sceptical about each other's objectives.

To overcome this problem, top officers from the state CID, Intelligence Bureau and other such agencies will now be members of the security review committee—on the lines of the one in the centre. It will be chaired by the additional chief secretary (home) while the principal secretary (home) will be its convenor.

"Information gathered by all agencies on any suspicious activities will be discussed, assessed and sifted through at the meeting, to be held once every month. The reports will be studied threadbare to help create a larger picture and provide leads to the investigators," a senior state official told TNN on Thursday.

Police story..

Shaken, not stirred

Ruling out changes in Mumbai's police force, especially the top brass, beleaguered deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal said on Thursday: "Now is the time to boost the morale of the police force so that they can face the grim challenge of terrorism more effectively." P2



Lips are sealed

With conflicting statements emanating from the top every day, joint police commissioner (crime) Satyapal Singh sought to put the lid on police officers shooting their mouths off. On Thursday, he issued a circular to his subordinates to "refrain from speaking to the press, off-the-record". Avoid speculation, was his diktat.

RDX used in twin blasts, say cops

Our Mumbai Bureau
27 AUGUST

Industrialists attack Shinde

Our Mumbai Bureau
27 AUGUST

THE state government's forensic department has said that the material used in the bombs that killed at least 51 people on Monday's twin blasts in Mumbai was RDX, a highly lethal explosive 150 times more powerful than TNT. RDX is a material that is not produced in India and is required to be imported from outside. Making such a bomb require cross border networking involving several persons. "Failing to get a whiff of such a largescale activity automatically puts a question mark on the efficiency of a police force," sources said. Police officers had earlier speculated that ammonium nitrate could have been used to set off the explosion.

The state police has not so far, asked the customs in Mumbai to investigate how the material was brought into Mumbai, a senior customs official told ET. RDX is widely used in making military bombs. One kilogram of RDX can generate sufficient power to destroy an aircraft. It is commonly used by Islamic militants in making bombs in Kashmir, experts pointed out. In the 1993 serial blasts in Mumbai that left 250 people dead, subsequent investigation had revealed that it was a lapse on the part of the customs department that enabled the terrorists to import the materials into India. However since it is known that the Kashmiri militants also use bombs made of RDX, the chance of RDX being transported to Mumbai by land also could not be ruled out.

Military experts are coming to Mumbai to help the police in their investigation into Monday's blasts. Experts from National Security Guard and military experts who have gained experience in combating terrorists in Kashmir are expected to provide valuable tips to the Mumbai police.

INDUSTRIALISTS and prominent citizens of the city on Wednesday lambasted Maharashtra chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde. Mr Shinde had convened a meeting with the leaders of the business community in the wake of the recent blasts in the city.

In a scathing attack on the government, Rahul Bajaj raised the issue of growing corruption in the police force. "The government needs to take action if these corruption allegations are right or else file defamation suits against those who make it. You should show some conviction," he told the government. He asked the government about what plan it has to take low-up measures after the meeting is over.

"The government should set an example. Chalta hai...attitude won't work," Mr Bajaj said. Adi Godrej asked the government to be alert and ready to face bigger challenges. "It will be highly optimistic to think that this is going to be the last blast in the city," he said. Former police commissioner J.F. Ribeiro too raised the issue of corruption in the police force. "Earlier the police used to get important information from the Muslim community. These sources have dried up since they have no faith in the police anymore," Mr Ribeiro said. He asked the chief minister to handle the home department, which is currently with his deputy Chhagan Bhujbal. "In the past Home was the CM's prerogative. For our sake take charge of it," he urged. Anand Mahindra suggested that the government announce a reward for information on terrorists.



Shinde

STING OPERATION

Blasts prove Pak grouse beyond J&K: Advani

Aloke Tikku & Nandu R Kulkarni

ON BOARD SPECIAL IAF AIRCRAFT/ MUMBAI, Aug 26. — The LeT-SIMI combine engineered twin blasts at Mumbai provoked Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani today to break his silence over Pakistan sponsored cross-border terrorism, asserting that Jammu and Kashmir was certainly not the "core issue" that would, if resolved, end hostilities between the two countries.

Earlier in Mumbai, taking an acerbic dig at Pakistan and tagging it a "hostile neighbour", Mr Advani had said Islamabad's condemnation of Monday's explosions would have been appreciated had it handed over the 20 proclaimed terrorists-cum-gangsters wanted in India for their complicity in the 12 March 1993 serial blasts and other offences. (Describing Mr Advani's allegations of Islamabad being responsible for the Mumbai bomb blasts as "baseless and irresponsible", Pakistan tonight said the 19 suspects referred to by India were not in the country, adds PTL.)

More than Kashmir, Islamabad's support for terrorism in India, had a lot to do with the complex that it suffered due to India's successes in every field — democratic institutions, secularism and all around development over the past five decades — as against the stagnation that the neighbour suffered, Mr Advani said.

"All these factors are at the root of our neighbour's hostility. It would be wrong to attribute it to J&K," he said, adding, "Mumbai only highlighted that," he said, pointing out otherwise, the Lashkar-e-Toiba, that was suspected to be responsible for the blasts along with SIMI, should have been active only in Kashmir.

This is the first time that Mr Advani has directly blamed Pakistan for terrorist acts in India after Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee took the peace initiative. Mr Advani, who inspected the two blast sites at Zaveri Bazaar and Gateway of India earlier in the day and spoke to the injured, said the explosives used in the recent blast were the same as found having been used in the earlier attacks in Ghatkopar and Mulund. A six-member SPG team led by a colonel is analysing the contents of the explosives. Mr Advani, who refused to blame the state government for inaction, said intelligence was being transferred to it on a regular basis. Intelligence reports foresee more such attack in Mumbai.

The Shiv Sena-BJP combine today called on the Governor, Mr Mohammed Fazal, and urged him to dismiss the Congress-led Democratic Front government in Maharashtra.

Gujarat govt mum: The Gujarat government has chosen not to react to the Maharashtra allegation that the blasts were a reaction to the Gujarat riots.



PICKING UP PIECES: An injured boy in his home near the Mumbadevi Temple in Mumbai on Tuesday. He was injured by flying glass on Monday when a bomb in a taxi exploded in the street under his home. — AFP

Bush calls Vajpayee

Press Trust of India

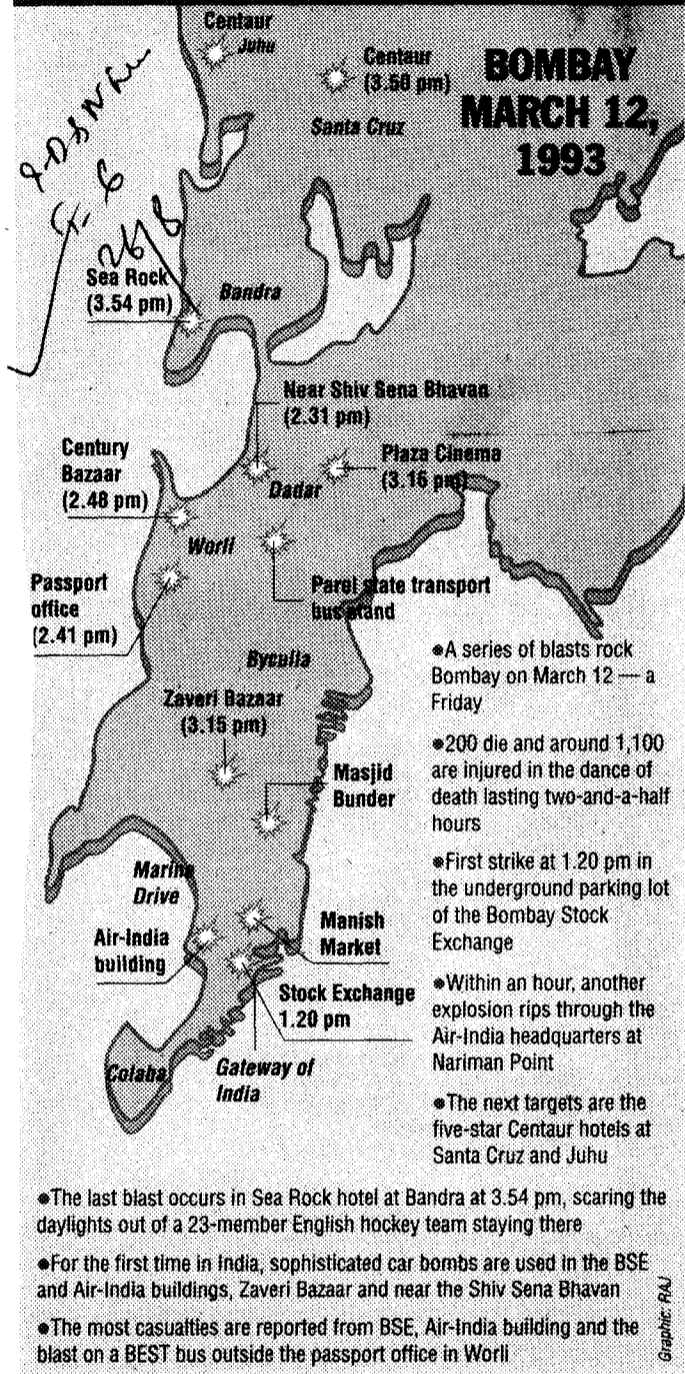
NEW DELHI, Aug. 26. — Mr George W Bush today telephoned Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee to voice sympathy for the loss of life in yesterday's Mumbai explosions and said India has a friend in the USA in the fight against terrorism.

The US President said: "I condemn the bombings... On behalf of all Americans, I send condolences to all affected by the tragedy and to the government and people of India."

"Acts of terror are intended to sow fear among free people. I hope that the perpetrators of these murders will be identified quickly and brought to justice."

Meanwhile, a Russian foreign ministry statement said: "The terrorist acts in Mumbai once more highlight the need for close unity of all the members of the world community in combating the global scourge of terrorism."

THAT DAY A DECADE AGO



Simi, Lashkar top suspects

DALIP SINGH AND
SEEMA GUHA

New Delhi, Aug. 25: The Mumbai blasts could have been a joint operation by the Students' Islamic Movement of India (Simi) and the Lashkar-e-Toiba, investigators believe.

No group has claimed responsibility as yet for the attacks and agencies involved in the probe are yet to arrive at definite conclusions, but the needle of suspicion points to the banned Simi and Lashkar.

Intelligence sources believe Abu Hamza, who was arrested for his alleged involvement in last year's Ghatkopar bus blast and later escaped from custody, is the brain behind the attack. They feel Hamza, who has shifted base to Saudi Arabia, organised the twin blasts with the help of Lashkar and Simi activists.

Preliminary findings suggest Semtex, a plastic explosive, was used to trigger the blasts.

L.K. Advani, who leaves for Mumbai tomorrow, said he was not ready to blame any group until investigations are over. "Since November-December last year, Mumbai has been witnessing a number of blasts. The earlier ones were mostly in buses... In almost all cases, the organisa-



The taxi where the bomb was planted. Picture by Sanjit Kundu

tion involved has been Simi, acting mostly in conjunction with the Lashkar," the deputy Prime Minister said.

"Whether today's blasts are the handiwork of the same organisations will depend on the investigations," Advani said. He will take stock of the situation in

Mumbai tomorrow and hold detailed discussions with the Maharashtra government.

The blasts have again raised questions about the working of intelligence agencies. There have been five bomb blasts in the last nine months in Mumbai, starting with the Ghatkopar bus

blast on December 2 last year.

The minister of state for home, Swami Chinmayanand, reaches Mumbai late tonight and is expected to visit the injured. He will meet deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal.

Most senior ministry officials are being cautious and re-

fuse to point fingers without proof. North Block has not mentioned Pakistan or the Inter-Services Intelligence until now.

"We do not want to rush to conclusions. Police are in the process of collecting evidence from the site of the blasts before we can have any definite clue to work on. The nature of the blast often points to the outfit involved," said a senior ministry official.

But off the record, officials say Hamza carried out the blasts, with Lashkar and Simi help.

The Centre has received intelligence inputs suggesting that Hamza is the brain behind the blasts. Delhi has been trying, unsuccessfully, to get him deported from Saudi Arabia, where he reportedly developed close links with Lashkar activists.

The Centre learnt about a Lashkar cell in Saudi Arabia after the August 2002 arrest of Shakeel Ahmed Bakshi. During interrogation, Bakshi said he had been recruited by the Lashkar's Kuwait cell. The cell's existence was corroborated by Imran Khan, one of the prime Ghatkopar blast accused. Imran, who was deported from Dubai on January 9, had worked with Hamza closely and had planned terrorist strikes.

Bolt from the blue hits markets

SATISH JOHN & VIVEK NAIR

Mumbai, Aug. 25: All hell broke loose in dealer rooms across stock brokerages in the city as news of the bomb blasts spread.

Everything was normal. It was the beginning of the week and dealers had taken to their desks and phones, reeling off stock quotes to investors and fund managers.

The sensx touched 4169.01 by 10 am, even as news of the ASI report on the disputed site in Ayodhya and the political shenanigans in Uttar Pradesh trickled in. But the stock markets have long claimed that they are immune to the political world.

It was around 1 pm and the sensx was at 4117.97. Arun Kejriwal of Kejriwal Research and Investment Services was just looking for the market to correct itself after the climb of over 1,000 points that the sensx undertook without any big let-up.

But even Kejriwal did not expect the day's events to unfold like it did.

pm to inform them of the blast in Zaveri Bazaar, the central hub of the bullion trade in the city. Kejriwal's office in Opera House is close to the diamond trade hub in the city.

The information was not taken seriously till calls started pouring in of several explosions, including the blast near the Gateway of India.

The news and the rumours accompanying it spread like wildfire. The Gateway of India is in the vicinity of the Taj Mahal Hotel, the showpiece five-star hotel of the Tatas.

It made Kejriwal sit up. Remembering that he has a friend working in the Taj, he called him up around 1.15 pm.

The friend confirmed his worst fears and gave him a graphic account of how the roof of the taxi in which the bomb was planted soared higher than the Gateway of India, before dropping with a thud.

Kejriwal immediately decided to liquidate certain positions he held and so did investors and dealers in the office. He was among the lucky few.

ment tried to block one of the main channels spreading rumours. They simply could not phone in to exit from their positions.

A couple of kilometres away as the crow flies, The Oberoi Towers basement hall was full of optimism. UCO Bank chairman and managing director V.P. Shetty was showcasing his institution's forthcoming public issue when a flurry of calls from newswire offices to correspondents sitting there changed sentiments dramatically.

Merchant bankers to the issue soon became wary of the blast tremors.

The stock markets, it may be recalled, have of late been bullish as several companies have unveiled healthy first-quarter numbers. Further, a good monsoon has also generated much optimism about India Inc's performance in the coming months.

Consequently share values of banks and other manufacturing sectors have considerably vaulted for the past couple of months.

deep in conversation with a senior official from the bank, wondered how the blasts could shake the market confidence that has been diligently built recently.

"We may see developed countries bringing travel advisories and foreign investments in stock markets getting hit," Shetty said, echoing the sentiments of quite a few in the initial stages after the blasts.

However, not to be cowed down by this pessimistic view, the official from UCO Bank who had full confidence in the never-say-die attitude of a Mumbaikar said, while the city has been witness to such blasts before, it cannot change the bullish sentiment.

46 Killed as twin blasts rock Mumbai

● OVER 160 INJURED ● TAXI DRIVER HELD ● SIMI, LASHIKAR HAND SUSPECTED

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, Aug. 25. Two powerful explosions, reminiscent of the 1993 serial blasts, ripped through South Mumbai's prominent areas this afternoon killing at least 46 persons and injuring over 160. The first of the two blasts, several kilometres apart, which shattered peace in the vibrant city, took place at 1.03 p.m. in the crowded Zaveri Bazar, close to the temple of Mumbadevi, the city's presiding deity. The second, four minutes later, occurred in a pay-and-park facility close to the famed Gateway of India and the Taj Mahal Hotel. Several of the injured are reported critical.

Police are unwilling to say which organisation could have triggered the blasts. The city Police Commissioner, R. S. Sharma, said it could be "a jehadi group, possibly the banned SIMI (Students Islamic Movement of India) or the Lashkar-e-Taiba, which 'have several modules in the city and around'. 'We have worked on this suspicion before and even now we suspect them but it is too early to pinpoint who (is responsible for the blasts)'. No organisation has claimed responsibility for the explosions. Today's blasts were the seventh in a series of explosions that have rocked the city since December 2, 2002.

Editorial on Page 10
Heart rending scenes Page 11
Photo feature on Page 22

ploded. Their fate is not known.

The driver of the taxi which exploded between the Gateway of India and the Taj Hotel had left the place after parking the vehicle as his passenger had told him to wait there for some two hours. Police have taken the driver, whose identity has not been disclosed, for questioning. They hope that he would lead them to the persons who may have placed the explosives. The timing of the blasts and the choice of locations were apparently decided for causing the maximum damage. The Gateway area is swarming with tourists even on weekdays and hundreds of people, executives and office-goers, drive in for luncheon appointments.

The Taj driveway is separated from the parking lot by a mere road. At Zaveri Bazar, at any given moment, several diamond brokers transact business on

explosions were so powerful, eyewitnesses at the Gateway of India said, that the taxi "flew some 40 feet into the air before landing in a heap of twisted metal". Part of the CNG (compressed natural gas) cylinder in the taxi flew over several buildings, each at least five storeys high, in a huge arc and landed about 400 metres away.

At Jhaveri Bazaar, the taxi driver, along with a passenger was apparently inside the vehicle when it exploded. Both are presumed killed. The official version is that a "metal badge" of a taxi driver was found, but it could be that of a driver of either of the two other taxis parked close to the one that ex-

the sidewalks and, on a working day, it is a task to walk through the place.

The blast at the Gateway, where the remains of the taxi were found, created a crater, three feet by two feet and about a foot deep. The twin blasts also shattered several cars parked in the area and many people were injured, their blood splattered across the sidewalks. "It was like a tremor. We were all shaken. We saw the glass of the chambers shattering," said Michael Pinto, former Shipping Secretary, who was lunching at the Taj.

A senior police official told *The Hindu* that "we read a signal in this blast. Someone is trying to tell us that you have some 45 lakh people coming for the ongoing Kumbh mela at Nashik and we have the potential for inflicting a bigger damage. They have shown how they can strike anywhere and at will." He said the implication was that "we would have to step up our security there as well as in Mumbai because from Sunday, public festivity at every street corner during the Ganapati puja makes for easy targets. There may be something in this timing."

The Maharashtra Chief Minister, Sushilkumar Shinde, said this was a deliberate attack because "there is a noticeable improvement in the city's financial sector and hotels are full of tourists, and the plan was to mar the peace and hit at the pulse of the economic lifeline". He saw a design but said that police would have to be "alert all the time". Since the first blast occurred in December 2002, and "especially in the past three-four months", there had been a pattern. He wants everybody to help restore normal life "by not politicising this blast".



Vehicles reduced to scrap at the Gateway of India in Mumbai following a blast on Monday. — Photo: Paul Noronha

TUESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2003

BEHIND THE TERRORIST STRIKES

90827217

TWO TERRORIST BOMB strikes in the heart of Mumbai on Monday have taken a terrible human toll and sent a shiver through the country. They are a challenge to civilised India and the very concept of Indian nationhood. Seven bombings in nine months, over 60 people dead, and over 300 injured: Mumbai is in the midst of what is, without dispute, the longest-running terror offensive any major Indian city has ever encountered. Since December 2, 2002, when an improvised explosive device went off on a bus killing two commuters, ordinary people in Mumbai have been subject with metronomic regularity to the horrors of urban terrorism. Bombs have gone off with alarming regularity in trains, buses and marketplaces. The object of these attacks is to intimidate civil society, and to illustrate the vulnerability of the city, the Indian state, and all they stand for. No organisation has claimed responsibility for Monday's carnage, and it is unlikely, given past form, that any will do so. The Maharashtra Home Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, has blamed elements of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and the banned Students' Islamic Movement of India for carrying out several of the bombings that preceded the latest attack.

The Mumbai Police had also executed a series of bombing-related arrests, notably of Mohamad Saqib Nachan. Nachan emerged from jail only last year, after serving part of a life sentence for involvement in an Inter-Services Intelligence plot to create a terrorist infrastructure throughout India. But now, it seems clear, Nachan and those arrested along with him could only be a part of the terrorist group or groups responsible for the terror-bombing campaign in Mumbai. As with all major terrorist outrages, the carnage in Mumbai will provoke the ritual voicing of well-worn questions. Why, it will be asked, were intelligence agencies unable to detect the bomb plot? Why were the Mumbai Police unable to

interdict the bomb makers, even after months of investigation? Why was Nachan, after being found guilty of an extremely serious offence, out on the streets so soon afterwards? And when will security agencies get their act together and make the lives of ordinary citizens more secure? Blueprints for intelligence and police reform, as well as excellent ideas to improve the criminal justice system, have been around for years. Sadly, these ideas have not been turned into a tangible agenda for change and improvement.

Another question, however, also needs to be asked, however painful it might be at a time of great national and personal distress. Many of those arrested by the Mumbai Police for the earlier bomb blasts, apart from being members of terrorist organisations, were also victims of the communal violence that has ravaged Maharashtra for decades. Nachan himself witnessed the consequences of communal violence in his youth. Other terrorists, like Jalees Ansari who set off a series of bomb explosions in December 1993 to 'avenge' the demolition of the Babri Masjid, suffered personal scars. Mumbai has suffered the consequences of communal politics before. The serial bombings of the 1993, the worst single terrorist outrage India has witnessed to date, were carried out by mafia elements backed by Pakistan's intelligence services. Yet members of the mafia acted as they did only after the city had witnessed an unprecedented communal pogrom. While millions of ordinary Muslims completely reject and condemn such 'retaliatory' terrorism, the fact remains that hatred breeds hatred. Islamist terrorism of the kind Mumbai is witnessing is part of a tragic cycle of communal terror and counter-terror. Neither legions of policemen nor the latest intelligence technology can solve this problem. For the carnage we are now witnessing, politicians who have built their career on hate must, in the final analysis, be held to account.

Boycott cloud back on George

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 20: The Left parties will not lift its boycott of defence minister George Fernandes, CPM MP Somnath Chatterjee said today, a day after the Vajpayee government won a vote of confidence in Parliament.

The Opposition moved a no-confidence motion against the National Democratic Alliance government following the defence minister's refusal to table before the Parliamentary Accounts Committee (PAC) the report of the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) on Operation Vijay. In a way, it was the row over the CVC report that triggered the no-confidence motion.

Today, CPM leaders said they were far from satisfied with the government's and the defence minister's responses to the Opposition's charge that the Centre was trying to brush under the carpet bunglings in the purchases of Operation Vijay.

"All parties have decided to continue with the boycott of George Fernandes," Chatterjee told the media this afternoon. "Yesterday morning, we had a meeting of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and all, including the Congress, decided to continue with the boycott," said Nilotpal Basu, a CPM leader in the Rajya Sabha.

The Congress, however, said it would take a final decision on the boycott tomorrow. The Samajwadi Party — a key partner in the Opposition ranks — will continue with its stand of not participating in the boycott.

Till recently, there were two opinions in the Congress on the issue. A section, including party president Sonia Gandhi, wanted to participate in the discussion on defence and national security issues and confront the defence minister. The Left parties, however, prevailed on the Congress not to lift the boycott since it would give the BJP an additional handle against the Opposition.

Chatterjee said the no-trust debate had exposed the government's hollow claims and that his party was ready to support a Sonia-led government as an alternative to the Vajpayee dispensation. At the same time, the CPM, Chatterjee clarified, will not join a front or a coalition led by the Congress. "We will certainly, however, extend our support to a secular government from outside," the CPM MP stressed.

The question of leadership, he said, should be decided by the Congress and not any other party. "Nobody within the Congress has asked us whether we want Sonia as a leader or not. We also have not given any suggestions."

Mulayam, however, remains



Fernandes at a railway function in Bangalore on Wednesday. (PTI)

an unstable partner on Sonia's leadership issue, though he has ostensibly agreed that the main objective of the Opposition is to get rid of the NDA government.

The Samajwadi Party had in the past reneged on a similar assurance, thereby, paving the way for the installation of the Vajpayee government.

Defence is not football

National security issues should only be addressed in a non-partisan manner.

SONIA GANDHI'S nine-point charge against the incumbent government in the no-confidence motion has many dimensions. But what all political leaders, whether on the treasury benches or in opposition, need to remember is their responsibility to the nation and democracy as a whole, which goes well beyond their ambitions to get re-elected. The focus has to remain on the defence and security of the country. The BJP came to power promising to pay special attention to national defence and security, which its leaders said had been ignored by previous — read Congress — governments. Ironically, it seems that the Congress party is all set to claim the same objective on similar grounds! But both must pause and reflect whether they are actually promoting what they claim they are, and in the best way that it can be done.

It is almost a cliché to say that national defence must not be allowed to become political football. After all, the aim of defence is not really subject to varying interpretations. Democracies are intrinsically better placed to deal with threats to national security. But this hinges crucially on achieving and sustaining a high degree of bipartisan convergence. What we see is the erosion of that process in the urge to get public support, apparently for electoral gains or to score points over the opposing side in an area which is so close to the heart of every citizen, and for which he or she relies totally on the government in New Delhi. Also, the

defence forces expect that national political leaders recognise their responsibility in maintaining a bipartisan approach to defence, if for no other reason than to assure them that the whole country is united behind them in the daunting task of defending the nation often at the cost of their own lives.

Take the PAC report on defence that has set off the current process leading to the no-confidence motion. The public is concerned at the turn of events, but is no wiser about what is happening. The events have raised more questions than answers. Surely, in an area of national endeavour and given the importance of defence, it was possible to sit down together and look at facts rather than allow suspicions to damage national institutions already under severe stress for a variety of reasons. It can be nobody's case that corruption in defence must not be rooted out. But procedural lapses are not the same thing as corruption, which may thrive in the shadows of influence in the periphery of the procurement processes, often outside the very system boxed in by procedures. Equally, the damage to decision making as a consequence of charges and counter-charges — very often without the guilty being convicted — has virtually halted the modernisation process. This compromises future defence. Therefore, after the heat of the recent exchanges in Parliament, would it be too much to expect all parties in the debate to do some cool-headed introspection for a change?

George threat to spill beans on China war

Vishal Thapar
New Delhi, August 16

In his defence

PUSHED TO the wall, Defence Minister George Fernandes has given a dramatic twist to the allegation that the government is refusing to share the Central Vigilance Commission report on Kargil deals with the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). He declared on Saturday that he is willing to table not only the CVC report in question, but all other secret documents — including the Henderson Brooks Report on the 1962 debacle.

"I have no objection to any report being made public if parliamentary rules so permit. If rules come in the way of transparency, they need to be amended," Fernandes said, hinting that the boot could now be on the other foot.

The CVC report examined about 50 defence deals valued over Rs 75 crore struck between 1989 and 1999. Most of the deals were made during the Congress and the United Front governments. But the Congress and the Left (a constituent of the UF government) have made the disclosure of the latest report an issue.

The Henderson Brooks Report, which has been kept under wraps by successive governments, narrates in detail the mismanagement of the national security apparatus by the Jawaharlal Nehru government that led to India's humiliating defeat in 1962.

Fernandes indicated he would approach the Cabinet to amend Parliament's Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business guidelines to enable him to table



- ▶ CVC has finished examining defence deals referred to it in 2000
- ▶ CVC not probing Kargil purchases as the matter has been 'commented upon by CAG'; MoD advised to 'settle' it with CAG, PAC
- ▶ CVC also not probing Sukhoi deal, signed during Mulayam's term
- ▶ Kargil buys were based on intelligence, which was shared with CAG. Coffins not a Kargil purchase

the top-secret reports, so far withheld from public scrutiny on grounds of national security.

Fernandes said he had offered to provide information on the CVC report in-camera to PAC chairman Buta Singh, but he insisted the report be shown to all PAC members. He expressed surprise that the PAC didn't file its findings on Kargil purchases though it was given all the information it had sought.

■ On Page 5: Southern rift casts shadow on NDA meet

Here is IAF's most wanted aircraft

Pakistan also wants these Mirage-2000-5s, Delhi team back from inspection trip

SAIKAT DATTA

NEW DELHI | AUGUST 16

GUESS what the Indian Air Force's new object of desire is. It's a batch of Mirage-2000-5s, a multi-role combat aircraft.

The aircraft that Qatar wants to sell off have sparked off a race between New Delhi and Islamabad. The IAF has strongly recommended its purchase to the government beef up its capability.

The Qatari 10 nuclear-capable Mirage-2000-5s were discussed recently by the Defence Acquisition Council, the apex body for purchase of weapon systems in the

Defence Ministry.

According to South Block sources, New Delhi is also trying to deny Islamabad the state-of-the-art aircraft, considered much superior to the present Mirage-2000 fleet that India maintains.

Meanwhile, India is also getting ready to receive its batch of an additional 10 Mirage-2000s from Dassault Aviation, the original manufacturers in

France. While the delivery is expected to be made by December this year, it is the superior 2000-5 that has Air Headquarters interested.

Qatar bought the aircraft in 1998 but decided to sell

What this aircraft has

■ A fourth-generation multi-role combat aircraft is capable of performing the whole array of missions that can be assigned to modern combat aircraft: air defence, air-to-ground strike with conventional and precision-guided munitions, long-range strike with stand-off missiles, escort, Electronic Intelligence/reconnaissance, maritime strike, close air support.

them off as the country did not have any use or maintenance facilities.

Pakistan, which now operates the Mirage-III/5, lacks a credible nuclear delivery platform and is overtly dependent on the F-16 Falcons it acquired from the USA in the mid-'80s. If Pakistan acquires the 10 Mirage-2000-5s, the equation could change.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



The new Mirage

BJP lines up defence

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 14

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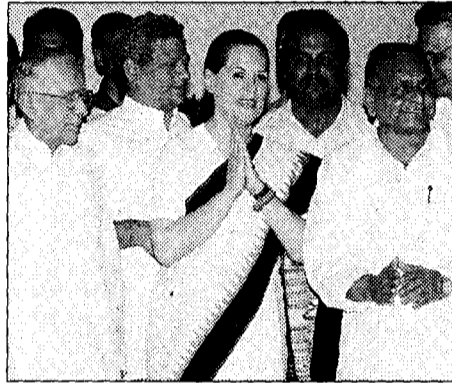
CVC report standoff

BRACING FOR the Opposition-sponsored no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha, the BJP has convened a meeting of the ruling NDA at Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's residence on Saturday to discuss their strategy on the issue. The party on Thursday said it welcomed the development since it would prove to be a "vote of confidence" for the government.

"This will give us an opportunity to talk of our achievements," BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said. He charged that the Opposition had brought about the no-confidence motion since it had failed to keep alive the controversy on the PAC issue.

Malhotra alleged that the "hurried tabling" of the "incomplete" PAC report on Operation Vijay and suppressing information from the committee members smacked of a conspiracy against the government. He said repeated stalling of the House proceedings on allegations of a "non-existent" report was not a loss for the government but a "loss for the nation, democracy and the image of Parliament."

Meanwhile, BJP MP and PAC member Kirrit Somaiya told newsmen that more than 10 members of the committee had submitted their objections and breach of faith notices against PAC chairman Buta Singh. Charging Singh with having misled the PAC by suppressing vital information from the CVC, Somaiya said he had written to him asking him to resign. He has also written to Speaker Manohar Joshi to take necessary action if Singh did not accept his request.



PTI
Opposition leaders at a dinner hosted by CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee on Wednesday.

Congress stand

The Congress has "condemned" the pressure being put on the BJP and Shiv Sena members of the Public Accounts Committee to write to the Lok Sabha Speaker "dissociating themselves" from the panel's report on defence purchases.

Party spokesperson Jaipal Reddy said only two panel members belonging to the NDA, the others did not contest the report. But some NDA leaders have been pressuring their PAC members to retract from their report with retrospective effect. "It's a naked downright abuse of the parliamentary process."

Opp PAC drive hits Shekhawat roadblock

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 13

PARLIAMENT again saw uproar today over the Government's "failure" to provide a Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) report on defence purchases to a Parliamentary Accounts Committee (PAC) looking into the same.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned twice, the second time for the day, amid slogan-shouting by members belonging to the Congress, the Left parties and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD).

However, in the Rajya Sabha, Chairperson Bhairon Singh Shekhawat deflated the Opposition's campaign by seconding the Government line that it couldn't submit the CVC report as no such report existed.

Ignoring protests by the Congress-led opposition parties in the House, which wanted the Chairman to stay out of the ongoing tussle between them and the ruling party, Shekhawat said he had perused all the documents pertaining to the case and found that "the CVC had neither been asked nor done any investigations" into the purchases of the Kargil war. He added that the Rajya Sabha Secretariat had been formally informed by the CVC about this. Shekhawat claimed the CVC had submitted a "factual note on investigations into defence procurements" to the PAC, and that while two items on this note seemed to relate to the Kargil war, the Committee did not even consider the note.

The Chairman's ruling led to a



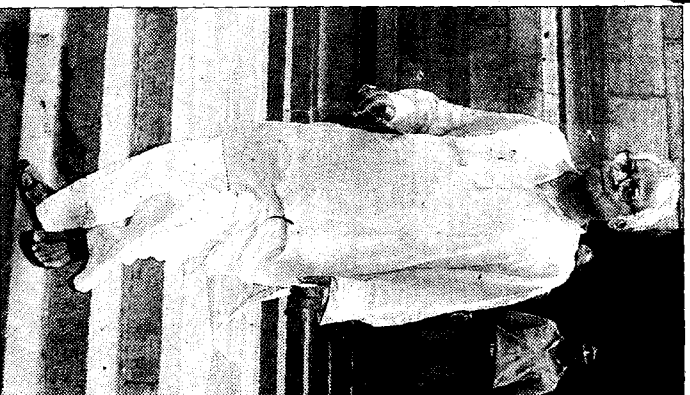
UNYIELDING: Bura Singh and Pranab Mukherjee; George Fernandes (right) at Parliament House on Wednesday. Express photos by Anil Sharma

quiet walkout from the Rajya Sabha by the entire Opposition for the rest of the day. Later Pranab Mukherjee, Congress, gave a vague explanation for their act. The walkout was not against Shekhawat's ruling, he claimed, but against "the sudden switchover to normal business" after a stormy hour.

In any case, what happened in the Rajya Sabha today was unprecedented — Opposition parties en masse shouting down the Chairman when he rose to make a statement on the issue. He claimed that members had asked him to study all the documents and give a ruling so that the deadlock could end.

According to Mukherjee, once before in 1978, when B.D. Jatti was the vice-president, a similar incident had happened.

The Opposition failed to make much headway on its other demand as well — that Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and not Defence Minister George Fernandes clear the Government's stand on the issue. "Under the



garb of making a statement, don't impose a person on us in whom we have no faith," Suresh Pachouri of the Congress said. He also demanded that the entire records and minutes of the PAC meetings be placed in the House.

However, Shekhawat rejected the Opposition's call for PM's statement as well. In fact, he said that the House could have a full-fledged debate on the issue provided Fernandes was allowed to reply "in the interest of the nation's security, which should be put above personalities".

"It is not appropriate on the part of the members to insist that they will not hear George Fernandes as he is the Defence minister and he has to reply

on behalf of the Government," Shekhawat reasoned.

The Congress and Left tried their best to dissuade the Vice-President from making a statement on the issue. "You are putting us in an awkward situation where we will be forced to take a stand against the Chair," Congress leader Kapil Sibal was heard telling him. In the Lok Sabha too, the Opposition refused to let Fernandes speak, seeking his resignation instead.

Responding to the uproar at the beginning of question hour, Speaker Manohar Joshi said: "We can discuss these issues at some other time." When this did not help, he said: "You can place your issues at 12 noon. The Government may give its reply too. It is my duty to run the House." The slogan-shouting, however, continued unabated, and he was forced to adjourn the House.

Later, when the Lok Sabha re-assembled at 12, Joshi carried through the tabling of papers listed in today's business as also a statement by Petroleum Minister Ram Naik on Monday's helicopter crash in the Arabian Sea carrying ONGC personnel. He also said that special mentions under Rule 377 be laid on the table.

Meanwhile, as Opposition members continued slogan shouting, the House adopted a motion moved by Fernandes for the election of members to the Central Advisory Committee for the National Cadet Corps (NCC). Finance Minister Jaswant Singh also introduced a Bill related to banking regulations. The tabling of the papers and the introduction of the Bill over, Joshi adjourned the House for the day.

George comment sought on privilege motion notice



NEW DELHI: Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi has sought comments from Defence Minister George Fernandes on a privilege motion notice against him for his refusal to furnish the CVC report on Defence purchases to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

While giving his ruling on the notice by G.M. Banatwala of the Muslim League, Joshi said: "I have called for comments of the Minister of Defence in the matter. I will take a decision on receipt of the said comments."

The Speaker informed Banatwala and Congress chief whip Piyarajnar Das-muni that he had referred their notices of privilege motion against Lok Minister Arun Jaitley to Rajya Sabha Chairman Bhairon Singh Shekhawat as the minister was a member of the Upper House. The notices related to Jaitley's remarks on an alleged dilution of charges against the accused by the CBI in the Babri Masjid demolition case.

Joshi said: "As Jaitley is a RS member, I felt it would be appropriate if the matter is considered by the Honourable Chairman, Rajya Sabha. I, therefore, referred this matter to him on August 1, 2003 for appropriate action." The Speaker said he had sought details from Jaitley and "after going through the material, I felt the matter required further examination".

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PM attacks Opposition for stalling Parliament on PAC issue

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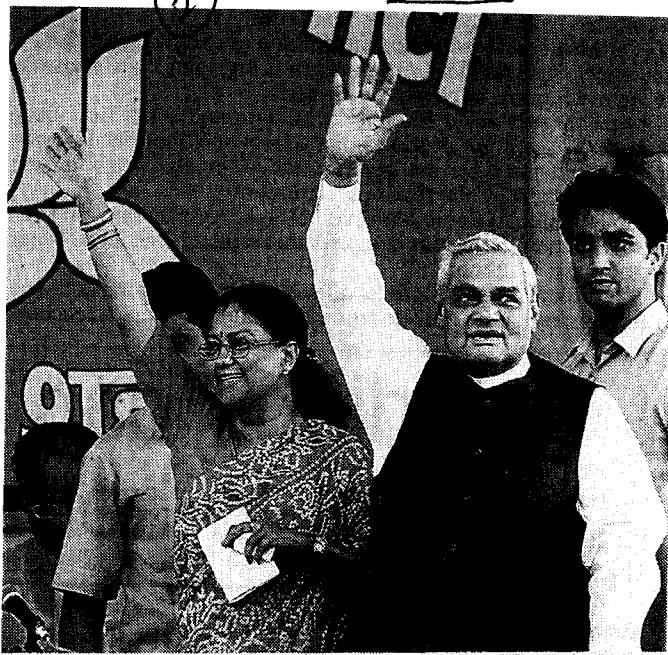
JAIPUR, AUG. 10. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today lashed out at the Opposition parties for stalling proceedings in Parliament on the issue of the CVC report on defence procurements for the Kargil War not being given to the Public Accounts Committee and said problems could not be solved by raising an uproar.

"In our days, we never created a scene. Now it has become a disease and no one knows who can catch it," Mr. Vajpayee said, addressing a BJP rally here.

"Parliament *mein shorgul sey samassayen hal nahin hogi* (problems will not be solved merely by raising a din in the House)," he said.

Mr. Vajpayee said the BJP had never put its interests above those of the nation. In a democracy, the objective should be to serve the people and not create social tension.

"Parliamentary problems should be solved in Parliament amicably or one should go to the people," the Prime Minister said, adding the coming As-



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Rajasthan BJP president, Vasundhararaje Scindia, at a rally in Jaipur on Sunday. — PTI

sembly elections by this year- next year would be a test for ev-
end and the Lok Sabha polls ery party. — PTI

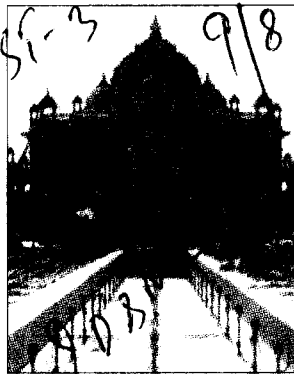
Akshardham attack brain killed in J&K

Statesman News Service

SRINAGAR, Aug. 8. — The BSF today killed Lashkar-e-Taiyaba's chief coordinator, Manzoor Zahid Chaudhary, who had masterminded the *fidayeen* attack on the Akshardham temple in Gujarat last year and the massacre of 24 Pandits at Nadimarg, south Kashmir, this year.

Mr K Srinivasan, BSF DIG said on specific information troops of 118 battalion of BSF laid an ambush in the outskirts of Bogam village in Budgam district. The troops observed suspicious movement of a group heading towards Kesermulla village. When asked to stop, they opened fire and hurled grenades.

In the ensuing encounter they killed a militant who was later identified as Manzoor Zahid Chaudhary alias Abu Marsha, alias Abu Nadeem, alias Abu Jishan, alias Munna and



Gandhinagar's Akshardham temple, where the blood of 23 innocents spilled last September alias Abu Zarar. "A resident of Lahore, Chaudhary was a chief coordinator of LeT," Mr Srinivasan said.

By eliminating Chaudhary, a major tragedy was averted as he was planning to carry out attacks on Amarnath *yatris* in Kashmir, he said adding his wireless code was R-1 and he was designated as chief coordinator for carrying out action in other states of the country besides carrying out anti-national activities in J&K.

Govt-Opp. clash on PAC defence report

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Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 6. — The guns may be relatively silent in Kargil these days but Parliament could soon be rattled by the Public Accounts Committee's "inability" to table its report on the related military purchases because of the defence ministry's refusal to make available a CVC report on defence deals. The Opposition has given notice of raising some thunder.

PAC chairman Mr Buta Singh today said he was not able to submit the report because of the ministry's non-cooperation and refusal. In his incomplete report, Mr Singh said: "The Ministry declined to submit the CVC report on defence deals on the plea that it is based on secret and top secret documents... and therefore... it would be prejudicial to the interest of the state."

On 17 January 2002, the ministry had written to the PAC: "The CVC report on Defence Deals is based on MoD's 'secret' and 'top secret' documents as well as on IB and CBI reports... the report has been classified

as 'secret'... Under proviso to Rule 270 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha, the Ministry is not in a position to supply a copy of the CVC report..."

The BJP today defended the defence minister's stand, arguing that the report, referring to the period 1989-99, didn't deal with Kargil purchases. Party spokesman Mr VK Malhotra said Mr George Fernandes was ready to show the report to Opposition members in the Speaker's chamber.

But the Opposition alleged that the ministry had launched a cover-up attempt. Mr Jaipal Reddy (Congress) said the ministry had provided the CAG with the CVC report and some related documents, on the basis of which the CAG questioned Kargil procurements.

The Opposition plans to demand the Prime Minister's reply on the PAC issue in view of their boycott of the defence minister. The CPI-M is toying with the idea of moving an adjournment motion, while the Congress will finalise its strategy at a morning meeting tomorrow.

THE STATESMAN

7 AUG 2003

Air safety in IAF on the ascent: Kalam

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, AUG. 5. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, today gave a patient hearing to the family members of a pilot who died in a MiG-21 crash and assured them that he would take personal interest in ensuring adequate air safety.

"I know that he is a fair person and will positively do something. The President carefully listened to us and seemed to share our grief," said Kavita Gadgil, mother of an IAF pilot Abhijeet, who died in a MiG-21 air crash in 2001.

After meeting the President, Ms. Gadgil said the President told the family that "air safety in the Air Force was on the ascent" and the information contained in a petition submitted to him would be used for making further improvements.

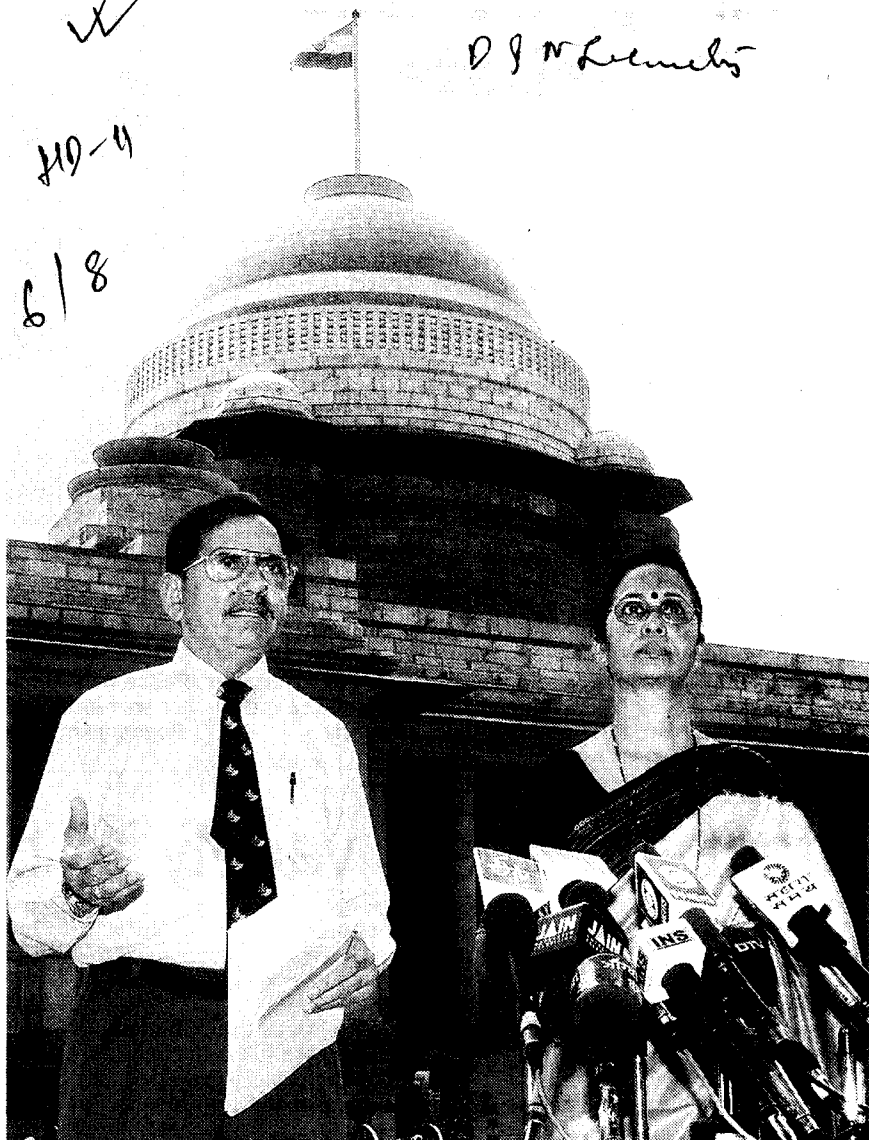
The meeting with the President was the culmination of a crusade launched by Ms. Gadgil for making MiG-21s safer after she was offered "unconvincing explanations" by Indian Air Force officials for the crash that killed her 27-year-old son less than a year after his marriage.

"His assurance is enough for me. I will wait for his reply and till then I shall not say anything. We are fortunate to have a responsive President," Ms. Gadgil told presspersons in the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The petition contained a five-point action plan — accept that there is a problem with the MiG fleet that needs to be tackled on a war-footing; carry out a squadron by squadron audit of aircraft serviceability by an independent board of experts; get good, high quality, realistic flight simulators; get modern safety equipment fitted onto the MiGs; and, conduct a cost benefit analysis of cannibalisation of fleet to make sure that at least 50 per cent of the MiG fleet is fully flying fit even at the cost of the other 50 per cent.

Ms. Gadgil, along with her husband, a former IAF pilot, explained to Mr. Kalam as well as to the media that the vigour of the "Abhijeet Air Safety Foundation" was not directed against the IAF nor was it pressing for the grounding of the entire MiG-21 fleet.

"We realised we were being misunderstood. We are not asking for unrealistic or drastic measures. We want an increase in air safety so that our soldiers are not killed by their own machines," said Ms. Gadgil, who gained media spotlight after she asked the Defence Minister, George Fer-



Kavita Gadgil, mother of the IAF pilot, Abhijeet, who was killed in a MiG-21 crash, with her husband, Anil Gadgil, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

nandes, to refrain from what she called "the frivolous exercise of a joy-ride in a MiG-21 at Ambala as it will serve no useful purpose".

Mr. Fernandes "ignored her advice" and flew in a MiG-21 but he also helped Ms. Gadgil get an appointment with the President.

Appreciative of his gesture, she nonetheless remained critical of his "joy-ride"

because "he proved nothing".

She said she was pained by the attitude of the Inspector-General, Air Headquarters, Ashok Goel, who she said misconstrued the intention of the foundation and wrote to her: "So far we have turned a blind eye to your tirade in public... a venomous attack on the Air Force or its hierarchy does not offer any solace. At worst, you may demoralise the service."

6 AUG 2003

THE HINDU

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IAF AND FLIGHT SAFETY

9/18/03

LAST FRIDAY, THE Defence Minister, George Fernandes, flew in a MiG-21 for under half an hour and landed safely. So what, one might ask. By posing for television cameras and news photographers following his "successful flight," Mr. Fernandes was obviously making a point. Upset by doubts raised recently about the airworthiness of the MiG-21 — both in the media and within Parliament — the Defence Minister was trying to dispel apprehensions about the fighter jet. This may seem like a worthy purpose. However, the question is whether hopping on an MiG-21 for a much-publicised flight, during which a few simple manoeuvres such as barrel rolls and stiff turns are executed, is the best way of addressing what is a real and persistent worry about MiGs and air safety. The answer is a resounding 'no'. As Defence Minister, Mr. Fernandes must know better than most that the statistics about MiG crashes, particularly those related to the ageing MiG-21s, are truly disturbing. The first MiG-21s were inducted into the Indian Air Force in the 1950s and the aircraft still remains the backbone of the Force. By the Defence Ministry's own admission, as many as 52 MiGs have gone down since January 1, 2000. Over 200 of these aircraft have been lost in non-combat crashes over the past decade; according to one estimate, the IAF loses a MiG every 2,500 flying hours, a figure that makes them the most vulnerable aircraft anywhere in the world.

Is there an inherent problem with these Soviet-built fighter aircraft? Are crashes largely a result of the ageing of the IAF's MiG fleet? The answers to both questions are 'no.' The age of the fleet does pose its share of problems but, as the La Fontaine Committee pointed out many years ago, the frequent crashes are a result of a

number of factors including pilot error, bird hits, and maintenance failures. As for Mr. Fernandes, he is absolutely correct when he suggests that a large number of MiG crashes — almost fifty per cent of those during the last three years, by his reckoning — are caused by pilot error. The lesson to be drawn from this is simple. The high incidence of pilot errors can only be a result of the inadequate training procedures imparted to IAF pilots. The urgent need to improve training measures for pilots is something that experts have stressed time and again. A major part of the failure is that Indian fighter pilots receive their instruction on obsolescent trainers. Basic training is imparted on sub-sonic training platforms such as Kiran and the pilots are then suddenly made to take a quantum leap by flying MiGs that travel at Mach 2 speeds.

This serious flaw in the training programme will continue to torment the IAF until advanced jet trainers (AJTs) are acquired and inducted. Ironically, the proposal for acquiring AJTs was officially made some two decades ago; in the context of the crashes, the enormous delay in acquiring them is inexcusable. Even though the process of acquiring 66 AJTs has reached an advanced stage, the repeated official assurances that the deal will be clinched soon are beginning to sound hollow. As things stand, British Aerospace's Hawk seems to be the front-runner but it was only a few months ago that the Defence Ministry appeared to be taking a close look at a cheaper Czech variant. Detailed negotiations on price and other parameters are obviously important to secure the best possible deal. However, given the number of crashes and the inadequate pilot training procedures, it is imperative that it is clinched soon.

SEE FINDO

4 AUG 2003

Rs 50,000-cr cut in defence plan

Srinjoy Chowdhury in New Delhi

Aug. 3. — Pruned by Rs 50,000 crore, the 10th Defence Five Year Plan, delayed by about two years, is currently projected to be about Rs 450,000 crore.

The plan is yet to be finalised: initially, the armed forces projected a requirement of Rs 496,000 crore, but the finances were not available. Even Rs 4.5 lakh crore will be difficult to reach as the defence outlay in the first two years of the plan have been about Rs 65,000 crore each. Against the armed forces' wishes, the Rs 16,000 crore long-term project for the building of houses for armed forces has also been included. This can come, a defence official said, at the expense of a weapon system the services have asked for.

Usually, a defence plan, running along with the five year plan, has revenue expenditures, including salaries and also, the capital expenditure for the services — for new weapons and for upgrading weapons — over five years. The final figures are still uncertain but roughly, the Army was allotted Rs 2,70,000 crore, of which about Rs 72,000 crore were to be capital expen-

ses. The naval figures were about Rs 35,000 crore for both revenue and capital over the five years while the Air Force's total budget is about Rs 108,000 crore, with revenue and capital being roughly equal in amount.

The revenue budget every year remains between Rs 89,000 crore and 93,000 crore and much of the money has to be spent as people have to be paid salaries and training procedures continued, so if there are cuts in the budget, the purchase of equipment will suffer. Already, the first two years have been difficult and the Army has not got the Rs 32,000 crore in capital expenses it projected as expenses for the first two years. The amounts come down in the next three years. The Navy's capital expenditure projections are an even Rs 8,500 crore a year while the IAF's initial allotments went up from Rs 9,600 crore up to Rs 12,300 crore in the final year. The cuts in the first two years are unlikely to be made up, given the state of finances.

The money for the Navy has been earmarked for building and buying a carrier, building submarines and other warships including three being made in Russia (one is ready), three destroyers, smaller craft and new weapons. At the

Will Opp. continue to boycott George?

NEW DELHI, Aug. 3. — Parliament may see more uproar next week when the Public Accounts Committee report dealing with defence issues is tabled. The Opposition, however, is in a bind: Shall it demand a debate on issues relating to the Kargil war and coffins purchases or continue to boycott Mr George Fernandes?

The PAC report follows CAG's findings and is expected to be critical of the minister. Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) said the report was adopted last Friday but the Opposition would have to decide what it would do as soon as the matter came up. "We've to sit down and chart out a course of action." He said he was aware the issue would be taken up but the boycott was a well-thought-out decision. The Opposition has largely been boycotting Mr Fernandes and even skipping defence consultative committee meetings. There has been occasional flouting of the boycott, but as an Opposition leader said, the government's proposal of a debate on Teheika in the Rajya Sabha was not good enough.

In between, however, the Opposition has had dealings with the defence ministry. When an Opposition MP from Kerala died, his body was sent back on a defence ministry plane, sources said. A Punjab MP too broke the ban when the issue of air crashes came up in Parliament. The PAC report follows up the CAG report on the emergency purchases during and after the Kargil war. It is also believed to have material on the purchase of coffins by the defence ministry from the USA. — SNS

beginning of the 10th Plan, the IAF had both the air force and army had made plans for air-to-air refuellers, an air-borne warning system, the new MiG-21 the Prithvi and the Army for both the Bisons, new sensors, and as always, the Agni and the Prithvi.

AJT. The army had called for the T-90, the Bhim gun, night-fighting devices, anti-terrorism equipment, gun-locating radars and other equipment. Besides, how the economy is doing.

LCA goes supersonic

By Harichandan A. A.

BANGALORE, AUG. 1. Tejas, the light combat aircraft (LCA), powered by an American GE 404 engine, made its maiden supersonic flight here on Friday to make Indian aviation history. Wing Commander Vikram Singh, one of three test pilots on Team LCA, took technology demonstrator I to a "targeted" speed of Mach 1.08, flying at an altitude of 11 km.

"She behaved beautifully," the Wing Commander, who has flown much faster than this on other aircraft, told a media conference called to announce the test conducted by the National Flight Test Centre (NFTC), Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA). He held the aircraft at supersonic speed for 12 seconds. The flight lasted 35 minutes.

"This is the first time an Indian designed fighter aircraft has been able to accelerate to in a level flight to supersonic speed and hold at that speed," said a pleased M.B. Verma, LCA Programme Director ADA. V.K. Aatre, Scientific Adviser to the Defence Ministry, and N.R. Mohanty, Chairman, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, were present.

Over the coming months, more supersonic flights are planned for technology demonstrators (TD) I and II, and for prototype version I (PV I) which will be rolled out in September, Mr. Aatre said. The Indian Air Force, and possibly the Navy, will each get their versions of the LCA

"by the end of this decade". Kaveri, the indigenous engine for the LCA, "is being developed", he said.

The technology demonstrators have been flown 94 times to date, with the flight duration being increased gradually. Over the next two years "we will concentrate on weaponisation and integration of systems", Mr. Verma said.

Behind and beyond the Tejas success: Page 12

The LCA's first supersonic flight, which came true two weeks later than announced, made everyone at the NFTC-ADA proud. Mr. Mohanty summed it up best. "On July 1, 2001, the LCA made its first ever flight, today within two years, it has made its first supersonic flight... it's a great day for us".

Tejas, as the Prime Minister named it, was accompanied by a Mirage 2000 and a MiG 21, piloted by Air Commodore Parvez Khoker, Project Director, NFTC, and Squadron Leader Suneeth Krishna, Test Pilot, NFTC, respectively. The

three aircraft flew supersonic simultaneously.

Later, Wg. Cdr. Vikram Singh stated that the maximum speed achieved by any aircraft piloted by a human being was Mach 3, that is, three times the speed of sound.

An aircraft moving at Mach 1, which is the speed of sound, will cover about 334 metres a second.

Today, Wg. Cdr. Vikram Singh took a 2.5 G turn on the LCA, during which manoeuvre the aircraft and the pilot would have experienced a pull two and a half times that of gravity.

He took the aircraft to an altitude of 8 km at sub-sonic speeds, and then climbed to 11 km, preparing for the supersonic flight.

Then came the moment to forget theory and trust the aircraft.

After months of agonising calculations, computer simulation and wind tunnel testing of wing vibrations and a battery of other tests, for 12 seconds, the LCA — an unstable configuration — made it.

2 AUG 2003

THE HINDU

'Govt's wasting money on Army'

96 5 218
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 1

NOBEL laureate Amartya Sen has criticised the Government's "wasteful expenditure" on many things, including the military and the subsidies doled out due to political pressure.

Addressing mediapersons in the Capital, Sen said that "education and healthcare are being continuously neglected (by the Government) while there has been wasteful expenditure on many items, including the military and the large number of subsidies."

Commenting on the fact that the the per capita military expenditure is higher in China or Pakistan, Sen said that "this is a bad way of judging military expenses because you don't fight wars on that basis. And when you compare per capita expenditure, one has to look at other

things also like education and healthcare."

Though China spends more money on the military than India, it does not neglect other areas like public health, education and infrastructure, he said.

He pointed out that there is a general feeling of insecurity among minority communities after the Gujarat episode and that is worrying.

Sen said that though the poor are not getting poorer, they are not getting a fair share of the growth, and political parties should be more active on issues of illiteracy and gender equality.

Citing example of India's excellence in producing skilled technical workforce, he said India invested in IITs in the 1950s and it is reaping the benefits now. However, the same is not followed in terms of primary education leading to limited social and economic expansion, Sen added.

INDIAN EXPRESS

2 AUG 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

NEW TURN TO BOYCOTT OF FERNANDES

Govt. rejects demand for debate on Tehelka

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 25. The presumed agreement of the Government with the Opposition on ending the latter's boycott of the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, in Parliament appeared to have collapsed today.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj said the Government was unwilling to accept the Opposition demand that a discussion on the Tehelka episode in both Houses should precede a review of the boycott. She suggested that this went against the informal agreement for a discussion only in the Rajya Sabha.

The Opposition demand was made earlier in the day by the Congress spokesperson, Satyavrat Chaturvedi. Ms. Swaraj said "the demand for a discussion in both Houses has been sprung on us. It is clearly not acceptable, now we will not have a discussion in either House".

According to her, the suggestion to hold a discussion on the Tehelka issue in the Rajya Sabha on Monday had come from senior Opposition leaders, following which they promised



to lift the boycott in both Houses.

She said that if the Opposition parties were prepared to end the boycott after the discussion in the Rajya Sabha, where was the hitch in following suit in the Lok Sabha as well. The argument was that the boycott was by political parties and not by the respective Houses, and therefore if in principle it was lifted as per agreement in the Rajya Sabha it should be extended to the other House.

Ms. Swaraj said the Govern-

ment had acceded to the Opposition's request to get Mr. Fernandes' statement on the Akhnoor attack which was listed in the Lok Sabha for Thursday to be postponed till the next week on the basis of this understanding.

Meanwhile, the Congress and the CPI(M) today asserted that any review of the boycott would have to be arrived at collectively. Several Opposition leaders met this morning and reiterated continuation of the boycott. The Congress leader, Suresh Pachouri later said the issue could figure again when the leaders meet on Monday.

The CPI(M) Rajya Sabha leader, Nilotpal Basu, said no one from the Government had approached his party for a conciliation on the standoff.

The Congress said it was willing to review the boycott after the Tehelka expose was discussed in both Houses. Mr. Chaturvedi said notices for a discussion were pending in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. "For the impasse (of boycott) to be broken, both Houses have to discuss the Tehelka issue", he said.

THE HINDU

26 JUL 2003

— Defence minister George Fernandes

MiG Mistake

MiG is not for rookie pilots; India needs advanced jet trainers

The MiG-21 has been called many things, mostly positive, through its long life. But now at the end of its lifespan, it has the ignominy of being called a 'flying coffin' and 'widow-maker'. Ironic, considering the 1959 MiG-21 is the most-built jet ever, and also the one that has seen most combat. Thousands of MiG jets continue to serve air forces in every continent of the world. Surely this belies the sweeping assumption that it is not airworthy. Yet, the cold fact remains that the Indian Air Force has lost over 100 pilots in MiG-21 crashes since 1990 and continues to lose them at alarmingly high rates. Should the aircraft be grounded? Flying of aircraft is governed by a tough regime to ensure safety. This means that bushes, sprockets, gears, and so on are replaced or overhauled in a set number of hours, whether or not they are worn out. The same goes for engines. Grounding of aircraft happens only when the basic structure is deemed unsafe. In other words, we must look elsewhere for the cause of the accidents.

Bad maintenance practices and poorly manufactured spares possibly contribute to crashes, but it must be admitted too that military combat requires pilots to take their machines to the limits, enhancing the room for mechanical and human error. As it is, the MiG-21 is not an easy aircraft to fly. Designed to intercept American bombers flying at high altitudes, it was given a delta-shaped wing. Such wings are ideal for flying high but make the aircraft difficult to handle in lower altitudes. Additionally, the MiG has such problems as a bad cockpit design that reduces the vision of the pilot, and an unusually high landing speed. Both factors increase room for pilot error. To put it in a nutshell: MiG-21 is not a jet where the inexperienced can train. If it is unconscionable to let this happen, what is worse is that the IAF does not have an Advanced Jet Trainer, 18 years after it began its search for one. Consequently, it is on the unforgiving MiG that advanced jet training is done. This is puzzling considering that negotiations have been on for years to acquire the three-decade-old British jet trainer Hawk. More recently, there have also been new competitive bids from other sources. There cannot be any further delay on this decision.

SHEKHAWAT PLAYS MEDIATOR

End to Opposition boycott of Fernandes in sight ^{AD-1 25/7} ③

*Parliament
20/7/2003
25/7/03*

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JULY 24. The "non-recognition" of George Fernandes as Defence Minister by the Opposition virtually prevented him from making a statement on the attack by terrorists on the Army camp at Akhnoor in Jammu and Kashmir although it was listed on the business agenda for today of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. But even as the drama of continuing "boycott" of Mr. Fernandes by the Opposition unfolded in both the Houses, there were signs that the matter may be resolved early next week.

It seems that a short duration debate on the Tehelka episode may be held in the Rajya Sabha as early as Monday on a notice given by the Congress MP, Suresh Pachauri, after which the party "could consider" lifting its boycott, at least in that House.

There were indications that the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, had been active on this front, talking to leaders and MPs of the Opposition and ruling parties, resulting in some sort of a breakthrough there. Although no one was prepared to say this on record, it seems that the Opposition had insisted, and won the point, that the response to the Rajya Sabha debate would come not from Mr. Fernandes, but the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani.

In the Lok Sabha, responding to angry demands by Samata Party and Bharatiya Janata Party MPs that the Opposition must be

"disciplined" for persisting with listing questions for the Minister but refusing to ask them in the House and walking out when the Minister tries to respond, the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, said that steps were being taken and a solution would be found "by next week".

It seems that the Government would like to concede a debate on the Tehelka episode only in the Rajya Sabha, but as yet there is no word from the Congress, the CPI(M) and other Opposition parties that they would be willing to let go a debate in the Lok Sabha as well, where they may insist on the Prime Minister responding to the debate.

The BJP has repeatedly said that the Opposition "cannot question the Prime Minister's prerogative to appoint any Minister of his choice," but the Opposition response has so far been that they are not questioning his constitutional prerogative but are raising issues of "political morality and propriety". The country needed to know what were the compelling reasons for re-inducting Mr. Fernandes after he resigned in the wake of the Tehelka scandal though he himself said he would not come back unless cleared by an inquiry. "After Tehelka, we had not demanded the resignation of Mr. Fernandes but that of the Vajpayee Government," the Congress spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy said. It was the NDA ally, the Trinamool Congress leader, Mamata Banerjee, who served an ultimatum to the Prime Minister to get the resignation of the Defence

Minister, Mr. Reddy recalled. He also justified the boycott ever since Mr. Fernandes' re-induction as part of parliamentary tactics. At the same time the Congress pointed out that in the Budget session four months ago, and before that in the winter session last year, it had "offered" to reconsider the boycott provided the Government conceded a debate on Tehelka. "The ruling coalition has not come forth," Mr. Reddy added.

The BJP spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, described the Opposition behaviour as amounting to "murder of democracy" and "a waste of Parliament's time and money". He was commenting on the Opposition walkout in the Lok Sabha this morning.

As soon as Mr. Fernandes rose to speak to reply to a question, the Opposition walked out, leading to strong demands from Samata and BJP MPs that the Speaker must "discipline" the Opposition.

However, the bottom line is that having made its point the Opposition is now keen on ending this impasse. "There are a number of important issues related to Defence — unspent money, falling MIGs and Jaguars, terrorist attacks on Army camps — we want answers, we do want to raise these issues," some Congress MPs conceded. But they expect the Government to concede a debate on Tehelka and explain why Mr. Fernandes was re-inducted when the Phukan Commission is yet to complete its inquiry. "As Minister he is in a position to sabotage the inquiry," the Congress said.

THE HINDU

25 JUL 2003

Peace process will not be derailed: Fernandes

By Luv Puri

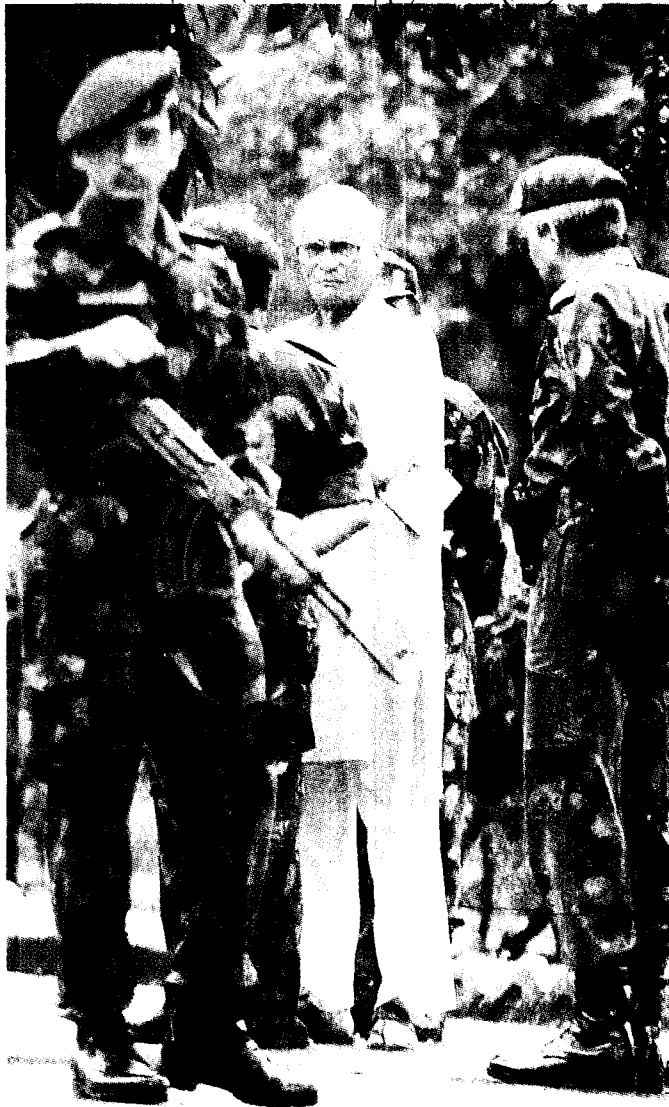
JAMMU, JULY 23. Terming the stepped-up violence by militants a desperate attempt to derail the peace process between India and Pakistan, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, said today that no terrorist activity would be allowed to derail the peace efforts initiated by the political leadership of the two countries.

He arrived here this afternoon to review the security arrangements and to meet those injured in Tuesday's attack on the Tanda Army camp in which eight Army personnel, including a brigadier, were killed.

Flanked by the Army Chief, General N.C. Vij, the GoC, Northern Command, Hari Prasad, and the GoC 16 Corps, T.P.S. Brar, Mr. Fernandes said, "I can say that yesterday's attack on the Army Camp near Akhnoor was aimed to scuttle the process of friendship initiated by India and Pakistan. These attempts will not be allowed to succeed in the larger interests of people of the State."

Holding the Lashkar-e-Taiba militant outfit responsible for the attack, he said, "These men (*fidayeen*) are using fake names after every attack but basically they are products of the same organisation." Asked whether reported injuries to top commanders would not demoralise the Army jawans fighting militancy in the State, Mr. Fernandes shot back: "This is rubbish. None of the commanders was injured. They are right in front of you — hale and hearty."

Refusing to term the attack a security failure, he said: "Our forces are competent enough to curb the menace of terrorism and I am sure we will stamp out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir as long as a war is going on in this front." He said there were "no security lapses" as these incidents of *fidayeen* (suicide squad) attacks had occurred in the past as well. Mil-



The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, with Army officers and soldiers at the Tanda camp, 40 km north of Jammu, on Wednesday. —AP

itants were still coming in from Pakistan and it was a reality. However, there were various camps of support in that country. These sending the militants here should stop their activities.

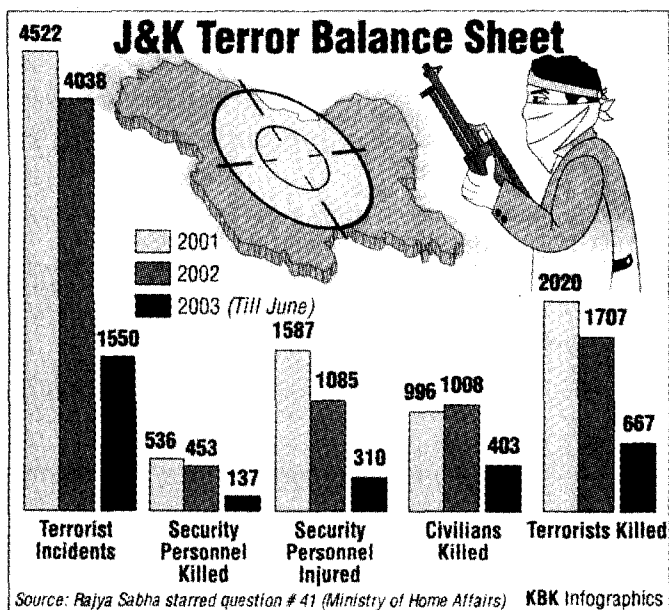
Referring to Monday's attack on Vaishno Devi-bound pilgrims at Katra, he said that such activities were intended to com-

munalise the situation, and that "terrorism should be stamped out from the country with all our might".

Significantly, he referred to the divisive political and social structure in Pakistan, which, according to him, was directly responsible for the spurt in violence in the State. "Gen. Pervez Musharraf made a promise not to allow any outfit to carry out terror-related activities against India from Pakistani soil. We should rely on Pervez Musharraf to give peace a chance in both the countries. Within Pakistan there exist lobbies which do not want to see the peace efforts succeed and are creating this trouble." There were a few groups in Pakistan that were still involved in subversive activities in India.

Earlier, Mr. Fernandes visited the Army Hospital and met the injured jawans. He was apprised of the attack.

A partial bandh was observed in Jammu town today to protest the terrorist attack on the Tanda camp. Shops and other business establishments remained closed while public transport was off the road.



SURPRISE PRE-DAWN FIDAYEEN ATTACK

Brigadier killed, 4 officers injured as militants storm Army camp

40-1
23/7

JAMMU, JULY 22. In an audacious pre-dawn strike, a heavily-armed terrorist suicide squad stormed an Army camp today killing eight personnel, including a Brigadier, and injuring four top Generals along with eight others at Akhnoor near here.

Around 5.30 a.m., the terrorists lobbed grenades at the camp. While one of the militants was killed by a sentry the others managed to barge into the nearby barrack and open indiscriminate fire killing seven soldiers and injuring six others.

Hours later, a team of top Army officials visited the site but a member of the suicide squad hiding inside the campus blew himself up killing Brigadier V.K. Govil, and injuring among others, the Northern Army Commander, Lt Gen Hari Prasad, the Commander of the Jammu-based 16 Corps, Lt Gen T.P.S Brar, and two Major Generals D Khanna and T K Sapru as the area had not apparently been sanitised before their visit.

While Gen. Prasad, with "superficial injuries", was flown to the Army Hospital in Srinagar, Gen. Brar and the two Maj. Generals and two Colonels of the 16 Corps were taken to the Udhampur Army Hospital where they were said to be out of danger.

The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, is rushing to the spot tomorrow morning for an on-the-spot study.

The attack almost coincided with a terrorist strike at Katra en route to the Vaishno Devi shrine killing six pilgrims and injuring over 40 others late on Monday night.

A lesser-known militant outfit Al-Shahuda, believed to be a shadow organisation of the Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility for the attack on the Army camp.

This is the second major attack on an Army camp in Jammu and Kashmir within a month. A suicide squad had

struck at the Sanjuwan Army camp on the outskirts of Jammu on June 28 last killing 12 soldiers and injuring seven others.

This is the first instance during the 14-year-old terrorism in the State that an Army Commander has been injured in a militant action.

The circumstances in which the Commander and other top Army officials were targeted highlight a shocking failure on following of security drill of sanitising an area when top security officials are on

the move.

The Army has sent instructions to entire formations in Jammu and Kashmir to be on full alert against more such strikes by militants and units have been asked to maintain intense vigil and take special measures to deal with such attacks.

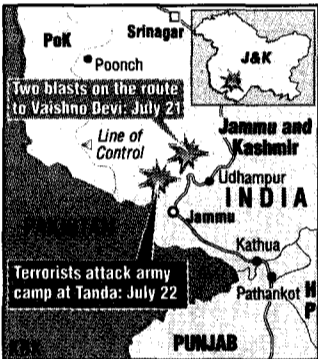
The two major suicide attacks on Army camps in Jammu region within a month come in the wake of recent alarming intelligence reports of frequent infiltration of militants by Pakistan from the Chamb and Khuiratta areas in the Akhnoor sector.

The Army top brass sees a pattern in the attacks — militants trying to shift their focus from the Kashmir Valley to the Jammu region.

Intelligence reports said that while there was a brief lull in the infiltration into the Kashmir Valley, in the Jammu region it has been unabated since May.

"We have evidence that a large number of Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen militants have come across from the Akhnoor sector," top Army officials said.

According to intercepts, an estimated 1,500 to 1,800 militants have managed to cross into Jammu region and unlike in the Kashmir Valley, they have been instructed to indulge in massive violence. — PTI



The body of a militant lies on the ground as a jawan looks on at the Army camp targeted by "fidayeen" at Tanda, north of Jammu, on Tuesday. — AP

ATTACK ON 'LANGAR'

7 Vaishno Devi pilgrims killed in blasts

40-1
22/7

9-08 N. S. S. S.

By Our Staff Reporter

PTI reports.

JAMMU, JULY 21. Seven devotees, including a child, were killed and 38 injured, in two powerful explosions set off tonight by militants at Banganga near Katra on the way to the Vaishno Devi shrine, police sources here said.

The Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Public Health and Engineering, Jugal Kishore, said a grenade was hurled by militants at a large number of devotees who gathered for food at the langar. Another blast went off within 10 minutes near the langar where pilgrims are served food.

The toll may go up as many were seriously injured, police sources said. The attack took place near the late Gulshan Kumar's (T series owner) langar (community kitchen). Right now the langar does not serve food.

He said security in the area was lax and he had conveyed it to the Director-General of Police. Mr. Kishore said the those seriously wounded were moved to the Jammu Medical College.

The attack is suspected to be the handiwork of the Lashkar-e-Taiba.

Bid to derail peace process: Mufti

This was the first attack by the militants on a religious place this year. The last attack was at the Raghunath temple where 12 persons were killed.

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, condemned the blasts and said the attack was an attempt to derail the peace process.

Monica: Govt to appeal Portugal court's decision

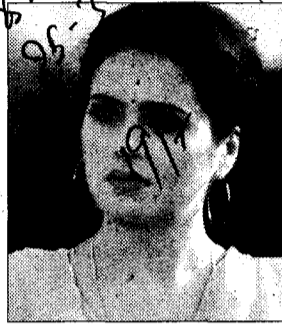
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JULY 18

INDIA is all set to appeal a Portuguese court decision turning down the extradition of Monica Bedi, Abu Salem's girlfriend. According to CBI, India has approached the prosecutor-general in Portugal to file an appeal against the court's decision to turn down the extradition request.

The Portuguese court had turned down the extradition request on the grounds that the allegations against Bedi were the same in both countries and she would be tried in Portugal.

In Portugal, Bedi is accused of travelling on a fake passport, while in India she is accused of using forged documents to get a passport with a different name and address.

India plans to clarify the two crimes are not similar. According to CBI, Bedi used forged documents to get a passport made in Hyderabad which is not the same as travelling on a fake passport. Besides, the case in India has wider ramifications as there is the probability of police offi-



cial and others being involved in the case. She was arrested in Lisbon in September last year along with Salem.

Earlier, Bedi had raised three queries, including whether she would face harassment as she was a Muslim; what was the guarantee that the President would not turn down her appeal against a death penalty or a life sentence exceeding 45 years and why her case would be tried in a special court and not in a normal court.

But CBI in its reply said that there was no merit in their contention and that India's Constitution guaranteed that there was no discrimination in terms of religion or caste and that the case would be tried in a special court.

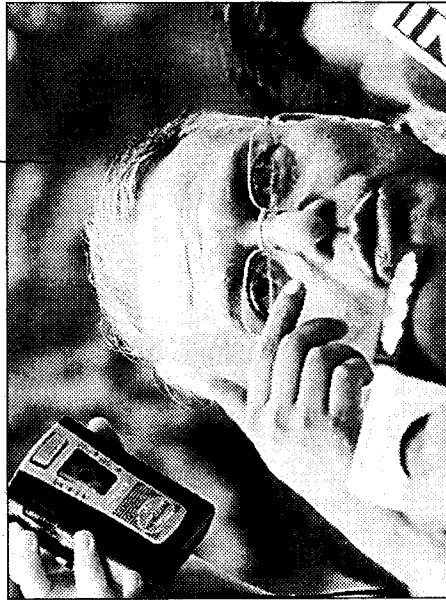
Explicit UN Mandate Required For Deployment Of Indian Soldiers, Says Yashwant

CCS says no to US request for troops

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 14 JULY

As expected, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Monday turned down the US request for sending troops to Iraq and said such a step could be considered only if there was an "explicit" UN mandate. "Were there to be explicit UN mandate for the purpose, the Government of India could consider the deployment of our troops in Iraq," external affairs minister Yashwant Sinha told reporters after the 90-minute meeting. New Delhi's decision was immediately conveyed to US ambassador Robert Blackwill by the national security adviser.

The rejection of the US request was not surprising as the proposal had failed to excite members of the CCS. With the



No Troop Scoop: External affairs minister Yashwant Sinha addresses the media outside the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi on Monday after the Cabinet Committee meeting. — PTI

exception of finance minister Jaswant Singh, who saw distinct gains from the deployment, other members of the CCS felt that an acceptance of the American request could

prove politically costly. In any case, deputy prime minister L.K. Advani and the BJP leadership have been advocating a cautious approach as the entire Opposition was ranged against the US plea for support.

The Opposition's stiff resistance had narrowed manoeuvre space for the government and Prime Minister could not have ignored the warnings from their side. Sensing the Opposition's mood, the BJP had in recent days upgraded its resistance, with many of its leaders maintaining that possible Indian casualties in war-ravaged Iraq could mar the party's electoral prospects in the forthcoming polls. While they agreed with the suggestions that deployment could help the country bag reconstruction contracts, they weren't too sure whether it would be sufficient to neutralise

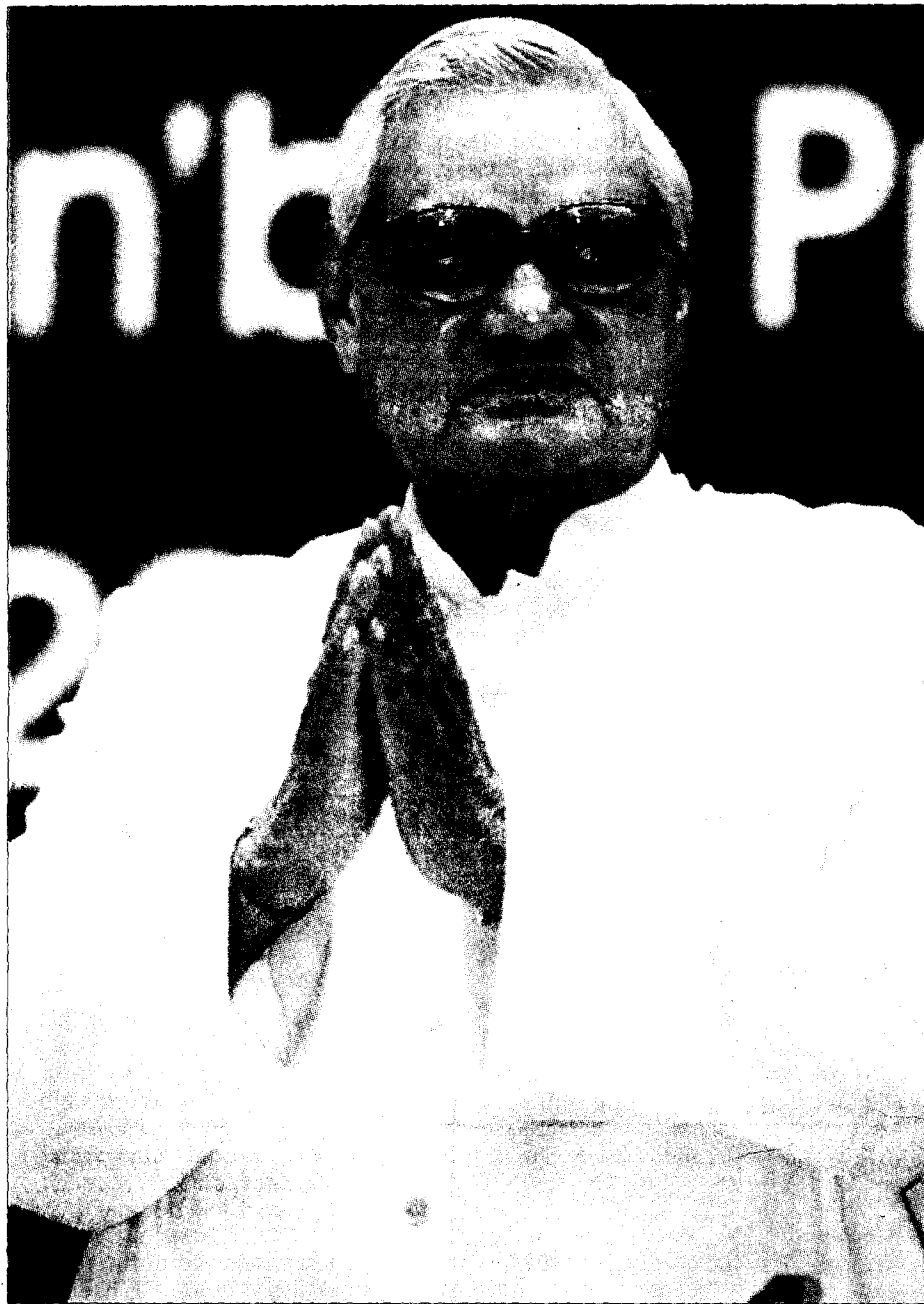
the opposition from within. For Washington, India's rejection of its demand is a setback of sorts and its disappointment was evident in its response to the development. However, it said the Indian decision will not alter Washington's equations with New Delhi. "While we had hoped India would take a different decision, the transformation of US-India relations will continue as before. India remains an important strategic partner for the US," a US embassy spokesperson said.

The US had taken up the case for Indian troops in Iraq when Mr Advani visited Washington last month and had discussions at the highest levels, which was followed up during foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal's tour of the US. Washington had also talked of spin-off benefits to India in the Iraqi reconstruction.

J-D & N News 5.7.7

15/7

Troops won't be sent to Iraq



GIVING IN GRACEFULLY: Mr Vajpayee has paid heed to the consensus over troops to Iraq. Pictured here at the launch of an insurance scheme for senior citizens in Delhi (Report on page 11). — AFP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 14. — India will not send troops to Iraq in US-administered Iraq. After pondering over the issue for months, the Cabinet Committee on Security's decision to send troops to Iraq as part of a peace-keeping force only after an "explicit mandate" by the UN will ensure that there is no deployment in the near future. Many issues went into the decision, but the last straw appeared to be the US government's backtracking on the issue of Iraq having tried to get uranium from Niger — something that it has admitted to be untrue — and the fall in Mr George W Bush's approval ratings.

Speaking to journalists after the two-hour CCS meeting today, foreign minister Mr Yashwant Sinha said: "Were there to be an explicit UN mandate for the purpose, the government could consider the deployment of troops." An "explicit UN mandate" is unlikely in the immediate future and as a result, the question of sending troops in the next few months — at least till the year-end Assembly polls — doesn't arise. There is yet another loophole in India's stand — a UN mandate will not automatically ensure the deployment. The Centre will weigh the pros and cons of sending troops once again if that mandate is available.

Instead of troops, the Centre has promised to "contribute to the restoration of infrastructure, medical, health, education, communications and other civilian needs of the Iraqi people", Mr Sinha said. This includes a joint effort with Jordan in setting up a hospital in Najaf. India, he said, is "ready to respond to the urgent needs of the Iraqis for stability, security, political progress and economic reconstruction."



STAYING PUT: A file photograph. — AFP

1579
His cleverly-worded statement suggests that the decision was not easy. "Careful thought" was given to the question of sending troops. "Our longer term national interest, our concern for the people of Iraq, our long-standing ties with the Gulf as a whole, as well as our growing dialogue and strengthened ties with the USA have been key elements in this consideration," Mr Sinha said.

The Cabinet Committee on Security had been deeply divided on the issue, with Mr LK Advani and Mr George Fernandes remaining opposed to the idea of sending troops. The Deputy

Prime Minister and the defence minister iterated their stand at today's meeting too. But, officials said, the committee also realised how important it was to be civil to the USA, considering New Delhi's growing relationship with Washington, and keep a window open. The final decision appeared to be a compromise between saying an unequivocal "No" to the USA and efforts to ensure that the decision was a diplomatic "No".

US reaction

A US spokesman here expressed disappointment with the decision, but said it was India's decision to make. Perhaps, as a consolation to the Americans, it was said Indo-US ties would continue to grow. The decision, officials said, was despite the serious last-minute lobbying to ensure that India did not shut the door on going to Iraq.

There was word about sending an infantry division and an armoured brigade to Iraq along with some combat engineers and military doctors. Not much of this contingent, it seems, will reach Baghdad.

15 JUL 2003

THE STATESMAN

Anti-India radio broadcast at madrasas

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, July 13

IT'S TWO hours of headline anti-India propaganda — several quami madrasas housed in mosques in the border provinces of Bangladesh have started clandestine, anti-Indian radio broadcasts aimed at illegal settlers from Bangladesh in the border districts of West Bengal and Assam.

Central Intelligence agencies officials said 15 such radio stations reportedly operate from Chuadanga, Meherpur, Rajshahi, Nawabganj and Noagaon provinces of Bangladesh. At least five more

have come up in Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Sunamganj, Netrakona, Mymensingh, Sherpur and Lalmonirhat bordering Assam.

The Intelligence agencies have been monitoring the broadcasts, which reportedly have the support of some Bangladeshi establishment, for the past few weeks. "The radio stations operate mostly after dusk. Maulvis spit venom against India and urge Muslims on this side of the border to provide shelter and support to illegal migrants from that country. They also talk of waging a 'holy war' against India," a senior Intelligence officer said.

Investigation by Indian agencies

has revealed that low as well as medium range transmitters have been installed at the madrasas, supported by Chhatra Shibir, a radical Islamic organisation funded by the hardline Wahabis of Saudi Arabia. The Chhatra Shibir has strong links with the Jamat-e-Islami, a partner in the ruling coalition, and the strong anti-Indian sections in the Bangladeshi army and civil establishments.

"The broadcasts continue for about two hours. Guest speakers, usually religious leaders, speak of flooding the border districts of West Bengal and Assam with Bangladeshis, changing the de-

mography of these districts and ultimately making them part of Islamic Bangladesh," said the Intelligence officer.

Readings from a vitriolic anti-Indian book — RAW and Bangladesh by Bangladeshi journalist Zainal Abedin — have been serialised in the broadcast. "The serial convinced us that the broadcasts were part of a well-planned propaganda war," the officer added.

An officer in the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI), whose links with Bangladeshi *mujahideen* have been exposed by Western Intelligence agencies, has reportedly coordi-

nated the project of setting up transmitters and operating them. This officer had served in the Bangladesh Deputy High Commission here in the mid Nineties.

"The broadcasts are being heard on our side of the border. We're assessing the impact," the officer added. Last week, all these radio stations aired a speech by Imtiaz Qudus, general secretary of a Jehadi outfit in Bangladesh. "Qudus spoke of waging a subversive war against India by opening another front in the eastern sector. It was clear from his speech that he had Pakistan's support," the officer added.

Opinion turns against sending troops to Iraq

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OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, July 13: The Vajpayee government is coming round to the view that India has more to lose than gain by sending troops to Iraq. But it is not clear whether it will make a definite announcement tomorrow after the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting.

One reason it may continue to hedge is the Iraqi governing council that took shape today. Backed by the US and, more important, with some UN role, the council offers Delhi an excuse to keep a decision pending.

If a request were to come from the council for sending troops, India can pass it off as the voice of the Iraqi people to counter opposition at home as well as cite the fact that the UN has stepped in. A UN representative spoke at the council's first meeting today.

The 25-member interim council can appoint ministers, approve the budget and review laws, but ultimate authority remains with the occupying powers.

Such a request, if at all, would, however, take time, which is what the Vajpayee government would like to buy. If it can tide over another week, it need not take a decision for about a month as Parliament opens on July 21.

With the Congress as well as the allies objecting to the move, the government is unlikely to risk announcing a decision during the session.

The Samata Party, led by defence minister George Fernandes who is a member of the CCS, today said troops should not be sent without UN mandate.

Even the RSS is opposed to the idea. The RSS objection is not to the principle as such but

hinges on whether or not India can extract a firm commitment from the US to put more pressure on Pakistan over infiltration. It has, of course, also pointed out that Iraq is one of the few Islamic countries to have supported India's stand on Kashmir.

Most worrying for Delhi, however, is the mess the Bush administration and Tony Blair's government have got into. Their initial assertion for going to war has been torn to shreds with no weapons of mass destruction being found in Iraq and the increasing belief that both might have lied. In the US, popular tide is turning against President Bush as the death count steadily mounts.

The prospect, therefore, of Indian soldiers meeting the same fate is weighing heavy on the leadership. Although Indian troops will be required to take up peacekeeping duty in northern Iraq, a relatively quiet area, sniper attacks have taken place there also.

Besides, how Turkey, a traditional ally, will react to the presence of Indian troops in an area contiguous to its borders, with the local Kurdish people living on either side, is not quite certain. Foreign minister Yashwant Sinha is expected to visit Turkey early next month.

On balance, probable losses would appear to outweigh benefits by way of oilfields, reconstruction contracts and — far more important — a long-term strategic coalition with Washington. But the accounting has not been closed yet.

The clincher could, however, be opinion within the BJP itself that the risk of being labelled a US lackey is far too great in an election year.

Mig-23 accident rate is highest in IAF

By Rajat Pandit
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: MiG-21s may have earned the dubious distinction of being dubbed 'flying coffins' in some quarters, much to the dislike of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) top brass. But MiG-23s are even more difficult to fly: their accident rate per 10,000 hours of flying is the highest in the IAF fleet.

The ageing swing-wing MiG-23s were to be phased out by the mid-1990s, but the delay in the induction of new fighters has compelled the IAF to continue flying these jets. The IAF has three squadrons of the MiG-23BN ground-attack fighters and one squadron of the MiG-23MF air-defence fighters.

Fortunately, the MiG-23BN crash near Ludhiana on Monday led to no loss of life. The IAF said it was a "planned ejection by the pilot, after a technical snag, in a designated safe area". However, another MiG-23 crash near the same Halwara base in April had killed four peo-

ple.

"The MiG-21s make more news since they constitute over 40 per cent of the IAF fighter fleet. They account for the bulk of flying sorties and consequently,

with alarming regularity.

There have been 305 'Category-I accidents' (in which the aircraft is totally damaged) in the IAF since 1990-1991, with 145 pilots losing their lives. Many civilians have also been killed on the ground during such crashes, with as many as 23 dying in 2002-03.

Several factors contribute to the IAF's high accident rate. Firstly, ageing aircraft of 1960s-and-70s vintage with design limitations difficult to overcome.

Secondly, direct exposure of inexperienced pilots to highly unforgiving super-

sonic aircraft like the MiG-21s without transitional training on the desperately needed advanced jet trainers (AJTs). Thirdly, the absence of new-generation flight simulators to train rookie pilots how to effectively handle emergencies. Finally, poor maintenance and inadequate quality control on spares and rotables.



A Mig-23 aircraft of the IAF seen in flight.

more accidents," said an officer. If all MiG variants are taken into account, then the MiG-21s constitute over 75 per cent of the IAF fleet.

Defence minister George Fernandes and Air Chief Marshal S. Krishnaswamy may wax eloquent on the airworthiness of the MiG fighters, but the fact remains that they continue to crash

POTA panel begins review

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JULY 8. The three-member committee headed by Justice Arun B. Saharya today started a review of the arrests made under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in 14 States, including Tamil Nadu, almost a year after the MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, was arrested. The committee, which includes U. Rehman, IAS (retd.), and Arvind S. Inamdar, IPS (retd.), had written to the 14 State Governments, requesting them to send information on cases registered under POTA in the States.

Mr. Justice Saharya told *The Hindu* that only five of the 14 States had furnished the details. Reminders had been sent to the States to send the data immediately along with the copies of the FIRs. Tamil Nadu had given details in respect of nine cases, Delhi (16), Uttar Pradesh (14), Gujarat (2) and Maharashtra (4) and the committee began a review of these cases.

Tamil Nadu is one of the States where a number of cases have been registered under POTA. Besides Mr. Vaiko, those arrested include P. Nedumaran, president, Tamilar Desiya Iyakkam, and R.R. Gopal, Editor of the Tamil biweekly, *Nakkheeran*.

Mr. Justice Saharya said that besides looking into the details from the States, the committee was also looking into six complaints of "misuse of POTA" — three on behalf of Mr. Gopal, (one by his father, one from Mr. Vaiko, one memorandum signed by MPs); one from the wife of a detenu, Palani, and two in respect of arrests made in Delhi. The complaints had been forwarded to Tamil Nadu and Delhi for their response, which was awaited.

On whether any time-frame had been fixed for the review of the cases, he said, "we are conscious of the stringent provisions of POTA and equally the human rights of those arrested. We have discussed the modalities on how to go about it. If necessary, we will go to the respective States for the purpose of review." The committee has been asked to make a comprehensive review of the use of the Act so far in various States.

WE FIND

SC ORDERS SPECIAL COURT TO PROCEED WITH BOFORS CASE TRIAL

HC verdict quashing chargesheet against Hinduja brothers set aside

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JULY 7. In what is seen as a major victory for the Central Bureau of Investigation, the Supreme Court today set aside a Delhi High Court judgment quashing the chargesheet filed by the agency against the three Hinduja brothers — Srichand, Gopichand and Prakash — in the "Rs. 64-crore Bofors payoff case".

A Bench, comprising Justice S. Rajendra Babu and Justice G.P. Mathur, while allowing the appeals filed by the CBI and the Central Vigilance Commission challenging the High Court judgment, directed the CBI special court here to proceed with the trial, which was stayed by the apex court in December last.

(At present, the three Hinduja brothers, who are on bail, are staying abroad with the permission of the apex court. With the court directing commencement of trial, they have to return to India to face trial).

Mr. Justice Mathur, writing the judgment for the Bench, observed that the view taken by the High Court that the chargesheet filed by the CBI without taking approval or consent of the CVC was illegal and wholly erroneous. The Bench did not



The Hinduja brothers (a file photograph)

political vendetta and to malign the name of the Prime Minister in office when the contract was signed (late Rajiv Gandhi).

Reliance was also placed on some correspondence between the Indian Embassy and the authorities in Switzerland to contend that the documents transmitted were too limited to sustain a chargesheet against the Hinduja brothers.

The Bench pointed out that this letter had not been written either by the CBI or by any authority in India and therefore it could not form the basis for as-sailing any action of the CBI.

That apart, the Bench said "we are not concerned here with the merits of the allegations and the nature of the evidence which prosecution would produce in the court to establish the charge". The Bench quashed the High Court judgment, holding that it was quite confusing and contradictory and directed the special judge to proceed with the trial. When the High Court quashed the chargesheet against the Hindujas, it was considered a major setback to the CBI which had been pursuing the case for over a decade.

However, today's order has come as a shot in the arm for the investigating agency.

CBI happy: Page 12

account of inaction of the CBI to investigate the commission of an offence. "The judgment nowhere says that the CBI will have to take concurrence or sanction from the CVC before filing chargesheet in court."

The Bench pointed out that in this case, well before the filing of the first chargesheet, the CBI sent an investigation report to the CVC. Though this aspect was brought to the notice of the High Court, it had not given due consideration to the affidavits filed by the CBI and the CVC.

The Bench said that counsel had alleged that the chargesheet was filed on account of po-

accept the contention of senior counsel Ram Jethmalani, appearing for the Hindujas, that the CVC had been entrusted with the responsibility of supervising and that the CVC could direct the CBI not to file the chargesheet.

In July last, a three-judge Bench headed by the then Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal, while staying the Delhi High Court judgment of June 10, 2002, quashing the chargesheet against them ordered continuance of the proceedings and accordingly the special court framed charges in November and posted the case

for trial on December 4.

However, on December 2 last, a three-judge Bench headed by the subsequent Chief Justice G.B. Pattanaik, stayed the commencement of trial and granted a major relief to the three brothers.

The Bench noted that the direction given by the apex court in the 'Vineet Narain case' was never meant to create or confer some kind of additional rights in favour of the accused as held by the High Court.

The Bench felt that the emphasis in the 'Vineet Narain case' was that persons holding high office should not escape on

THE HINDU

8 JUL 2003

12 soldiers killed in camp strike

BINOO JOSHI

Jammu, June 28: Two *fidayeen* stormed an army camp on the outskirts of Jammu, killing 12 soldiers, in the first such strike since the Kaluchak massacre that took India and Pakistan to the brink of war.

The pre-dawn assault on the camp in Sunjwan came on the last day of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's visit to the state.

The militants, who lobbed grenades and sprayed automatic fire to gain entry, targeted a barrack where soldiers were sleeping, spokesman Brigadier B.S. Jind said.

The initial burst, which took the guards by surprise, killed six soldiers, while six more died in the subsequent exchange of fire. Seven soldiers were wounded.

With the militants were

killed after a four-hour gun battle inside the camp, which runs parallel to the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway bypass, the brigadier added.

Jind said the element of surprise was the reason behind the high casualty figure. The attackers had taken shelter in a bushy area before cutting their way through barbed wire into the camp between 4.30 and 5 in the morning as most of the soldiers slept.

"I heard two big bangs that were followed by firing," 38-year-old mechanic Abdul Majid, who lives near the camp, said. "I thought the army must be conducting a routine exercise."

While one of the attackers was killed in the first hour of the encounter, his associate kept on firing till 9.15, an army spokesman said. "The terrorists entered the army camp dressed in

army uniform," he added.

The assault, the first such since Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee extended a hand of friendship to Pakistan at a Srinagar rally in April, came as a chilling reminder of the attack on the Kaluchak camp in May 2002. More than 30 soldiers, their wives and children were killed in that strike.

Soon after the encounter, a bomb disposal squad carried out an extensive search of the entire area near the barracks and defused three grenades thrown by the militants. Two AK-47 rifles with Pakistani markings and Lashkar-e-Toiba symbols, 470 rounds of ammunition, 23 grenades, some explosive material and Rs 1,800 in Pakistani currency were recovered from the militants, sources said.

A lesser-known militant out-

fit called al Nasreen claimed responsibility for the attack. A person named Abu Salim Mehmood, who claimed to be the spokesman of the outfit, said three al Nasreen militants had carried out the attack. But neither police nor the army could point to the identity of the attackers.

Minister of state for defence Chaman Lal Gupta, who visited the camp, said: "It is sad. It shows the frustration of militants."

In Delhi, senior home ministry officials said though the government has taken a serious view of the *fidayeen* (suicide) attack, it does not yet have the potential to derail the peace process. "Today's attack is not another Kaluchak," said a senior ministry official, implying it would not push India-Pakistan relations to the brink.

Picture on Page 7

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Army formations on full alert

29/6

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 28. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) was briefed on today's 'fedayeen' (suicide) attack on a Dogra battalion camp on the outskirts of Jammu.

The high number of Army casualties prompted the discussion at the meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and convened primarily to take stock of his China visit, reliable sources

said. The Army has put its formations in Jammu and Kashmir on full alert.

The attack came as the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, concluded his three-day visit to the State.

Senior Army sources said here that it was too early to say who was responsible for the attack, but that they were following "leads on the terrorists and their linkages".

Considerable planning had gone into the attack and the militants had targeted a unit

whose catchment area for recruitment is primarily the Jammu region.

Today's is the second major attack on an Army installation in two years and the first since the Prime Minister's peace initiative announced in Srinagar last month.

The previous attack, at Kaluchak in Jammu region, had claimed civilian casualties, mainly the kin of Army personnel, and was what provoked Operation Parakram, the massive troop mobilisation on the

border with Pakistan.

However, Government sources did not compare today's attack with Kaluchak.

Such attacks were to be expected and the country's security forces had to exercise greater vigilance.

So far, officials are continuing with the earlier formulation that firefights in Jammu and Kashmir should not be the barometer for assessing the moves to create normality on the ground and the pace for Indo-Pakistan peace initiatives.

Senior Home Ministry sources said the majority of the State's population supported the efforts of the Mufti Mohammed Government to restore normality but there would always be elements that were inimical to peace returning to the State.

Though India had to deal with infiltration, officials seemed to separate this issue with what had taken place at the Army camp. Today's attack, they said, would in no way impact the peace process initiated by the Prime Minister.

The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Mishra, and the Foreign Secretary, Kanwal Sibal attended the meeting.

MPs fear 'dirty bomb'

Aloke Tikku in New Delhi

June 25. — The threat of a "dirty bomb" is real. The government today moved a step closer to protecting parliamentarians from the "dirty bomb" — basically a conventional explosive packaged with radioactive material that scatters when the bomb goes off — with a high-level committee firming up plans to construct underground shelters.

The shelters would protect parliamentarians from radioactive substances or a chemical, nuclear, chemical and biological weapon attack.

"Yes, the threat of a dirty bomb is real. As real as it can get," a government official, who attended the meeting of the Parliament Security Committee headed by Deputy Speaker Mr PM Sayeed, said.

What worries security experts is the relative ease of constructing such weapons. It is not a highly specialized task, no more than making a conventional bomb. The only difficult part is

acquiring the radioactive material.

Security officers said the alarm bells had started ringing in India a few years ago, beginning with the National Bomb Data Centre of the National Security Guards that alerted police forces across the country to the risk. It had since then issued regular warnings of a terrorist threat to use dirty bombs on the basis of intelligence inputs.

Dirty bombs are hard to detect and "retrieving and salvaging" radioactive material dispersed over a large area would be a nightmare.

But after 13 December — when parliamentarians came close to being the proverbial sitting ducks for the terrorists — officials said they were not stopping at insuring against the disruptive dirty bomb.

They will also have to provide for the more routine, and more likely, physical attack on Parliament or MPs. The Parliament Security Committee has decided to close Imtiaz Khan Road from Parliament Annexe to Akashvani Bhavan by the year-end.

Off fighter, George guns down F-16s

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
PUNE, JUNE 22

PLAYING down fears of the possible re-sale of lethal F-16 fighter aircraft by the United States to Pakistan, Union Defence Minister George Fernandes today said given the Indian Air Force's (IAF) air power and "immense capability", we had nothing to worry about.

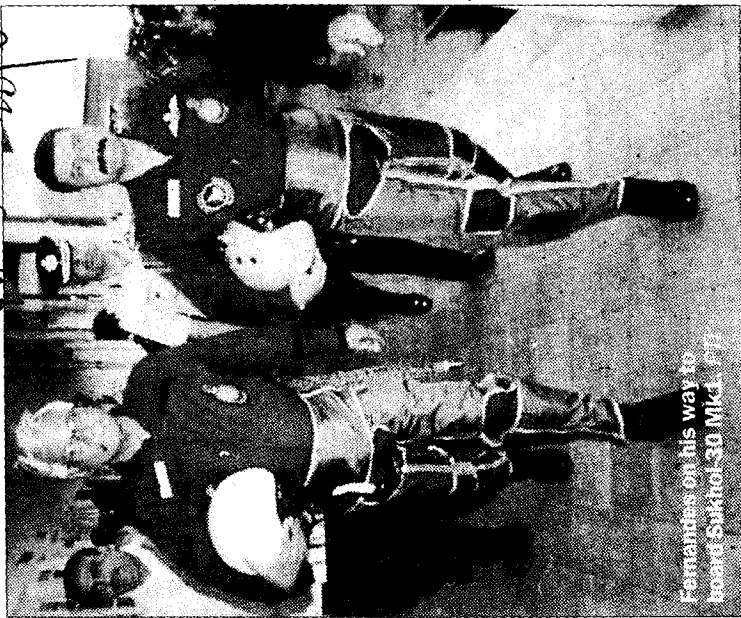
Earlier, Fernandes flew on an IAF fighter plane, the supersonic Sukhoi-30 Mk1. After flying 25,000 ft above the ground, at a speed of 1.15 Mach (1.15 times the speed of sound), as a passive co-pilot, he said the sortie had made him wiser to the problems faced by pilots of the IAF.

He exuded confidence in the strike potential of the IAF, and said the re-supply of F-16s was purely a business matter between the US and Pakistan and would not affect India's airpower. At the same time, Fernandes asserted, he did not believe "the false story circulated by someone" that the supply of F-16s by the US to Pakistan was about to resume.

When asked whether a possible re-sale of F-16s would create friction in the Indo-US relations, he replied in the negative. But he was quick to take a dig at both the countries, stating that it was well-known that Pakistan had an armory stocked mainly by the US. "But that is business between those two countries," he added.

The Defence Minister made no bones of the fact that 9/11 had not changed anything for India in terms of threat from terrorists. "We have been having 9/11s much before the US had a 9/11," he pointed out. Asked about his opinion on the possible deployment of Indian troops in Iraq, Fernandes said the Cabinet Committee on Security was yet to take any decision on the matter.

Fielding questions on the frequent accidents of MiG-21 aircraft, Fernandes said the media was doing a great injustice to brave pilots by creating a "fear psychosis" around the IAF's war-horse. He defended the MiGs, claiming the number of accidents has been on the decline. "It's a demanding aircraft. If we fail to fly it properly, let's not blame the machine,"



Fernandes on his way to board Su-30 Mk1. IAF

he said. Asked what lessons he had learnt from his 39-minute flying experience, the Defence Minister said India needs more two-seater aircraft. "The pilot has to fly the aircraft, chart the course of the enemy on the radar, control a whole range of buttons and go through a physical situation which can knock him out," he said.

He also talked about the G-factor (gravity-induced problems), which has caused

many pilots to lose their lives in the recent past. "I had heard a lot about the G-factor (gravity-induced problems) from senior officials while flying fighter aircrafts. Today I had a first hand experience of what it feels to be in the cockpit of a sophisticated aircraft," he said.

In simple words, the addition in gravity as one travels up causes the blood to rush from head to toe. Though pilots wear a G-suit, too many manoeuvres sometimes lead to gravity-induced loss of consciousness, which can cause accidents. Fermandes, who acquired three times his body weight, admitted the gravity factor could be hazardous. "The physical situation is so trying, you don't need an enemy to knock you down," he remarked.

Wing Commander N.S. Jamwal, who flew the Su-30 Mk1 that the Defence Minister took a ride on, said the latter was given a briefing early in the morning about the type of exercise to be performed during the sortie and put through pre-flight medical tests.

F-16
2096

Our Sukhois can match F-16s: Fernandes

J. D. B. N. S. S. S.

PUNE, JUNE 22. India had no reason to worry irrespective of whether the United States went ahead with its plan to sell 'offensive' aircraft such as F-16 to Pakistan as it had Sukhois to match, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, said here today.

"First, the U.S. has described as false the report that it is intending to sell F-16s to Pakistan," Mr. Fernandes said. "Second, even if we assume that they are going to sell it, we need not have any reason to worry about it as we have our own aircraft to match," he said.

Most of Pakistan's armoury was either U.S.-made or made in China, hence there was no reason to worry as it was a business deal between two countries, he added.

To a question on the growing number of accidents of MiG aircraft, the Minister said, "on the contrary the rate of accidents has come down". "From the time the MiGs were inducted into the IAF, there has been accidents, but it is only now that they are being more noticed by the media." He was particularly critical of the media dubbing the MiG aircraft 'flying coffins' and said it was a great injustice to the pilots of the aircraft.

The MiG is a high-performance machine and to prove that there is nothing wrong with the aircraft, the then Air Chief Marshal, A.Y. Tipnis, flew the single-seater aircraft hopping from



The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, showing the thumbs-up sign before he took off in a Sukhoi fighter aircraft in Pune on Sunday. — Reuters

one airbase to another when he had taken over as the Air Chief," Mr. Fernandes said.

On his 40-minute flying sortie on board the IAF SU-30 MKI at the Pune airbase. "I am wiser after the flight today. So much needs to be known. I am leaving with the conviction that our fighter pilots' work is to be made easier than it is. A physical situation can knock out the pilot, it is not enough to say that he went in the defence of the country," he said.

On the ways to prevent MiG accidents, he said "people need to be educated about the dangers to aircraft from bird-hits

and must be made aware of the importance of keeping the surroundings (of the airports/air bases) clean to prevent birds from nesting in these places".

U.S. reply awaited on troops for Iraq

On the issue of sending troops to Iraq, Mr. Fernandes said India was awaiting replies to certain queries from the U.S. before taking any decision. The NDA partners had discussed the issue on Saturday at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security. — PTI, UNI

**Flying high in a Sukhoi:
Page 12**

23 JUN 2003

THE HINDU

RAW nod behind Advani pledge on Bleach release

Chandan Nandy
New Delhi, June 18

DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER L.K. Advani's assurance to Britain to release Purulia armsdrop accused Peter Bleach is understood to be based on the recommendation of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Days before demitting office, the then RAW chief Vikram Sood had, in a note to the Union Home Ministry, outlined the grounds on which Bleach, un-

dergoing a life sentence at Kolkata's Alipore Central Jail, could be accorded presidential clemency. Sood retired from service on April 31.

RAW sources said Sood's case for Bleach's release was a recognition of sorts of a "liaison" between the RAW and the British Secret Intelligence Service, better known as MI6.

New Delhi acknowledges that Bleach had tipped British intelligence about Davy's plans to airdrop weapons over India in

1995. They in turn shared the information with RAW, which sent a report to the home ministry ahead of the arms drop.

For reasons of its own, the MHA chose not to share the information with the West Bengal. Earlier, in a detailed statement to the CBI, Bleach had called the armsdrop a "CIA scam".

The CBI, which is probing the armsdrop, isn't pleased with Advani's promise to his British hosts. Sources said after the grant of clemency to the five Lat-

vian crew members of the aircraft that dropped the arms, the Deputy PM and then External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh had favoured Bleach's release in the face of stiff opposition from a section of senior MHA hands.

Earlier, when the British government had demanded Bleach's release, the MHA and the law ministry had said it would jeopardise the probe into certain sensitive aspects of the case.

The then High Commissioner of UK to India, Sir Rob Young,

had told the MHA officials that his government would pursue the matter at the highest political level in New Delhi.

The principal accused in the case, Kim Peter Davy, remains at large. Four Ananda Marg *avadhoots*, believed to be part of the conspiracy, also continue to abscond. Davy escaped to Denmark on December 22, 1995 after the AN-26 that had air-dropped the weapons over Purulia was forced to land in Mumbai. Denmark has refused to extradite him.



Peter Bleach
Ray of hope

India invited for multination Alaska military exercise

9-08
11/11

4/6

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 3. India and the U.S. will further one aspect of their military ties this week at the first multination exercise of its kind after the Gulf war. To be held in Alaska, it will involve more than 70 aircraft and 1,500 personnel from the armies of the U.S., the UK, Canada, Japan, Thailand and Malaysia.

This will be India's maiden participation at the "Exercise Cooperative Cope Thunder" after having been invited as observers at the past edition. Other countries have had a long history of participating in training programmes and joint exercises of varying complexities.

The inability of the direction-setting Defence Policy Group (DPG) to meet for over a year has contributed to certain lopsi-

dedness in bilateral defence ties being pushed by the two Governments. The DPG, comprising top civilians from South Block and the Pentagon, last met in May 2002. American pre-occupation with the Iraq war led to it being postponed. Since then, both sides are trying to hammer out mutually-acceptable dates.

The DPG meeting in Washington had broadly set out a three-pronged agenda for closer defence ties.

These were specialised training programmes and joint exercises to be carried out by the armed services of the two countries, developing a defence supply relationship and resumption of technical cooperation in defence research development and production.

Of these three areas, the first

aspect, where the three services had major roles, was successful. Civilians are still struggling to make major breakthroughs in the other two areas. India did agree to buy direction-finding radars, the U.S. did not put a spanner in Israeli plans to sell sophisticated aircraft mounted radar system, and preliminary discussions at various levels have been held on the issue of an easier U.S. technology exports regime.

Despite these accomplishments, another DPG meeting is considered essential to review the progress including a frank acknowledgment of the inadequacies such as Indian apprehensions about stability in defence buyer-supplier ties and the lack of a clear-cut vision about expectations from joint exercises.

THE HINDU

49-17-1967

By Our Special Correspondent

HENNAI, MAY 12. The Indian Space Research Organisation's latest satellite, GSAT-2, has been successfully placed in a geostationary orbit and its solar arrays and antenna have been deployed.

This follows a series of critical operations carried out by the Master Control Facility, Hassan, on Sunday and today, ISRO said. GSAT-2 was launched by the

second developmental flight of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, GSLV-D2, on May 8 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, SHAR, Sriharikota.

Today, the two solar arrays and the west antenna of GSAT-2 were successfully deployed. In the first operation, the solar array on the south side of the satellite was deployed.

The solar array on the north side and the west antenna were deployed later. The two solar arrays together

generate 1400 watt of electrical power. In the third and final phase of orbit-raising operations conducted yesterday, GSAT-2 was successfully placed in geostationary orbit by firing its 440 Newton Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM) for 79 seconds.

The satellite is now located at 36 degree east longitude and drifting slowly, as per plan, towards its final slot of 48 degree east longitude. It is expected to reach its final orbital slot in a week's time.

The LAM was fired for a total

duration of 90 minutes six seconds in three phases on May 9, 10 and 11, imparting a total velocity increment of 1.66 km per second

needed to take the satellite from the geosynchronous transfer orbit of 180 km perigee and 36,000 km apogee to its present geostationary orbit. The inclination was also reduced from 19.2 degree with respect to the equatorial plane at the time of its injection into the orbit, to the present 0.1 degree. The LAM, which was developed by ISRO's Liquid

GSAT-2 placed in geostationary orbit

Propulsion Systems Centre performed to its specifications.

The satellite carries four transponders, two ku-band transponders and one satellite service payload to four scientific payloads. Functional testing of the payloads and the in-orbit communication payload

carried out in the next ISRO today said that on board GSAT-2 satellite functioning well.

EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY

13 MAY 2003

India launches GSLV-D2

By Srinivas Laxman
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Sriharikota: India's space programme rocketed into greater heights with the successful launch of the second Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D2) from here on Thursday at 4.58 p.m. The thunderous lift-off of the three-stage 49-metre rocket drew a loud applause from the scientists gathered in the mission and launch control rooms.

It carried an experimental communication satellite, designated 'G-Sat-2', weighing 1,800 kg. The rocket soared higher and higher gathering speed every second, with bright yellow flames. A huge pillar of dazzling fire gushed forth and moments later thunder rolled across this huge spaceport.

The awesome roar of the rocket unleashed cheers and screams of excitement from the hundreds of people who had gathered on the terraces of various buildings in Sriharikota. All of them felt rewarded because they were seeing the fruition of their hard work. In the nearby town of Sullerpetta, many people left their homes, offices, shops and stood on the roads and rooftops to see the rocket take off.

For the key players of this flight, particularly chairperson of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) K. Kasturirangan and mission director R.V. Perumal, the few minutes prior to the lift-off

were of nervous anticipation.

As the countdown was nearing its end and with seconds left for the lift-off, some of the scientists clasped their hands in a silent prayer. At 4.45 p.m., the final signal was given for the launch.

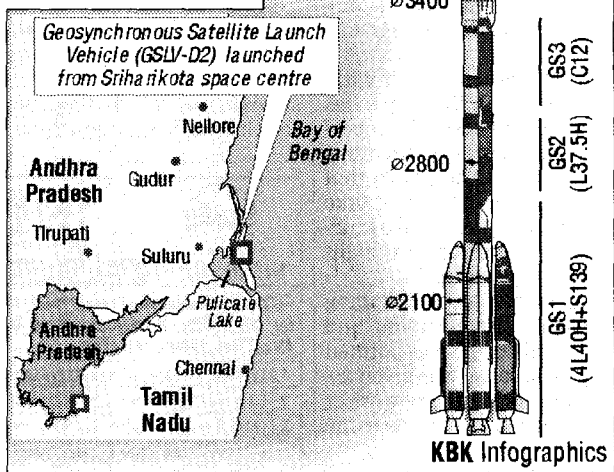
A commentator announced over the public address system: "50.. 45..

40.. 35 30 25 20 15 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0.. we have lift off!" The rocket then blasted off much to the relief of the scientists. In the mission control room, the GSLV team sat before their computers, tense and excited.

When the rocket reached a whopping supersonic speed of 9.78 km per second and exactly 10.13 seconds after it lifted off, the G-Sat-2 satellite was placed in the geostationary transfer orbit. The mis-

sion was successful. A few days later it will move to its final parking slot in the geo-

Overall length: 49 metre
Lift-off-weight: 414 tonnes
No. of stages: 3
Payload: GSAT-2 (1800 Kg)
Orbit (GTO): 180x36,000 km



synchronous orbit, 36,000 km above the equator.

There was a mood of celebration in the mission control room with the scientists embracing each other and exchanging congratulatory handshakes. Mr Kasturirangan formally declared the mission as successful. According to space scientists here, the GSLV is the most technically challenging project undertaken so far by the ISRO.

MISSION *13* **GSLV-D2 LAUNCH SUCCESSFUL**

The Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) is designed to place satellites in Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). It adopts the flight-proven solid and liquid stages of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle and a cryogenic upper stage. The second developmental flight, GSLV-D2, carries an experimental communication satellite, GSAT-2, with an augmented payload of 1800 kg

GSLV is a three stage vehicle, 49 m tall. The first stage, GS1 comprises a solid propellant motor (S139) and four liquid propellant strap-on motors (L40H). The second stage (GS2) is powered by a single liquid propellant engine (L37.5H). The third stage (GS3) is a cryogenic stage (C12)

Improvements in GSLV-D2
 GSLV, in its first developmental flight, GSLV-D1, carried a 1540 kg payload into GTO. For the second development flight, GSLV-D2, the payload capability has been enhanced to 1800 kg by incorporating:

- Enhanced propellant loading in the core solid motor
- High pressure engine in liquid propellant strap-ons and the second stage
- Optimisation of structural elements

Overall length: 49 metre
Lift-off-weight: 414 tonnes
No. of stages: 3
Payload: GSAT-2 (1800 Kg)
Orbit (GTO): 180x36,000 km

Launches from India

1	SLV-3 E1	Aug 10, 1979	Partially Successful
2	SLV-3 E2	Jul 18, 1980	Successful
3	SLV-3 D1	May 31, 1981	Successful
4	SLV-3 D2	Apr 17, 1983	Successful
5	ASLV-D1	Mar 24, 1987	Unsuccessful
6	ASLV-D2	Jul 13, 1988	Unsuccessful
7	ASLV-D3	May 20, 1992	Successful
8	ASLV-D4	May 4, 1994	Successful
9	PSLV-D1	Sep 20, 1993	Unsuccessful
10	PSLV-D2	Oct 15, 1994	Successful
11	PSLV-D3	Mar 21, 1996	Successful
12	PSLV-C1	Sep 29, 1997	Successful
13	PSLV-C2	May 26, 1999	Successful
14	PSLV-C3	Oct 22, 2001	Successful
15	PSLV-C4	Sep 12, 2002	Successful
16	GSLV-D1	Apr 18, 2001	Successful
17	GSLV-D2	May 8, 2003	Successful

Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D2) launched from Sriharikota space centre

KBK Infographics

9-08/2003
TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2003

TEJAS

49-10 MS

THE COUNTRY'S PRESTIGIOUS aeronautical project that aims to find a replacement for the aging MiG fleet of the Air Force has been making steady, though slow progress. The two so-called technology demonstrators of the Light Combat Aircraft which adorned the skies over Bangalore on Sunday confirm the fairly significant advances made in the past year in the development of the indigenous fighter aircraft. Christened Tejas (radiance), their flight in formation comes nearly a year after the second of the two technology demonstrators was test flown and more than two and a half years after the first was aerially tested. Dogged by delay, some of which is understandable in the case of such high technology programmes, progress on the LCA project picked up with the lifting of the economic sanctions by the U.S. and the release of some blocked high technology. As the Prime Minister mentioned during the christening ceremony, the country's drive to acquire maximum technological autonomy faces obstacles. The experience with the LCA project as well as other defence modernisation programmes carries several lessons. The most vital one is the imperative of moving toward the goal of self-reliance in key sectors.

That the technology demonstrators still are powered by engines acquired from the U.S. highlights this truth. The time schedule for the indigenous Kaveri engine, which is to replace the U.S. makes, has been slipping regularly. Mr. Vajpayee said the Kaveri engine would be ready soon, but in the absence of a target date and in the context of the LCA's chequered history, doubts will persist over official claims. Any delay in the Kaveri programme can cause a further setback. Once it is fitted, the LCA will become 75 per cent indigenous. It has been designed and developed by a consortium of five aircraft research, design, production and product support organisations and the scientists, technicians and workers of the agencies involved

deserve full praise for the progress so far on a project of critical importance to the defence of the country. Whatever scepticism and doubt existed over the LCA project related to the inordinately long gestation period considering that it was placed on the drawing board nearly two decades ago. Criticism also centred on the unrealistic estimates of the resources and time needed to accomplish the task. Compounding these self-created delays was the imposition of the American sanctions that followed the nuclear testing by India in the summer of 1998 which totally skewed the schedule. It is to the credit of the scientists that they have utilised the forced and unavoidable delay to develop a host of systems and components that are essential for all aircraft.

Sunday's show of technological prowess should spur the political leadership to place the required resources at the disposal of the agencies to move towards the ultimate goal of induction of the LCA. The recent series of accidents involving the MiG fleet underscores the dangers of further delay. The IAF has decided to retire some of the ground attack MiG 23s along with the oldest versions of the MiG 21s. When they were acquired, the MiGs were considered the workhorse of the Air Force and as their intended replacement, the LCAs have a pivotal role to play. Agreements have been signed for the manufacture of a small number of LCAs by 2006. The real test will be how soon full-scale induction will take place. Even going by conservative estimates, this may not happen for a decade from now. As frontline, multi-mission tactical aircraft, the indigenously manufactured supersonic fighters will ensure that the country develops the air defence capability that matches its requirements. It is to everyone's credit that a project that was even two years ago being dismissed as a fiasco has acquired steam and may yet come to symbolise the country's capability in indigenous aircraft development.

LCA is now Tejas

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, MAY 4. The indigenous light combat aircraft (LCA) — the smallest, lightweight, single-engine, single-seat, multi-role, fourth generation combat aircraft — was named "Tejas" (radiance) by the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, in Bangalore on Sunday.

Speaking at a function to christen the aircraft, the Prime Minister said even in the era of globalisation, in which free movement of goods, technologies and services was a recurring mantra, the country's defence modernisation programme continued to strive for maximum technological autonomy.

He expressed concern that in spite of adopting a responsible policy on missile, nuclear and dual use technologies and taking utmost care to avoid their proliferation, the country continued to face technology denial regimes which tried to impede its weapons development and other programmes.

In this context, Mr. Vajpayee referred to the policy adopted by the country on missile, nuclear, and dual use technologies, and said it was concerned, in the same way as other countries, that these technologies should not fall into the wrong hands.

The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, referred to the cynicism expressed by many a few years ago about the LCA and the Advanced Light Helicopter project taking off, and complimented the scientists, engineers, and workers of the organisations concerned for completing the mission.

The Chief of Air Staff, S. Krishnaswamy, said the LCA reflected the total capability of the Indian aviation sector, and he was convinced that the world-class weapon of war could teach any adversary a lesson.

The Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and Director-General, Aeronautical Development Agency, V.K. Atre, said the LCA had done 76 flights, and with the prototype vehicle about to join it, it would go supersonic shortly. Also present on the occasion were the Union Ministers,



The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in front of the Light Combat Aircraft, 'Tejas', at a function at the Bangalore International Airport on Sunday. — AFP

Ananth Kumar and O. Rajagopal, the Karnataka Governor, T.N. Chaturvedi, and the Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna.

Mr. Vajpayee, who witnessed some spectacular demonstrations by Tejas, said the American engines of the aircraft would soon be replaced by the indigenous Kaveri engines to make it 75 to 80 per cent indigenous.

'Lashkar module busted'

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, MAY 3. A terrorist module set up by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, which had prepared itself to create "another Akshardham-type of situation" in Mumbai to "trigger communal tensions", has been neutralised with the recent killing of three persons in an encounter and the arrest over the past week of six persons with Pakistani links, the Deputy Chief Minister, Chagan Bhujbal, said here today.

At a media presentation, assisted by the top brass of the Mumbai police, Mr. Bhujbal said that the terrorists' team "had surveyed Mantralaya" — the Secretariat — and "other crowded places like the Gateway of India" where explosions could be set off. The March 13 blast in a suburban train near Mulund was part of the plot.

AK-56 assault rifles and pistols were recovered and "came from the usual country" and procurement of chemicals such as a kilogram of potassium cyanide and acids has been "traced to its source", he and the Mumbai Police Commissioner, A.K. Sharma, said pointing out that "at least a dozen to 15 persons have been trained by his team which used the difficult-to-access hills about two hours away from Mumbai".

Though they announced that "we are aware of the identities of another half-a-dozen" persons involved, "we do not intend to disclose all the

details now" but a chargesheet under POTA would be filed "in the next few days".

The probe into the March 13 blast, which was followed by another in a bus near suburban Ghatkopar a few days later, led to the unearthing of the "conspiracy". Subsequently, in an encounter, three persons, including two Pakistani nationals, were killed; one of them was an ISI agent.

A sum of Rs. 4 lakhs, an AK-56 rifle, two pistols and 27 cartridges were found in their car.

Later, the chemicals and weapons were unearthed from near Bhiwandi.

The arrested persons include Artif Naser Mulah, an MBA who had allegedly received a Pakistani terrorist in Pune, found a place for him to hide in and generally supported his logistics. Another was Saquib Abdul Hamid Nachan, who had spent 10 years in jail under TADA provisions for possessing deadly weapons and had come to live in a village on the outskirts of Mumbai.

Several of the people have some connection with Pakistan, a couple of them having visited that country for training.

One of them killed in the encounter some weeks ago was a top ranking operative of the LeT's "southern command" and "they were spreading out and training people" who may have been identified but the officials wanted to withhold details.

9-
D.D. 5/11

Sorabjee defends validity of Pota

28/4

Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, April 22. - The Attorney-General, Mr Soli Sorabjee, today defended the Prevention of Terrorism Act as a "necessary evil" to curb the menace of terrorism and said that the law had enough in-built safeguards to prevent its misuse.

Making his submissions before the Supreme Court Bench (coram, Babu, Mathur, JJ) examining the constitutional validity of the law, Mr Sorabjee argued that Pota was an improved version of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act and had all the safeguards of the earlier law. "So if Tada is constitutional, a *fortiori* Pota is constitutional too," the Attorney-General said.

He rejected the prosecution contention that the law was beyond the legislative competence of Parliament as it fell under the law-making domain of states. Making a distinction between law and order and terrorism, he said the latter involved the security and sovereignty of the Indian state. "Our country has been the victim of an undeclared war by the epicentres of terrorism with the aid of well-knit and

resourceful terrorist organisations engaged in terrorist activities..."

The court directed the Attorney-General to explain the Union's stand on the bail provisions of Pota, the anonymity sought to be granted to witnesses and the necessity of recording confessional statements twice, once before the SP and later with the magistrate. Mr Sorabjee will make his submissions in this regard tomorrow.

"The climax of terrorist activities was the attack on... our Parliament... Hence acts of terrorism cannot at all be equated with breaches of law and order or disturbances of public order and safety," Mr Sorabjee said.

He pointed out that since the law related to the defence of the country, it falls under List I or the Central list of the constitutional scheme of division of powers. The anti-terror law is also in line with two UN Security Council resolutions, passed post-September 11, enjoining member-states to take steps to prevent and suppress terrorism, he said.

The constitutionality of Pota has been challenged by the jailed MDMK leader Mr Vaiko and the People's Union for Civil Liberties as violative of Article 19 (1) (a) of the Constitution.

23 APR 2003

23 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

India launches first radar-evading warship

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: India on Friday unveiled to the world its capability to incorporate stealth technology for military purposes with the launching of "Shivalik," a warship which has this system, at Mazagon Dock here.

At 1 p.m., Kaumudi Kumari, wife of Admiral Madhvendra Singh, chief of naval staff, broke a coconut on the warship's hull and named the vessel after a Himalayan peak. She then pressed the launch trigger and the new radar-evading warship, resplendent in its colourful bunting, slid down the slipway to the strains of 'Sare Jahan Se Achha.'

The process of fitting the 143-metre-long warship with different types of equipment and weapons will begin now and it will be delivered to the Indian Navy in December 2005.

Two more such warships will be built by Mazagon Dock and they will be delivered to the navy in 2006 and 2007. These have an unusual design and reduced noise level and will be armed to execute offensive and defensive missions. They will be fitted with surface-to-surface vertical launch missiles, surface-to-air missiles and state-of-the-art radar

"The government has decided to accord priority for strengthening Indian Navy," he stated. According to him, the important role of the navy was highlighted during the recent Iraqi war. "Most of the operations were carried out by the navy," he said.

Admiral Madhvendra Singh said a developing country like India should build its own navy in an era of technology denial by advanced nations. "In the last 35 years our shipyards have delivered 92 warships to the Indian Navy which is quite creditable," he stated.

He said: "Recent events have emphasised the fact that the strategic focus is in north Arabian Sea and the 21st century is the era of the navy."

Later addressing the media, he said the indigenous content of the stealth warship was about 70 per cent. The 30 per cent of the foreign component was mainly the weapon sensors and the missiles. "Nowhere in the world will you find a warships which is totally indigenous," he said.

Chairperson and managing director of Mazagon Dock Commodore H.S. Kang said the cost of the warship at the 1994 price level was Rs 700 crores. "However, at the time of delivery it could go up to Rs 2,000 crores," he added.

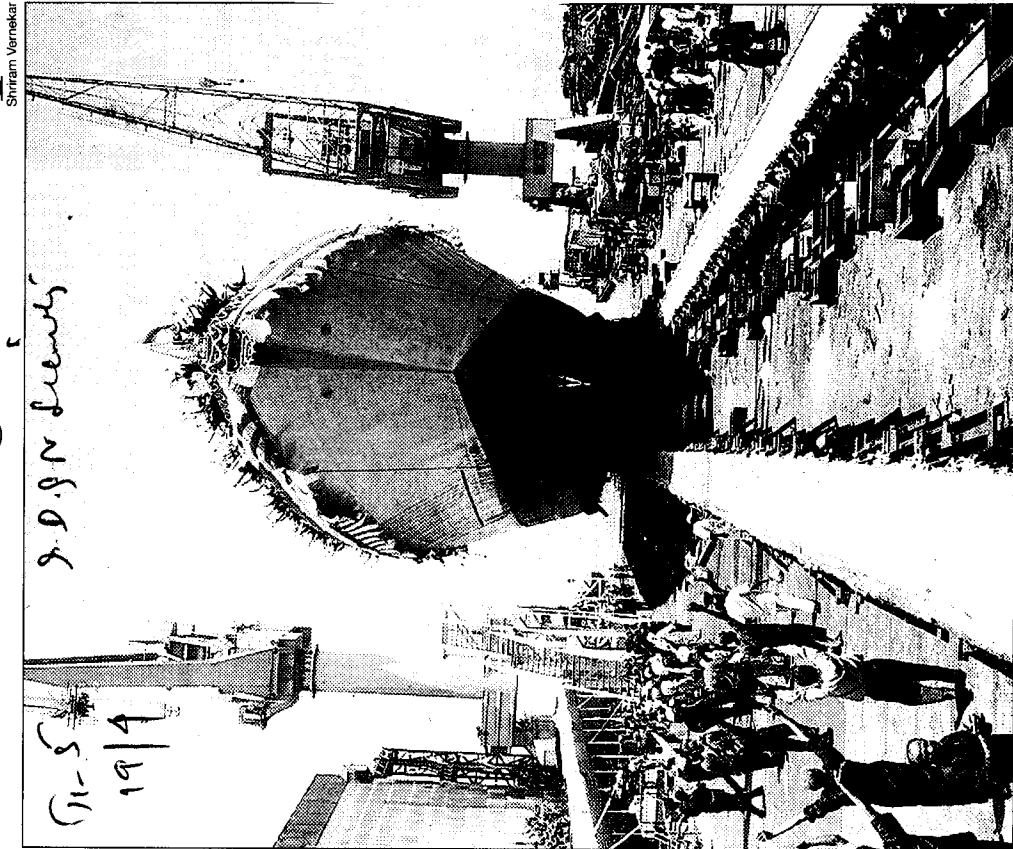
- The 143-metre-long warship 'Shivalik' will be delivered to the Indian Navy in December 2005.
- India has now joined the select group of nations which has developed stealth technology
- Two more warships will be built by Mazagon Dock

and communication equipment.

According to defence experts, with the launching of "Shivalik," India has joined a select group of nations which has developed stealth technology for defence purposes. The countries include, France, China, Russia, the US and recently South Korea.

The event evoked a lot of interest and curiosity in diplomatic circles. A dock official said: "Till late on Thursday night we received requests from consulates for invitations and passes for the function. We did our best to accommodate all the requests," he said.

Addressing the gathering, defence minister George Fernandes regretted that since independence India's maritime boundaries were neglected because there was a misconception that a war can take place only on land.



STEALTH GOES A-SAILING: India's first stealth warship 'Shivalik' slides down the ramp after its launch at Mazagon Dock in Mumbai on Friday.

129-17 ✓

India may get Phalcon AWACs

By Sandeep Dikshit ✓

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29. Denied to China and Pakistan, India is on the track to acquiring the sophisticated Phalcon airborne early warning and control system (AWACS). The Phalcon radar, developed jointly by the U.S. and Israel, can simultaneously track up to 60 targets over 800 km radius to support defensive and offensive operations.

Israel cancelled a firm order from China allegedly under American pressure as it was feared that the AWACS would give Beijing a decisive edge over U.S. fighter aircraft in case of a military conflict over the Taiwanese issue. Despite expressing reservations a couple of months ago, Israel has entered into price negotiations with India for the sale of Phalcon radars which will be mounted on the latest version of IL-76, the giant Russian military transport aircraft.

There is a minor roadblock though. Russia, Israel and India have to sign a tripartite agreement and a stalemate situation had arisen because of Moscow's insistence on a secrecy clause to ensure that Israel keeps to itself information gained while accessing its military aircraft. If Defence Ministry officials are to be believed, this issue is due to be sorted out soon.

Indian defence scientists had provided the technical solution earlier this year to the complicated issue of putting together the radars, avionics and data links. Most of the Indian software will be integrated by a Russian company. This would be the first time that a Phalcon radar will be fitted on a Russian aircraft. The trend so far was to mount it on Boeing 707 and 767 platforms. Comprising three antennas, the Phalcon provides 260 degree coverage and more coverage can be ensured by mounting small CONformal arrays on each side of the rear fuselage.

Though China had stated that a denial of the early warning system to it and opening talks with India would disturb stability and peace in South Asia, the formation of the contract negotiation committee and the commencement of price negotiations with Elta of Israel clearly indicate that India's dream of a decisive air superiority over potential adversaries is on the way to realisation. Defence planners are said to have earmarked about Rs. 1,000 crores for the purpose.

Since India would like the AWACS to last for two decades, the Tashkent Aircraft Production Company has been persuaded to provide structurally modified IL-76 TD version of the aircraft re-engined with the more powerful Russian engines.

Like Pakistan and China, India had also always craved for an AWACS but its dream died young. A prototype called Airawat (after Indra's elephant) crashlanded four years ago in Tamil Nadu killing all eight on board.

Since then India has been keen on acquiring an AWACS with considerable inputs from its engineers on the basis of the failed experiment which had last 14 years. The lifting of the sanctions and closer defence ties with the U.S. and Israel since September 11, 2001 have enabled it to move closer to acquiring an airborne radar to provide early warning about the presence of hostile aircraft in the skies.

30 APR 2003

THE HINDU

25 APR 2001

INDIA NEWS

HC resumes hearing in Parliament attack case

9. 07. 17
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NSM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 24. The Delhi High Court today resumed hearing of the appeals filed in the December 13 Parliament attack case. Continuing his presentation of the evidence recorded during the trial, the Special Prosecutor, Gopal Subramaniam, dealt with the evidence of police officials who arrested Shaukat Hussain Guru and Mohammed Afzal in Srinagar on December 15, 2001.

Srinagar police officer, M. Bhatt, had stated that they had received the information about Shaukat Hussain and Mohammed Afzal and the number of the truck they were travelling at 5.30 a.m. on December 15. It was on the basis of this information that they located the two men and the truck at around 8

a.m. at the fruit mandi in Srinagar. Formalities of the arrests were completed by 11.45 a.m.

Justice Pradip Nandrajog asked Mr. Subramaniam to link the detail of the arrests to the time when the information about the truck was received as in evidence relating to arrests that Mr. Subramaniam had presented earlier the information about the two men and the number of the truck were ascertained only after the arrest of Afsan Guru/Navjot Sandhu.

According to the evidence of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma of Delhi Police's Special Cell, S.A.R. Geelani was arrested first, at 10 a.m. on December 15, and he led them to the house of Afsan Guru who was arrested at 10.45 a.m.

Mr. Subramaniam said that while dealing with the material

on record he would arrive at a "safe time" or a "likely time" and the order of arrests. He said that what remained to be considered was the defence's claim that Geelani was arrested on the afternoon of December 14 and Navjot Sandhu on the night of December 14. This would suggest that they had the information prior to 8 a.m. on December 15.

He said that even if Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma's evidence was assumed to be correct and the information was received on December 15 at 10.45 a.m., it could have been "flushed immediately" to Srinagar which would have enabled the arrests at 11.45 a.m.

Justice Nandrajog pointed out that according to the statement of the police official in Srinagar who made the arrests,

information about the truck was recorded as having been received at 5.30 a.m. Mr. Subramaniam responded saying, "I am not trying to reconstruct but your Lordships will have to take a view on how this information came. Was it only because of the disclosure made (by Afsan Guru)". He added that what should also be considered was the view taken by the trial court judge who concluded that "if Bhatt was right, then the arrests must have been a little earlier".

The judge asked Mr. Subramaniam when the police got information of the truck number. Mr. Subramaniam replied: "Only after the arrests of Geelani and Navjot on December 15 at around 10 a.m. and 10.45 a.m." The hearing will resume on Monday.

He said the train between Srinagar and Delhi was stopped for 10 days.

INDIA NEWS

1973
A hard look at POTA

THE CENTRE'S decision to set up a committee to review the working of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) underlines a belated dawning of sense. When all objections to this seemingly even more restrictive successor of TADA were summarily brushed aside by the BJP ministers — especially L.K. Advani — they were clearly being guided by the electoral need to highlight their commitment to fight terrorism. As a result, the misgivings voiced by opposition political parties and human rights organisations were derided as unpatriotic. What was overlooked was India's dubious record in the use of harsh laws. Whether it was the Defence of India Rules (DIR) or the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) — called the Maintenance of Indira and Sanjay Act during the Emergency — or the more recent TADA, there had been persistent complaints of their misuse.

Nor is this surprising. In a country where even ordinary laws assume draconian proportions in the hands of a corrupt and oppressive police, especially where the poor or people with-

out the right connections are concerned, it's clearly not safe to entrust the force with excessive powers. The situation has been compounded by the handy 'tool' which vindictive politicians have found in the POTA. Had only the underprivileged suffered the consequences of arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions, the home ministry may not have bothered. But what has awakened it to the dangers inherent in the law is its misuse against political opponents by the governments of Ms Jayalalitha and Ms Mayawati.

Not only that, the fact that the two chief ministers have jailed the BJP's allies like the MDMK's Vaiko in Tamil Nadu and Raja Bhaiyya in Uttar Pradesh has further energised the home ministry. It is to be hoped that the review committee will not only underline the need to ensure that the POTA is not used for partisan purposes, but also that there are adequate built-in safeguards against the harassment of the innocent. It is the latter who deserve more attention than the canny politicians who have run afoul of their currently more powerful adversaries in the states.

17 APR 2003

Horror at Nadimarg

5/18 Launches no security revolution

Militants are not likely to be cowed down nor their victims comforted by the outcome of the high-level meeting called by the Deputy Prime Minister in the wake of the nightmare at Nadimarg. The formal note issued after it was typically bureaucratic, piles of pious intent sans promise of positive action. In fact what it projected in all seriousness would arouse amazement, if not derision. The homily began, "the Union Government today reaffirmed its commitment to providing all feasible support to the State Government of J&K in its fight against terrorism", was that commitment ever questioned? If it was then the Centre would find itself in the dock for not protecting what it insists is an integral part of the nation. Similar would be the thrust of a question generated by the declaration that "it was agreed that the Union and State Governments would function in complete harmony on all security related matters." Is it an admission of previous discord, or variances in perception? If both the Centre and the State felt it was important to reiterate what are the basics of governance then they are admitting to a lot that is despicable. The note also talks of ensuring "more synergized and pro-active anti-terrorism operations" by the various forces deployed in the state — surely there can be no better co-ordinating agency than the Unified Command that has been in place for some years. Or is it true that each agency functions independently, and the Unified Command is only in name?

The specific outcome of the high-level interaction was the setting up of a "special group to review existing macro-strategies" and to suggest "appropriate" ones to be implemented during the next few months. If after more than a decade of full-blown militancy in the state there is a requirement to develop strategies it is a poor reflection of the functioning of the security agencies down the years. That group has been given three months to make its recommendations, by which time the snows would have melted and the militants would enjoy easy access to both bases and targets.

Government admit that a similar group was set up in 1998 — did its recommendations prove inadequate? If so, why the long wait to evolve a better action plan? There would be only limited validity to the unofficially-expressed claim that the 1998 plan did not reach fruition because the counter-insurgency grid being developed got dismantled when the army's VIII Mountain Division had to be rushed from the Valley to deal with the Kargil incursions. Operation Vijay wound down in September 1999, has it been impossible to re-establish the grid over the last 40 months?

The tragedy of J&K is that while it gives the politicians a lot to politick over, and the Government cause to take Pakistan to the cleaners, the security effort on the ground remains patchy. There have been no signs of innovation, the theory of area-dominance and saturation with forces has not been modified. The nature of the "policing" is such that it arouses resentment — if not worse — among the local populace. Committees, special groups and what have you may come up with impressive recommendations, the functioning of the agencies implementing them has yet to impress.

4 APR 2003

THE STATESMAN

India's stealth warship to be launched on Friday

45 119 12
By Arunkumar Bhatt 167A

MUMBAI, APRIL 15. India will launch the first of its indigenous stealth warships of the Project 17 New Nilgiri Class next Friday in Mumbai.

Conceived by the Naval Design Bureau of the Indian Navy, the New Nilgiri, billed to be stealthy versatile surface combatants, will be the standard frigate of the Indian Navy, which has the programme to build 12 such warships.

The new Nilgiri built by the Mazgaon Dock, the country's premier shipyard, is 143 metres long and 16.9 metres wide at beam, displacing 4,900 tonnes. Powered by gas turbines and diesel engines, the frigates of this class achieve a top speed of over 30 knots. The design imbibes state-of-the-art technology, modern stealth features and latest weapon and sensor fit, say the builders.

Its armament, it is said, include anti-ship cruise missiles, either Indo-Russian collaboration Brahmos or the Russian Klub missiles from eight vertical launchers. The launchers are believed to be flexible enough to deliver anti-submarine torpedoes. It will have a combination of missiles and guns providing medium range and close in air defence. These include Kashmir surface-to-air missile system having 24 missiles of 3.5 to 25 km range.

The ship is capable of taking on at least six targets — in multi-dimension and multi-direction — simultaneously. The main air search and targeting radar is a foremast-mounted. Fire control guidance and target illumination for the Kashmir system is provided by three or four Orekh radars. The fire control for the ship's 76 mm super rapid gun is provided by Bharat Electronics' radar, Shikari and fire control for surface ships will be done by Aparna (Active and Passive Radar Navigation and Attack) radar.

The electronic warfare suit will also be the Bharat Electronic's Ajanta system comprising rather unusual mix of components and equipment from India, Israel, Italy and some other country. The navigation system will include the Decca Bridgemaster, Bharat Electronics' Rashmi (Radar Aid for Inshore and Harbour Manoeuvring in I-band) or its other system called Rani (Radar Aid for navigation in I-band).

The New Nilgiri is capable of carrying two advanced light helicopters or Sea King for anti-submarine warfare.

Insat-3a put in orbit amidst loud applause

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: India's space programme shot into greater heights on Thursday with the hi-tech Ariane-5 rocket successfully placing the indigenous 2,950-kg Insat-3a communication satellite into orbit.

According to reports reaching here, the thunderous lift-off of Ariane-5 at 4.22 a.m. from the European spaceport of Kourou in French Guyana triggered a loud applause from the scientists and engineers gathered at the Arianespace's Jupiter control room.

As the rocket soared higher and higher gaining speed every second, its white flames lit up the night sky over Kourou. The whole area echoed to the rumbling sound of the rocket's engines.

The much-awaited mission was originally scheduled for Wednesday. But it was postponed because of a minor technical snag. Along with Insat-3a, the rocket also placed in orbit an American satellite, Galaxy XII. Once it becomes operational in a week's time, Insat-3a will mainly provide telecommunication and TV transmission services. It will have a meteorological role and is also equipped with a search and rescue payload.

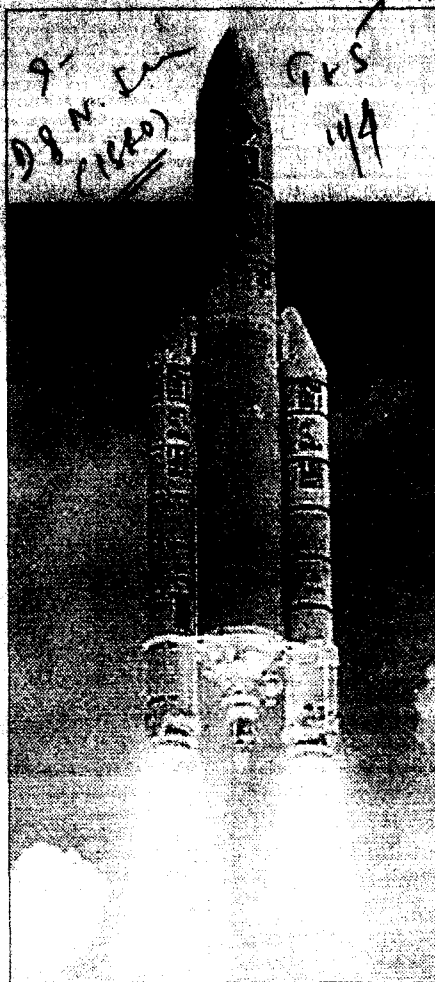
When the final launch sequence was initiated and the countdown was nearing its end, the atmosphere in the control room turned into one of nervous anticipation. For satellite mission director R.K. Rajangam, it was an anxious moment. Seconds before the rocket took off, the scientists clasped their hands in a silent prayer. Much to their relief, Ariane-5 blasted off without any hitch.

Three minutes and 26 seconds after lift-off, the rocket left the earth's atmosphere. A commentator in the control room declared that "all systems are on the go," indicating that everything was functioning normally.

Chairperson of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) K. Kasturirangan was observing the rocket's flight path on a giant monitor. Mr Rajangam was glued to the computer analysing the flow of data and his colleague C.S. Nagaraj spoke on the hotline to officials at the ISRO headquarters in Bangalore updating them about the progress of the flight.

Seventeen minutes and 36 seconds later; the velocity of the rocket reached nine km per second, which was the speed needed to place the satellite in the geo-stationary transfer orbit (GTO).

About 30 minutes after the rocket took off, the ISRO team was in a mood to celebrate because Insat-3a was successfully injected into the GTO. When the master-control facility at Hassan in Karnataka ac-



Insat-3a was launched from Kourou, French Guyana, on Thursday morning.

gratulatory handshakes.

It will be parked in the GTO for a few days before it moves to its final home in the geo-stationary orbit, 36,000 km above the Equator.

The initial checks of Insat-3a showed that it was performing satisfactorily. Mr Kasturirangan called it a "very eventful flight, spectacular and technologically precise". Following the success of the mission, ISRO chief and CEO of Arianespace Jean-Yves Le Gall announced the signing of launch contracts for two more Indian payloads: Insat-4a and 4b which will be used for telecommunication purposes in the coming years.

Insat-3a is the 10th satellite of ISRO which has been orbited by an Ariane launcher since June 1981. In the coming days orbit-raising operations of the satellite will be carried out. It will be positioned

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 APR 2003

Opposition alleges misuse of POTA

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. Even as the Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha today levelled allegations of misuse of POTA, the Centre said it will not interfere in the functioning of the Review Committee set up to review such charges. The Committee will look into the cases of misuse referred to it or even taken up 'suo motu', the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, informed the Rajya Sabha.

Replying to supplementaries, Mr. Advani refused to be drawn into a discussion on whether the setting up of the Committee was an admission on the part of the Government that the allegations of misuse were correct. The question was raised by Alka Balram Kshatriya (Cong.) who sought to know whether setting up of a committee meant that the Government agree that there was misuse of POTA. Mr. Advani said the Committee was constituted taking cognisance of the allegations made on the floor of the House.

Independent member, Sha-

bana Azmi sought to know whether many people in Gujarat were booked for the Godhra carnage but no one arrested for the bloodshed that followed. While several members were on their feet, the Leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, questioned the reason for a change in the Government affidavit in the Supreme Court on the issue of arrest of the MDMK leader, Vaiko, under POTA. He said the reply to Ms. Azmi's query was "not satisfactory".

Mr. Advani said the Committee was expected to take a comprehensive view of the use of the Act in all States, complaints, grievances and any cases referred to it for review.

It would also suggest measures to ensure that provisions of the Act were invoked for combating terrorism only and not other crimes. "You should not expect me to usurp the authority of the Review Committee," he said.

In reply to another query, Mr. Advani said the Centre had not referred any case to the Committee.

10 APR 2003

THE HINDU

POTA accused can move court for bail within a year: Sorabjee

J. D. S. N. S. S. S.

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 8. The Attorney-General, Soli Sorabjee, today clarified in the Supreme Court that a person detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) could move for bail within one year and that he need not wait for the expiry of the one-year period.

The Attorney-General's clarification came during the course of arguments before a Bench of Justice S. Rajendra Babu and Justice G.P. Mathur hearing a batch of petitions questioning the constitutional validity of POTA.

When senior counsel for the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Rajindar Sachar, was arguing that Section 49 of POTA was so harsh that bail could be filed only after one year, Mr. Sorabjee intervened and said

the correct interpretation of this provision was that bail petition could be filed within one year.

It might be recalled that this stand of the Centre was quite in contrast to the arguments of the Additional Solicitor-General, Altaf Ahmed, who while appearing for Tamil Nadu (before another Bench comprising Justice K.G. Balakrishnan and Justice P. Venkatarama Reddi), had stated that under POTA a bail petition could be filed only after one year.

He had argued on Monday that the Madras High Court judgment that under Section 49 bail could be filed before a special POTA court before the expiry of one year was erroneous. But today Mr. Sorabjee said the High Court's interpretation seemed to be correct. Mr. Sachar reiterated that as the Act did not contain

adequate safeguards, it was being misused in some States. Further, most of the States had stated that they would not implement the Act. "Are we not making a mockery of the law," he asked.

Mr. Sachar cited various judgments to show how the provisions violated international covenants and declarations governing fair trial and human rights. The Act did not have any safeguards and was being abused and misused.

He said the National Human Rights Commission had categorically stated that POTA was not necessary to deal with terrorism, which could be effectively tackled with existing laws. The Government had not taken a lesson from past experience of the TADA being misused. It was on record that out of over 77,000 arrests made under

TADA, the conviction rate was just 0.41 per cent. He said innovative ideas could be the right answer to the menace of terrorism and not state terrorism as it would be counter-productive. Further arguments by other counsel will continue tomorrow.

Meanwhile, P. Nedumaran, president of the Tamilar Desiya Iyakkam, detained under POTA has filed a writ petition for a declaration that POTA is unconstitutional. He said he had addressed a public meeting in Chennai on April 13, 2002, after obtaining permission. The discussions focussed on the repercussions of the press conference addressed by the LTTE

supremo, V. Prabakaran, and it had nothing to do with any support to any unlawful or terrorist organisation nor did it further the activities of any such organisation.

9 APR 2003

THE HINDU

MiG-21 crashes

in Ambala

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, April 7. — At least five people were injured, two of them seriously when an Indian Air Force MiG-21 fighter jet crashed into the residential area of a milk processing plant in Ambala's Baldev Nagar locality around noon.

The district authorities disclosed that two of the seriously injured were rushed to the PGI and Sector 32 Medical College and Hospital in Chandigarh. Three persons who received minor injuries were rushed to a local hospital in Ambala.

Among the injured were three woman, Roshni, Santri and Sita Devi, and two children.

Sources said a house and some vehicles were damaged and a fire broke out which was brought under control.

The aircraft crashed soon after take-off and the pilot, Flight Lt. Garg, ejected safely. He was admitted to the Military Hospital in Ambala.

Agni-III test-fire this year: Fernandes

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NEW DELHI, APRIL 6. India is developing 'Agni-III', a long-range surface-to-surface missile capable of carrying nuclear warheads, and is making all efforts to test fire it this year, according to the Defence Minister, George Fernandes.

"The test firing of Agni-III is overdue and we feel the need for that long-range missile as part of our policy of deterrence," he told PTI.

He said Agni-III would have a strike capacity longer than Agni-II, which has a range of over 2000 km.

Asked when Agni-III would be test fired, the Minister said, "the

date has not been firmed up. Effort is to see that it is test fired this year".

On whether Agni-I and Agni-II have been deployed, he said, "Well, they are available for deployment." Asked whether these missiles would be with the strategic forces or the Army, he said that it would depend on the situation that would demand their use. He replied in the affirmative when asked if Agni-I and Agni-II were being produced.

Asked about other missiles being developed by the country, Mr. Fernandes said he would take pride in the success of 'Brahmos', a supersonic cruise

missile jointly produced by India and Russia. "Apart from Agni and Prithvi (a short-range surface-to-surface missile), supersonic cruise missile Brahmos is something exclusive. Nobody has this missile today," he added.

On whether Brahmos has reached the development stage, he said, "deployment comes when you start serial production. That stage has come in the sense that we are ready now. All tests are complete". Brahmos, which has a range of nearly 300 km, has three versions — ground-to-air, air-to-ground and the naval variant.

SEE HINDI

SELECTIVE USE OF POTA

BY FIRST SUBMITTING to the Supreme Court that the MDMK general secretary, Vaiko, attracted the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, and then offering to file a fresh, corrective, affidavit on the issue after coming under pressure from allies, the National Democratic Alliance Government is guilty of endorsing selective use of the anti-terrorism law. The distinction sought to be made by the Centre between the "use" and the "misuse" of POTA appears to be driven by political expediency and not any legal argument. Apparently, the difficulty for the BJP, which heads the NDA, is to help the leader of an allied party, Mr. Vaiko, out of the case slapped on him by the Tamil Nadu Government for supporting the banned Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, without, however, diluting the provisions of the POTA. In short, the Centre, while maintaining the need for a draconian law such as POTA to deal with cross-border terrorism, does not want the same to be used by State Governments, whether in Tamil Nadu or Uttar Pradesh, against political opponents. Especially if these political opponents are friends of the BJP. Although there is no denying that some of the provisions of POTA are harsh, what is disconcerting is that the Centre, which rode roughshod over Opposition criticism of the Act, seems to have woken up to the danger of misuse of the legislation only after the BJP's political friends were put in the dock.

Even before the faux pas in the Government affidavit in the Supreme Court, which the Attorney-General, Soli Sorabjee, attributed to juniors, the Centre had decided to constitute a review committee to check misuse of POTA. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, had stated that the review committee would ensure that the law would not be used against ordinary criminals or persons who were not terrorists. In the eyes of the BJP, the cases of Mr. Vaiko, and the independent Uttar Pradesh MLA, Raja Bhैया, did not warrant the use of POTA. But, irre-

spective of the political motives of the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, or the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, in putting their electoral rivals behind bars, the fact remains that they have gone by the book in invoking POTA and more justifiably in the case of the manifest support for the LTTE. Truly, it is impossible for the Centre to ensure that the law is used only for the reasons originally envisaged: cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and destabilisation plans of Pakistan's ISI. Ironically, while the Jammu and Kashmir Government is not implementing POTA, other State Governments have become alive to the possibility of using POTA to deal with law and order problems and political rivals.

In Tamil Nadu, the Centre's attitude on POTA is irrevocably tied to the BJP's choice of allies. Any support of the State Government's use of the anti-terrorism law against Mr. Vaiko would have effectively ended the alliance with the DMK and the MDMK. The DMK president, M. Karunanidhi, has actually called for the repeal of the law, going a step further than even the MDMK which, being a junior ally in the NDA, has to be necessarily more circumspect before taking on the BJP. As the next general election is at least a year away, the BJP, for its part, would not like to displease the DMK when any tie-up with the AIADMK is yet to be formalised. The AIADMK and the BJP have moved closer to each other in the last one year, but it is still too early to talk of a political realignment. Indeed, the options-open policy of the BJP in Tamil Nadu seems to have resulted in the Centre's ambivalence on the Vaiko issue. If there is a point to be made against the political use of POTA by the State Government, then it holds true for the Centre too. Support or opposition from the Centre to particular cases of use of POTA is seemingly dictated by the political situation in a State. Without doubt, the Centre's plea against the misuse of POTA lacks credibility.

THE HINDU

1 APR 2003

Vaiko's speech an act of terrorism: Centre

By J. Venkatesan

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NEW DELHI, MARCH 29. The Central Government has submitted in the Supreme Court that the MDMK leader, Vaiko's speech made at a public meeting, near Madurai, in June last constituted an act of terrorism under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

In its counter-affidavit to Mr. Vaiko's petition challenging the constitutional validity of POTA, the Centre said, "the petitioner has been drawing support for LTTE, a banned terrorist organisation" which was responsible for the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. And "the words flowing from the petitioner constitute an act of terrorism" under POTA.

Mr. Vaiko, whose party is an ally of the ruling NDA Government at the Centre, was arrested on July 11 last. The hopes of his supporters, who have all along been expecting that the Centre would come to his rescue at least in his legal battle, have

been dashed. By justifying Section 21 of POTA in the Supreme Court and by describing Mr. Vaiko's speech as an act of terrorism, the Centre has belied even this hope, leave alone take any steps to get him released.

A batch of writ petitions questioning the validity of POTA, including the one filed by Mr. Vaiko, is expected to come up for final hearing next week. Though listed for hearing this week, these could not be taken up as they were at the bottom of the list.

In his petition Mr. Vaiko had contended that the scope of Section 21 of POTA was very wide affecting the right to freedom of speech and expression guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution.

Refuting this, the Centre's affidavit said that "what is prohibited is support or assistance for a terrorist organisation which amounts to a reasonable restriction on the person's right to freedom of speech or expression which is permissible under the Constitution itself".

It pointed out that under Section 21 (3)

of POTA "a person commits an offence if he addresses, submitting for the purpose of encouraging support for terrorist organisation or to further its activities".

Referring to Mr. Vaiko's speech at the public meeting, the Centre said that "wrong support for a banned organisation also amounts to an act of terrorism".

POTA had been enacted with the intention of providing a special machinery to combat the growing menace of terrorism in different parts of the country. If such activities (of support) of a terrorist organisation were allowed unchecked, it would dilute the fight against the menace of terrorism.

On Mr. Vaiko's contention that his fundamental right was infringed, the affidavit said that "it is the larger interest of society which have to be protected and not the rights of a few individuals".

Mr. Vaiko's contentions were misconceived and devoid of any merit or substance and "deserved to be rejected", the Centre said and sought their dismissal.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2003

LCA is now Tejas

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, MAY 4. The indigenous light combat aircraft (LCA) — the smallest, lightweight, single-engine, single-seat, multi-role, fourth generation combat aircraft — was named "Tejas" (radiance) by the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, in Bangalore on Sunday.

Speaking at a function to christen the aircraft, the Prime Minister said even in the era of globalisation, in which free movement of goods, technologies and services was a recurring mantra, the country's defence modernisation programme continued to strive for maximum technological autonomy.

He expressed concern that in spite of adopting a responsible policy on missile, nuclear and dual use technologies and taking utmost care to avoid their proliferation, the country continued to face technology denial regimes which tried to impede its weapons development and other programmes.

In this context, Mr. Vajpayee referred to the policy adopted by the country on missile, nuclear, and dual use technologies, and said it was concerned, in the same way as other countries, that these technologies should not fall into the wrong hands.

The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, referred to the cynicism expressed by many a few years ago about the LCA and the Advanced Light Helicopter project taking off, and complimented the scientists, engineers, and workers of the organisations concerned for completing the mission.

The Chief of Air Staff, S. Krishnaswamy, said the LCA reflected the total capability of the Indian aviation sector, and he was convinced that the world-class weapon of war could teach any adversary a lesson.

The Scientific Adviser to the Defence Minister and Director-General, Aeronautical Development Agency, V.K. Atre, said the LCA had done 76 flights, and with the prototype vehicle about to join it, it would go supersonic shortly. Also present on the occasion were the Union Ministers,



The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in front of the Light Combat Aircraft, 'Tejas', at a function at the Bangalore International Airport on Sunday. — AFP

Ananth Kumar and O. Rajagopal, the Karnataka Governor, T.N. Chaturvedi, and the Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna.

Mr. Vajpayee, who witnessed some spectacular demonstrations by Tejas, said the American engines of the aircraft would soon be replaced by the indigenous Kaveri engines to make it 75 to 80 per cent indigenous.

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2003

TEJAS

9-0-2003

THE COUNTRY'S PRESTIGIOUS aeronautical project that aims to find a replacement for the aging MiG fleet of the Air Force has been making steady, though slow progress. The two so-called technology demonstrators of the Light Combat Aircraft which adorned the skies over Bangalore on Sunday confirm the fairly significant advances made in the past year in the development of the indigenous fighter aircraft. Christened Tejas (radiance), their flight in formation comes nearly a year after the second of the two technology demonstrators was test flown and more than two and a half years after the first was aerially tested. Dogged by delay, some of which is understandable in the case of such high technology programmes, progress on the LCA project picked up with the lifting of the economic sanctions by the U.S. and the release of some blocked high technology. As the Prime Minister mentioned during the christening ceremony, the country's drive to acquire maximum technological autonomy faces obstacles. The experience with the LCA project as well as other defence modernisation programmes carries several lessons. The most vital one is the imperative of moving toward the goal of self-reliance in key sectors.

That the technology demonstrators still are powered by engines acquired from the U.S. highlights this truth. The time schedule for the indigenous Kaveri engine, which is to replace the U.S. makes, has been slipping regularly. Mr. Vajpayee said the Kaveri engine would be ready soon, but in the absence of a target date and in the context of the LCA's chequered history, doubts will persist over official claims. Any delay in the Kaveri programme can cause a further setback. Once it is fitted, the LCA will become 75 per cent indigenous. It has been designed and developed by a consortium of five aircraft research, design, production and product support organisations and the scientists, technicians and workers of the agencies involved

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deserve full praise for the progress so far on a project of critical importance to the defence of the country. Whatever scepticism and doubt existed over the LCA project related to the inordinately long gestation period considering that it was placed on the drawing board nearly two decades ago. Criticism also centred on the unrealistic estimates of the resources and time needed to accomplish the task. Compounding these self-created delays was the imposition of the American sanctions that followed the nuclear testing by India in the summer of 1998 which totally skewed the schedule. It is to the credit of the scientists that they have utilised the forced and unavoidable delay to develop a host of systems and components that are essential for all aircraft.

Sunday's show of technological prowess should spur the political leadership to place the required resources at the disposal of the agencies to move towards the ultimate goal of induction of the LCA. The recent series of accidents involving the MiG fleet underscores the dangers of further delay. The IAF has decided to retire some of the ground attack MiG 23s along with the oldest versions of the MiG 21s. When they were acquired, the MiGs were considered the workhorse of the Air Force and as their intended replacement, the LCAs have a pivotal role to play. Agreements have been signed for the manufacture of a small number of LCAs by 2006. The real test will be how soon full-scale induction will take place. Even going by conservative estimates, this may not happen for a decade from now. As frontline, multi-mission tactical aircraft, the indigenously manufactured supersonic fighters will ensure that the country develops the air defence capability that matches its requirements. It is to everyone's credit that a project that was even two years ago being dismissed as a fiasco has acquired steam and may yet come to symbolise the country's capability in indigenous aircraft development.

HC resumes hearing in Parliament attack case

NSA

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 24. The Delhi High Court today resumed hearing of the appeals filed in the December 13 Parliament attack case. Continuing his presentation of the evidence recorded during the trial, the Special Prosecutor, Gopal Subramaniam, dealt with the evidence of police officials who arrested Shaukat Hussain Guru and Mohammed Afzal in Srinagar on December 15, 2001.

Srinagar police officer, M. Bhatt, had stated that they had received the information about Shaukat Hussain and Mohammed Afzal and the number of the truck they were travelling at 5.30 a.m. on December 15. It was on the basis of this information that they located the two men and the truck at around 8

a.m. at the fruit mandi in Srinagar. Formalities of the arrests were completed by 11.45 a.m.

Justice Pradip Nandrajog asked Mr. Subramaniam to link the detail of the arrests to the time when the information about the truck was received as in evidence relating to arrests that Mr. Subramaniam had presented earlier the information about the two men and the number of the truck were ascertained only after the arrest of Afsan Guru/Navjot Sandhu.

According to the evidence of Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma of Delhi Police's Special Cell, S.A.R. Geelani was arrested first, at 10 a.m. on December 15, and he led them to the house of Afsan Guru who was arrested at 10.45 a.m.

Mr. Subramaniam said that while dealing with the material

on record he would arrive at a "safe time" or a "likely time" and the order of arrests. He said that what remained to be considered was the defence's claim that Geelani was arrested on the afternoon of December 14 and Navjot Sandhu on the night of December 14. This would suggest that they had the information prior to 8 a.m. on December 15.

He said that even if Inspector Mohan Chand Sharma's evidence was assumed to be correct and the information was received on December 15 at 10.45 a.m., it could have been "flushed immediately" to Srinagar which would have enabled the arrests at 11.45 a.m.

Justice Nandrajog pointed out that according to the statement of the police official in Srinagar who made the arrests,

information about the trucks was recorded as having been received at 5.30 a.m. Mr. Subramaniam responded saying: "I am not trying to reconstruct, but your Lordships will have to take a view on how this information came. Was it only because of the disclosure made (by Afsan Guru)". He added that what should also be considered was the view taken by the trial court judge who concluded that "if Bhatt was right, then the arrests must have been a little earlier".

The Judge asked Mr. Subramaniam when the police got information of the truck number. Mr. Subramaniam replied: "Only after the arrests of Geelani and Navjot on December 15 at around 10 a.m. and 10.45 a.m."

The hearing will resume on Monday.

India may get Phalcon AWACs

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, APRIL 29. Denied to China and Pakistan, India is on the track to acquiring the sophisticated Phalcon airborne early warning and control system (AWACS). The Phalcon radar, developed jointly by the U.S. and Israel, can simultaneously track up to 60 targets over 800 km radius to support defensive and offensive operations.

Israel cancelled a firm order from China allegedly under American pressure as it was feared that the AWACS would give Beijing a decisive edge over U.S. fighter aircraft in case of a military conflict over the Taiwanese issue. Despite expressing reservations a couple of months ago, Israel has entered into price negotiations with India for the sale of Phalcon radars which will be mounted on the latest version of IL-76, the giant Russian military transport aircraft.

There is a minor roadblock though. Russia, Israel and India have to sign a tripartite agreement and a stalemate situation had arisen because of Moscow's insistence on a secrecy clause to ensure that Israel keeps to itself information gained while accessing its military aircraft. If Defence Ministry officials are to be believed, this issue is due to be sorted out soon.

Indian defence scientists had provided the technical solution earlier this year to the complicated issue of putting together the radars, avionics and data links. Most of the Indian software will be integrated by a Russian company. This would be the first time that a Phalcon radar will be fitted on a Russian aircraft. The trend so far was to mount it on Boeing 707 and 767 platforms. Comprising three antennas, the Phalcon provides 260 degree coverage and more coverage can be ensured by mounting small CONformal arrays on each side of the rear fuselage.

Though China had stated that a denial of the early warning system to it and opening talks with India would disturb stability and peace in South Asia, the formation of the contract negotiation committee and the commencement of price negotiations with Elta of Israel clearly indicate that India's dream of a decisive air superiority over potential adversaries is on the way to realisation. Defence planners are said to have earmarked about Rs. 1,000 crores for the purpose.

Since India would like the AWACS to last for two decades, the Tashkent Aircraft Production Company has been persuaded to provide structurally modified IL-76 TD version of the aircraft re-engined with the more powerful Russian engines.

Like Pakistan and China, India had also always craved for an AWACS but its dream died young. A prototype called Airawat (after Indra's elephant) crashlanded four years ago in Tamil Nadu killing all eight on board.

Since then India has been keen on acquiring an AWACS with considerable inputs from its engineers on the basis of the failed experiment which had last 14 years. The lifting of the sanctions and closer defence ties with the U.S. and Israel since September 11, 2001 have enabled it to move closer to acquiring an airborne radar to provide early warning about the presence of hostile aircraft in the skies.

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Meeting to review J&K security

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25. The Government has decided to call a high-level meeting to be chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, over the "next few days" to recalibrate the security measures in Jammu and Kashmir following the massacre of 24 Kashmiri Pandits yesterday in Pulwama and the expectation of enhanced terrorist activity due to warmer weather in the coming months.

Briefing newsmen, the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, said the effects of the Jammu and Kashmir Government's "healing touch" policy did not come up for

discussion at today's "informal meeting" of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). But the proposed security review could bring it under the scanner.

Accusing Pakistan of continuing to abet cross-border terrorism as evidenced by the Pulwama killings, Mr. Sinha said this point of view was conveyed to the Foreign Ministers of the U.S. and the U.K., Colin Powell and Jack Straw, respectively, when they phoned him on Monday to express their condolences over the large number of civilian deaths.

"There is reason to believe that all the actions are being directed from across the border.

Therefore, there is need for the international community to recognise this fact and for us to be more careful in future," Mr. Sinha said.

Following a detailed appraisal by Mr. Advani, it was decided that he along with the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, will represent the Centre at the security review meeting to be held in the "next few days". The Srinagar team will be headed by the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and "possibly" the Governor, G. C. Saxena. Representatives of the armed forces, intelligence agencies and others involved in counter-insurgency operations will also attend.

The CCS, held later than scheduled due to the delayed arrival of Mr. Advani from the massacre site in south Kashmir, also noted the disquiet over the passive capitulation by State policemen when threatened by militants. Mr. Sinha said the issue of positioning army personnel near the 80 or so hamlets occupied by Kashmiri Pandits in south Kashmir might come up for discussion.

Earlier in the day, the Chief of the Army Staff, N. C. Vij, who also attended the CCS meeting, asserted that anti-terrorist operations would be carried out in "full swing".

Healing touch not for militants: Minister

By Our Staff Reporter

JAMMU, MARCH 25. Under attack from different quarters for the Jammu and Kashmir Government's "healing touch" policy, the People's Democratic Party leader and Finance, Law and Parliamentary Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Beig, defended the coalition Government's policies and vowed to fight the terrorists.

Speaking in the State Assembly, he said, "The policy initiated with an objective to heal the wounds of the alienated masses in the State is unfortunately being interpreted in the entire country as a soft policy towards the terrorists. As a matter of fact, the policy is aimed at winning over the masses."

THE HINDU

26 MAR 2003

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A hard look at POTA

THE CENTRE'S decision to set up a committee to review the working of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) underlines a belated dawning of sense. When all objections to this seemingly even more restrictive successor of TADA were summarily brushed aside by the BJP ministers — especially L.K. Advani — they were clearly being guided by the electoral need to highlight their commitment to fight terrorism. As a result, the misgivings voiced by opposition political parties and human rights organisations were derided as unpatriotic. What was overlooked was India's dubious record in the use of harsh laws. Whether it was the Defence of India Rules (DIR) or the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) — called the Maintenance of Indira and Sanjay Act during the Emergency — or the more recent TADA, there had been persistent complaints of their misuse.

Nor is this surprising. In a country where even ordinary laws assume draconian proportions in the hands of a corrupt and oppressive police, especially where the poor or people with

out the right connections are concerned, it's clearly not safe to entrust the force with excessive powers. The situation has been compounded by the handy 'tool' which vindictive politicians have found in the POTA. Had only the underprivileged suffered the consequences of arbitrary arrests and prolonged detentions, the home ministry may not have bothered. But what has awakened it to the dangers inherent in the law is its misuse against political opponents by the governments of Ms Jayalalitha and Ms Mayawati.

Not only that, the fact that the two chief ministers have jailed the BJP's allies like the MDMK's Vaiko in Tamil Nadu and Raja Bhaiyya in Uttar Pradesh has further energised the home ministry. It is to be hoped that the review committee will not only underline the need to ensure that the POTA is not used for partisan purposes, but also that there are adequate built-in safeguards against the harassment of the innocent. It is the latter who deserve more attention than the canny politicians who have run afoul of their currently more powerful adversaries in the states.

Panel set to review Pota

File 14/2

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 13. — Less than a year after the government pushed through the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance at a joint session of Parliament, the BJP-led coalition government today came close to acknowledging that concerns of misuse of the Act were "serious" enough to warrant a close look at how states had used the law.

The Deputy Prime Minister told Parliament that a review committee headed by a retired chief justice of the Punjab High Court would take a comprehensive look at the use of this legislation in various states and recommend measures to remove the shortcomings to ensure Pota is only used to combat terrorism, not criminals. The review committee, to be headed by Mr Justice Arun Saharya, former Chief Justice of Punjab High Court, will "take a comprehensive

view of the use of the legislation in various states and give its findings and suggestions for renewing the shortcoming in the implementation of this law." Mr Advani said. This would be with "special reference to ensuring that the provisions of the Act are invoked for combating terrorism and not against ordinary criminals or those who are not terrorists or whose acts cannot be considered as terrorist acts", he added. A formal notification, detailing terms of reference of the committee as well as other members, will be issued later.

The Opposition was quick to react, saying the decision to set up the review committee vindicated their fears of the potential to misuse stringent provisions of the Act. Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet said the decision was an open admission of the large-scale misuse of the law. Congress spokesman Mr Jaipal Reddy asked the government to

withdraw the law, asserting that it was time the government realised the serious consequences of the law.

An official said the government had been receiving some instances of states invoking Pota — enacted in the backdrop of the continued offensive of Pakistan's ISI and post-11 September developments — where provisions under the criminal law would suffice. But the Centres was unable to intervene as implementation of the law came under the jurisdiction of the states.

In a statement in both houses of Parliament, Mr Advani said though there were specific safeguards built into the Act to ensure that the powers were not misused and human rights of the citizens were not violated, MPs had pointed out on several occasions that "the provisions of this law are invoked even against such persons and acts that do not fall into the ambit of this law". The

government, the Deputy Prime Minister said, had given careful consideration to their views and "decided that the matter is serious enough" to warrant the invoking of the powers of the Central government under Section 60 of Pota. This section provides for setting up of one or more review committees for implementing the Act.

Incidentally, at least two petitions — one of them filed by MDMK MP and general secretary Vaiko who was arrested on 11 July last year for his pro-LTTE speeches — challenging the constitutionality of the anti-terrorism law are pending before the Supreme Court. Vaiko was the first politician to be arrested under Pota last July. A month later, Tamil Nationalist leader P Nedumaran, also a LTTE sympathiser, landed behind bars. On 25 January this year, MLA Raghuraj Pratap Singh was arrested under Pota.

Review committee to check misuse of POTA

By Our Spécial Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13. Bowing to the pressure from political parties on the misuse of the anti-terrorist law, POTA (Prevention of Terrorism Act), the Centre today announced the setting up of a review committee to check misuse of its provisions.

The committee, headed by Arun Saharya, former Chief Justice of the Punjab High Court, will take a comprehensive view of the use of the legislation in various States and give its findings and suggestions for removing shortcomings in the implementation of POTA.

The announcement was made by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, in a *suo motu* statement in the Lok Sabha today. Other members of the committee would soon be named and its terms and conditions would be worked out separately.

While looking at the shortcomings in POTA implementation, Mr. Advani said the review committee would lay special emphasis on ensuring that the provisions of POTA were invoked for combating terrorism and "are not used against ordinary criminals or those who are not terrorists or whose acts cannot be considered as terrorist acts.

"Members have raised from time to time an issue that the provisions of this law are invoked even against such persons and acts which do not fall into the ambit of this law. The Government has given careful consideration to their views and it has been decided that the matter is serious enough to warrant the invoking of the powers of the Central Government under Section 60 of Act which provides for the formation of one or more Review Committees," Mr. Advani told the Lok Sabha.

The slapping of POTA against the MDMK leader, Vaiko, the TNLA leader, P. Nedumaran, the independent U.P. MLA, Raja Bhaiyya, and his father have made several political parties see red in the manner in which the law was invoked and demands have been made from time to time for dropping POTA provisions against them. Mr. Advani said that POTA was a special law to deal with terrorist acts.

"However, in order to ensure that these powers are not misused and the violation of human rights does not take place, specific safeguards have been built into the Act."

Mr. Advani said that it became necessary to put in place such a special law last year due to increased instances of cross-border terrorism and the continued offensive agenda of the ISI aimed at destabilising India, and the post-September 11 developments.

14 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Ulfa strikes at refinery

HTC & Agencies
Guwahati, March 8

ENDING A prolonged lull, the Ulfa carried out serial strikes across Assam on Friday night, setting fire to a 5,000 KL petrol tank at Digboi refinery, blowing up a nearby gas pipeline, attacking a police post and a commando barrack and firing at a Bihari settlement.

Two persons were killed and six injured in the attack on the settlement in Lower Assam's Goalpara district. There were no casualties in the strikes on the refinery and pipeline.

Ulfa commander-in-chief Paresh Barua rang up media houses in Guwahati in the morning to claim responsibility for the attacks on the Digboi refinery in Upper Assam's Tinsukia district and the gas pipeline in neighbouring Dibrugarh district. "We have done this. We will do it again in the near future," Barua



EASTERN PROJECTIONS
INFERNO: Flames leap out of the Digboi refinery.

told *Hindustan Times* over the phone.

Tinsukia deputy commissioner B.N. Das said the guerrillas seem to have used rocket-launchers or mortars to set fire to the oil tank just after midnight. He said the flames initially leapt to 70 feet.

Operations were temporarily suspended, IOC said, but the refinery started operating again

from the evening. Assam Oil's division deputy general manager Nandan Saikia said the loss could be around Rs 10 crore.

In Dibrugarh, the militants blew up an Oil India Ltd pipeline. The pipeline carries gas from OIL, Duli-ajan, to the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd grid. The pipeline has been repaired and the flow of gas restored, IOC sources said.

The Ulfa also fired from AK-47 rifles at the Darrangiri police outpost in Goalpara. The police returned the fire and while fleeing, the extremists attacked a Bihari settlement, killing two persons and injuring six.

Ulfa cadres fired rocket-propelled grenades at a police commando barrack in Bongaigaon. The grenades missed the target and fell on the battalion inspector's residential quarters, about 300 yards behind the barracks.

See also Page 4

THE DEFENCE FREEZE

For Chilling Reasons

By KEITH FLORY

Had the virtual freeze on defence expenditure during the ensuing fiscal been a manifestation of a considered policy to put a cap on these outlays, there might have been cause for some cheer in at least that section of society which complains of squandering limited resources to earmark 13 paise per rupee of government spending for the military machine. There is not, and indeed under the prevailing circumstances there cannot be, any such policy. Yet, what borders on the suspicious, is the manner in which the defence outlay has been publicly projected. The figures are being juggled around.

Unutilised outlays

In his budget speech the finance minister made the customary pronouncement that funds will never be a constraint for the genuine needs of the forces — every one of his predecessors has made similar professions. But Mr Jaswant Singh was not quite on target when he included Rs 9,300 crores for defence in explaining away the rise in non-plan expenditure. He was, cleverly, comparing the budget estimates for 2003-2004 with the revised estimates for the fiscal now drawing to a close. Had he played with a straight bat and compared one budget estimate with another the increase would have been just Rs 300 crores. In real terms that is no increase.

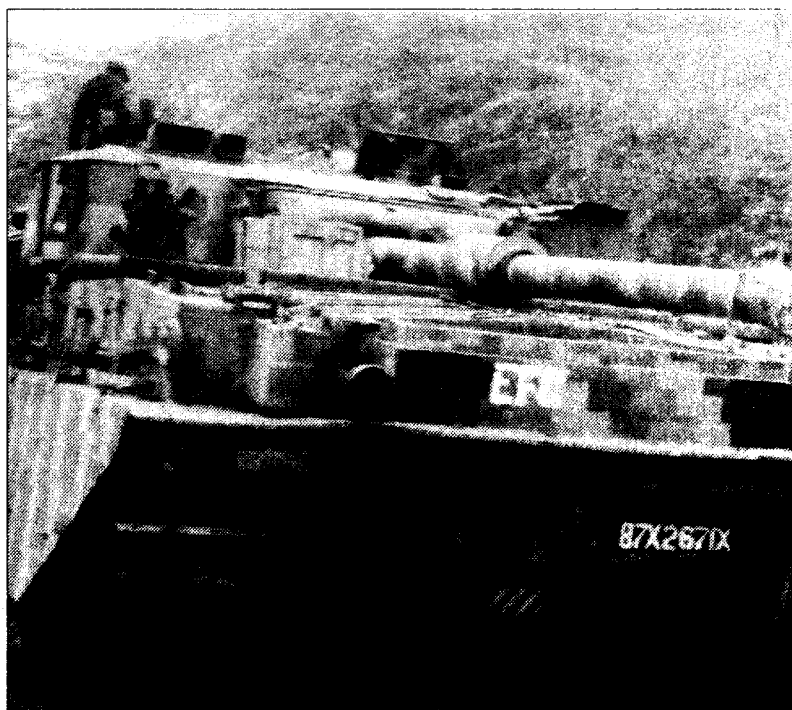
That same line was taken in a graphic officially released by government which created an impression that the defence outlay had been hiked from Rs 56,000 crore to Rs 65,300 crore. Nowhere did it point out that the initial outlay for 2002-03 had been Rs 65,000 crore. Regardless of the arguments and counter arguments for raising defence expenditure, the bid to conceal reality was aimed at allowing the soldier to run away with an incorrect impression that the government was doing more than its mite for the forces. Our jawans do not scrutinise financial documents — they be disappointed to discover that what was projected as a Rs 9,300 crore hike was actually a token enhancement of Rs 300 crore.

There are two theories doing the rounds about why close to Rs 6,500 crore under the capital head for 2002-03 was not utilised. The more pernicious one first: the grapevine has it that the defence authorities were instructed to keep "on hold" some acquisition

projects that were nearing fruition and close deals in the new fiscal. The intention being to reduce the overall deficit. While other ministries/departments might have been similarly hit, in the case of defence it means that the soldier will have to do without his weaponry for a little longer — that is not acceptable. Particularly when the foreign exchange reserves have reached current heights.

there is merit in the suggestion that unspent funds — under the capital head — be permitted to roll over a two-year time-frame.

Adding to the suspicions that the books have been "cooked" somewhat is the decline in defence revenue expenditure also. The revised estimate of Rs 41,088 crore is down by Rs 2,500 crore from the outlay that Mr Yashwant Sinha had proposed in the last budget



Even assuming that no such instructions were issued there must be cause for serious concern that for the third year running the capital outlay could not be fully utilised. It has been this government's case that the forces were neglected by the last Congress government, that there is a huge backlog of modernisation and re-equipment to be cleared. It speaks poorly of those in power that they were unable to initiate remedial measures when money was available — or was it available only on paper?

Permit rollovers

It might be too early to write off the new defence procurement agency, for it had inherited much baggage. But the causes for capital provisions "lapsing" three successive years point to a terribly skewed system. A collective failure, and the air chief had a point recently when he said that the bureaucrats alone were not to blame, the service headquarters had not got their act together. Given the protracted process involved in defence procurement,

that he presented. At the best of times a decline in revenue expenditure would cause tongues to wag — this time around it is mind-boggling because the forces had been fully mobilised for close to a year. The ballpark figure for the cost, just in financial terms mind you, of Operation Parakram ranges between Rs 6,000-8,000 crore. Yet revenue expenditure, according to the budget papers has fallen?

Had the document explained the revenue expenditure of the army included a "training" head it might have been possible to figure out the manner in which Parakram's expenses had been absorbed. For that is to where the finger points, no major training exercises are to be held in the next 12 months, and while the troops were poised eyeball-to-eyeball on the western frontier some senior army officers said that it was the best possible form of training. Still, that doesn't quite explain the drop in revenue expenditure — unless the financial managers of the forces are streets ahead of the field commanders in camouflage capabilities.

There would, however, be more than fuzzy figures to cause frustration in the defence community. It is conceded that the budget does not equate with either doctrine or orbat (battle order) but it does serve as a guideline to how the establishment functions. And there is little in the budget that suggests the military machine has broken free of past shackles. A little more for one head of expenditure, a little less under another. No evidence of any specific new thrust. Conditions probably do not permit that.

Caught in a cleft stick

The Indian armed forces are caught in a cleft stick. While they must remain prepared to defend thousands of miles of disputed frontier and prosecute all-out wars, increasingly their day-to-day task is fighting a low-intensity conflict. A proxy war if you wish. The result being that there can be no gradual downsizing of force levels and utilising the money thus freed to acquire the most advanced military technologies. Their routine duties tend to render meaningless terms like "a leaner meaner army" and "bigger bang per buck." The scope for innovation is very limited.

Even the one welcome innovation in this year's budget remains restricted to paper. For the first time Research & Development attracts a separate section. The provision of Rs 3,640 crore falls far short of the 10 per cent of the overall defence outlay that several experts insist is the minimum required to liberate the forces from dependency on foreign sources for virtually all their hi-tech needs. At the present levels, some contend, what is spent on R&D does not suffice to effect desired breakthroughs and could even be a case of throwing good money after bad.

Thus in terms of both financial and operational requirements, the reality remains that the defence apparatus keeps spinning around in a series of vicious circles. There is no simplistic solution to problems arising from huge wage and pension bills, relatively little for modernisation and re-equipment. The national resources do not permit any massive injection of funds to effect any immediate course correction, but if things continue to simply muddle along there is a really chilling prospect of those vicious circles actually becoming a garrote.

The finger of suspicion points to the top brass in the Defence Ministry.

The author is Associate Editor, The Statesman.

Abusing POTA

3/1/03 The BJP's double standards 03/01/03

The Prevention of Terrorism Act seems to be going the way of its predecessor, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, better known by its acronym TADA, which became a byword for abuse. In Jharkhand, a 12 year old and an 81 year old have been arrested under POTA, which surely deserves a place in the Guinness book of records for harbouring the world's youngest and oldest terrorists. Jayalalitha has used POTA to pitch opposition MDMK leader Vaiko in jail. The most blatant misuse of POTA, however, is taking place in Gujarat, where 123 people have been held under anti-terror laws for the Godhra carnage, while those who engineered the post-Godhra violence are not even in focus for causing murder and mayhem. Is participation in a communal riot a terrorist act? If yes, then it ought not to matter whether the victims of the violence are *kar sevaks* or not; if no, then POTA is being misapplied in Godhra. The explanation being proffered for such double standards is absurd: the Godhra violence was "pre-meditated" while post-Godhra riots were "spontaneous". Firstly, VHP volunteers had been gathering information about Muslim businesses and addresses months before Godhra, information that was available to rioting mobs as they moved from locality to locality precisely targeting Muslim homes and businesses in mixed areas. Secondly, even presuming for the sake of argument that the riots were "spontaneous", does the Indian penal code condone mass murder if committed spontaneously? And what about the threat to repeat the post-Godhra violence elsewhere? Is the repetition going to be spontaneous?

The BJP ought to be wary of politicizing POTA and using it as an instrument of vendetta, as it can be turned against it in states where it is out of power or the junior partner in a coalition. This is already happening in UP, where the Mayawati government used POTA against Raja Bhaiyya, an independent MLA favoured by the BJP. A case of intimidation was registered against Raja Bhaiyya when he got into an argument with another MLA, and he found himself being hauled off to jail at 3 am in the morning. Subsequently, fresh charges were made against him and 70 of his supporters are behind bars. The BJP risks losing its Rajput base in the state as it is unable to come to the aid of Raja Bhaiyya. Now even the BJP is saying that the law is being "misinterpreted", but if this is the case, then the BJP itself is leading the charge in other states. One has heard time and again about deputy prime minister LK Advani's supposed determination to make India a "hard state" — what is the explanation, then, for Gujarat's mass murderers being allowed to go scot free?

3 MAR 2003

THE STATESMAN

208/2/2003

DUBAI AND DEPORTATION

22/2/03

OF THE TWO developments on the deportation front, the first is truly extraordinary, the second confusing and uncertain. The return of Dawood Ibrahim's brother, Iqbal Kaskar, and gangster Ejaz Pathan from the United Arab Emirates is a major success for a country with a frustrating record of attempts to have criminals returned to India and to justice. As for the claim that Portugal has agreed to hand over mafia don Abu Salem, the fact that his extradition is currently under legal scrutiny suggests his return is neither as certain nor as imminent as the Minister of State for External Affairs declared. The deportation of Kaskar and Pathan appears directly related to the marked change in the attitude of the UAE, whose authorities now seem much more determined to prevent their territory from being misused by the underworld. Pathan is a key accused in the Mumbai bomb blasts case but it is the deportation of Kaskar — Dawood's youngest brother who slipped out of the country in 1992 — that sends out the strongest signal of the UAE's new resolve. As a sibling of the godfather of the so-called D company, Kaskar's arrest and quick deportation is an indication that the Dawood gang, which enjoyed a great deal of clout in Dubai, is now under some kind of squeeze.

Earlier this month, the Dubai police had suddenly swooped down on a large number of gangsters — over 100 according to some estimates — in a massive, unprecedented and carefully coordinated operation conducted in total secrecy. Its real significance lay in the fact that among those picked up were two of Dawood's younger brothers and some of his key aides such as Mohammed Dossa and Aftab Bhakti. It is another matter that most of those arrested were allowed to go; reportedly, some were asked to leave and others deported to Pakistan. But in the context of Dubai's earlier approach with respect to such matters, the fact that they were arrested was much more noteworthy than the fact that they were released. Suddenly, the message was out: Dawood's men could no long-

er assume that Dubai would tolerate anything they did on its soil.

What has been responsible for the change? At the bottom of Dawood's recent problems in Dubai is the killing of Sharad Shetty, the ringmaster of a betting syndicate in which Dawood had huge financial stakes. Shetty's killing — which was orchestrated by Dawood's rival, Chhota Rajan, in a high-profile club in Dubai and which coincided with the annual shopping festival — sent ripples through the corridors of power. The killing of Shetty seems to have touched a raw nerve in Dubai and has helped to convince authorities that in order to keep its image clean, it is imperative to prevent such incidents from recurring. Pressure from the United States, which has been increasingly worried about the underworld's links with narco-terrorism in the UAE, has also helped in persuading the UAE into taking a much tougher line against D Company.

The question that will be uppermost in many minds, particularly in India, is how far the UAE authorities will go in effecting a cleanup. If the recent crackdown on the Dawood gang is purely a knee-jerk reaction to a shocking murder, a measure to prevent the spilling of more blood, then clearly not very much. However, if it is a part of a larger resolve to stem the criminal and terrorist activities that such gangs commit in other countries, then this could be the beginning of a new phase, one that will have a considerable bearing on India and its attempts to bring terrorists to book. As for the extradition of Abu Salem, his case bears no relation to that of Kaskar and Pathan, being caught up in the complexities of the Portuguese legal process. Whether the MoS for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh, jumped the gun in announcing that Salem would be sent back soon is something that must be asked. India has applied diplomatic pressure to have Salem returned but the real challenge is before the CBI, which has to convince the courts about the gangster's identity and the necessity of bringing him home.

Is POTA becoming TADA?

The opportunistic way in which this draconian law is being used should raise great concern

THE National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), under Justice J.S. Verma, had steadfastly opposed the Prevention of Terrorism Act (Pota), which had become the law of the land ever since it was pushed through a joint session of Parliament last March. Justice A.S. Anand, its new chairperson, had observed there were enough safeguards under the law to prevent its misuse. Yet, the NHRC has now been constrained to take suo motu cognisance of a report that revealed the arrest in Jharkhand of a 12-year-old boy and an 81-year-old man under Pota — they were among some 200 people arrested under the Act for allegedly “supporting naxalites”. Almost simultaneously, the Gujarat government has also thought it fit to book all 121 accused in the Godhra case under this Act.

This mass application of the Act recalls the untenable and arbitrary manner in which the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) was wielded by the executive in the eighties and nineties. By the time TADA was withdrawn in 1995 — after a concerted

campaign against its misuse — over 77,000 people had personally experienced its horrors. Therefore, a year after Pota became law, it's as good an occasion as any to raise familiar concerns over its boundless capacity for abuse. Many who had spearheaded a campaign against the misuse of TADA are, ironically enough, the very ones who are today passionately justifying Pota on the grounds that rising international terrorism demands such a law. In actual practice, terrorism is best fought — not by arbitrarily locking up a vast group of suspects — but through better policing and meticulous follow up measures. The recent deportations from Dubai is only one instance of the efficacy of the latter approach.

Governments in power, however, simply adore their instruments of persecution. The Opposition may huff and puff as much as it pleases over the misuse of Pota but its exertions are unlikely to force a rethink on the Act at the highest levels of power. As for the question, is Pota becoming another TADA, the answer is self-evident: of course it is. And Indian democracy is the poorer for it.

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Dawood brother, aide remanded

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, FEB. 20. The underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's brother, Iqbal Shaikh Kaskar, and his aide, Ezaz Pathan, were remanded to police custody today by two separate courts here.

After formally arresting them at the Sahar airport here on their arrival from Dubai on Thursday night, the Mumbai police handed over Pathan to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is prosecuting the accused in the Mumbai bomb blast cases of 1993.

The CBI produced Ezaz Pathan alias Mohammad Sharif in the TADA court at the high security Arthur Road Jail here where the Special Judge, Pramod Kode, remanded him to the CBI custody for seven days. The CBI told the court that Pathan was involved in the 1993 bomb blast conspiracy and had helped Dawood Ibrahim in executing it. In the past, the same court had issued a non-bailable warrant and red-corner notices to the Interpol for him.

He is expected to face charges of having facilitated the landing of the deadly RDX



Underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's younger brother, Iqbal Shaikh Kaskar, being taken to court in Mumbai on Thursday.

— Photo: Vivek Bendre

explosives, placing it in the city, supplying arms and ammunition to rioters and sending Muslim youth to Pakistan for terrorist training.

The Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, V.K. Sharma, meanwhile, remanded

Iqbal Kaskar to police custody till March 6. Iqbal is likely to face several murder charges.

He is alleged to have eliminated another gangster, Amirzada, in Mumbai's Sessions Court in 1984 and to have 'liquidated' Samad Khan, a neph-

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ew of drug-peddler, Karim Lala. Amirzada and Khan were involved in the murder of his elder brother, Sabir Kaskar.

Iqbal's lawyer, Shyam Keswani, said that his client was not extradited but had come home on his own. The UAE authorities had asked him to leave Dubai since he did not have a valid passport.

He had not sought a passport from any other country and was actually contesting his passport's cancellation in the Mumbai High Court.

The City Police Commissioner, Ranjit Singh Sharma, told mediapersons that legal opinion has been sought to see if both the gangsters could be booked under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crimes Act — the State's version of the POTA.

The Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, who also holds the Home portfolio, said that the nabbing of the two gangsters would help control anti-national activities in Mumbai.

The deportation of Pathan and Iqbal has given a jolt to the city's underworld.

SHOT IN THE ARM FOR MUMBAI POLICE

Dubai deports Dawood's brother, aide

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, FEB. 19. The long arm of the law at last reached Iqbal Shaikh Kaskar, brother of the underworld gangster, Dawood Ibrahim, and his accomplice, Ezaz Pathan, principal accused in the Mumbai bomb blast case, when the authorities in Dubai deported them to India today. The duo was flown in here tonight by an Air India flight from Dubai.

The gangsters, who figure in the list of the 20 terrorists and underworld operatives, handed over to Pakistan for action, were arrested on their arrival and would be produced before different city courts tomorrow.

The Government of the United Arab Emirates arrested and deported them to India in view of the "good bilateral relations," the Union Minister of State for Home, I. D. Swami, said. The arrest was effected after the External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha, wrote to the UAE Crown Prince and Defence Minister, Gen. Mohammad bin Rashid al Mukhtoum. Their nabbing has come as

a shot in the arm for the Mumbai Police, who threw a security net around the airport awaiting their arrival.

Pathan, a hardened criminal, arranged for the landing of arms, ammunition and RDX explosives at the Shekhadi and the Dighi coasts in the Raigad district of Maharashtra in January-February 1993 at Dawood's behest.

He not only supplied weapons to the rioters in Mumbai but also played a lead role in placing RDX in various parts of the city. The explosion claimed hundreds of lives. Pathan is also involved in several other murders, contract killings and narcotics smuggling.

Iqbal is wanted in several criminal cases, including six murders. He was running Dawood's Dubai-based syndicate, D company, and pulling wires in the Mumbai underworld.

The law is yet to get Dawood and his other brother, holed up in Karachi along with an accomplice, Chhota Shakeel. They are among the 34 accused in the Mumbai bomb blast case who are absconding.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2003

INFILTRATION GOES UNCHECKED

Sensors from Israel come a cropper

Kavita Suri in Jammu

Feb. 18. — The special Israeli ground sensors given to the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir have failed. As a result the BSF posted on the International Border and the Army on the LoC are finding it difficult to check the increase in cross-border infiltration.

The imported sensors have failed, senior BSF and Army officers said, because they cannot function very well in the topographical conditions in J&K. The sensors were tailor made for Israel which is situated on a desert where ground sensors are very useful. But the border areas in J&K are quite different and comprise deep gorges, ravines, forests and streams, the officers said.

It was only a few months ago that the defence ministry had provided the special sensors to the security forces. But now with their failure, troops deployed at the border areas have written to the Centre to replace them with some useful electronic gadgets which can help in checking infiltration.

The BSF, entrusted with guarding the 210-km long International Border in Jammu, were given five to six of these sensors. But their non-productivity, senior officers said, have compelled the force to shift to the use of Hand Held-Thermal Images (HHTI) equipment which are proving very successful.

The BSF IG (Jammu Front-

ier), Mr Dilip Trivedi, confirmed that they had written to top defence officials to provide his force with some improved versions of these Israeli sensors which could prove to be more productive and helpful in checking infiltration.

"We are not getting the desired results from these sensors because we have different ground conditions from that of Israel. Instead HHTIs are proving to be quite successful," Mr Trivedi said.

The hand-held sensors, costing a little over Rs 3 lakh each, are easy to handle and give thermal images of infiltrators making it easier for security forces to spot them. "The BSF had many successes after it started using these HHTIs." The BSF is now planning to procure more of these instruments, he said.

Pak shelling kills havildar: An Army havildar was killed and a jawan injured in heavy shelling by Pakistani troops in a forward post in Rajouri sector's Jangard area today, adds PTI.

Pakistani troops shelled the Jangard, Bhawani, Choki Chora, Kalal, Noushera, Krishnagati, Balakote and Kerni areas of Rajouri and Poonch sectors since early today. Indian troops retaliated and exchange of shelling was continuing till late in the evening. Only yesterday, cross-border shelling had claimed two Indian lives.

19 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

Bangladesh cracks the whip, Dawood-linked outfit banned

■ CLEAN-UP | Al-Hikma wanted Dhaka to annex Bengal

BHAVNA VIJ-AURORA
NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 17

INDIAN pressure on Dhaka to rein in fundamentalist elements operating from Bangladesh yielded its first result today with the banning of Shahdat-e-Al-Hikma, a newly-formed outfit that claims West Bengal is part of Bangladesh and is funded by underworld don Dawood Ibrahim.

Al-Hikma is one of the dozen Pakistan-backed organisations active in Bangladesh and figured in the list handed over to visiting Bangladesh Foreign Minister Morshed Khan by Deputy Home Minister L.K. Advani last week. In addition, India had also given to the minister a list of 90 alleged ISI-training camps in Bangla territory and 88 terrorists based there.



The North-Bangladesh based outfit's overtly "hate India" campaign has more to do with the fact that it is primarily funded by the Karachi-based don. It is learnt that it received 140 crore takas recently from Dawood. Based in Rajshahi, Al-Hikma is believed to have connections with other terrorist organisations in Southeast Asia, including Pakistan and Indonesia. Home Ministry sources suspect it had been sending its

cadres for training in jihadi camps in Afghanistan.

The organisation has reportedly been inciting people to take up arms against "Indian injustice" and calls it a "terrorist state." Intelligence agencies say that the organisation has also been distributing pamphlets proclaiming their intention of "occupying" West Bengal as legitimate territory of Bangladesh.

"We provided Dhaka with ample proof about Al-Hikma and also other organisations. Al-Hikma posters and pamphlets had appeared in Rajshahi and some other parts of Bangladesh in April and then September, last year. Confronted with the proof, Dhaka couldn't really deny the existence of the groups and their anti-India

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

1 8 FEB 2003

ISI hand exposed in Andhra communal killings

Stanley Theodore
in Hyderabad

Feb. 16. — The bizarre serial killings in which nine persons were murdered on communal bias, all by slitting of throats, through last year is believed to be the handiwork of ISI agents.

The four Muslim youth, arrested on 31 January, are activists of the local Dargah-e-Jehad-O-Sahadath (martyrdom in holy war), a front organisation of the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba.

The DJS has denied responsibility, but the habeas corpus petition they filed in Court for Imtiaz has made their claims hollow, senior police officers told The Statesman.

The DJS' involvement in other

cases aimed at creating communal trouble across the country was cracked by the state police recently. DJS activists through 2002 used their car to offer lifts at night to unsuspecting passengers, identify their religion and then kill them.

Ironically the Chandrababu Naidu government wanted to play down the DJS-LeT angle. Police said the government's contention was, the country was recovering from the Gujarat riots and a disclosure of this magnitude could re-create communal tension.

Imtiaz was caught four days ago. Earlier his four accomplices — Zaffar Khan, Mukhtar, Khalil and Akbar Khan — were remanded to judicial custody and moved to the Charlapally jail.

Convicts there boycotted these killers for their "gruesome killings". They have since been shifted to a separate cell.

The fact that a Lashkar module or cell was in operation in Hyderabad was confirmed when 11 boys in Chennai were caught. This was soon after the bomb explosion outside Saibaba temple in Saroornagar on 21 November, where two persons were killed and twenty others were injured.

This bomb was packed and planted in a scooter by Md Azam and Akram. They procured the explosives and detonators from Mumbai. Azam travelled to Pakistan and from there went to Saudi Arabia, where he and his associates hatched the plot to foment communal trouble by trigger-

ing a series of blasts in the country.

Both were killed in two encounters in Hyderabad and Karimnagar after the Saibaba temple explosion. These two were connected to the two bomb blasts in Mumbai recently, but their exact involvement is yet to be confirmed. Actually the larger plot was to trigger series of explosions outside temples in Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad. Tamil Nadu police informed their Andhra Pradesh counterparts that the Chennai gang was aware of the Hyderabad killers, police said.

Azam and Akram were associates of local DJS chief Mahoob Ali, a retired government employee. Ali has been giving training to Muslim youth to fight "Hindu

terrorists". He trained as many as 20,000 youths in martial arts, unarmed combat and use of swords. As part of the training was severe indoctrination against Hindus and even exhortation to kill prominent Hindu leaders.

Here a group was formed to kill VHP leaders Mr G Pulla Reddy and Mr Narayan Reddy. Akram scripted the plot but his plans could not materialise. The plan to kill the two VHP leaders and execute several explosions in key cities were to be done in the guise of avenging the Babri Masjid demolition in the run up to its tenth anniversary.

During the Gujarat riots, police said, there was a large influx of Gujarati Muslim youths to Hyderabad. Part of them

belonged to Muslim fundamentalist outfits there who joined their Hyderabad counterparts here. A core group was formed at the DJS to avenge the killings of the Muslims there.

"The DJS-Lashkar collaboration is established. The fact that these serial killings started soon after Godhra, the link of these operatives to various communal incidents and fundamentalists in different states, the fact that the operatives wanted to spread the incidents far and wide is indicative of the ISI role. As of now the nexus between the killers and the fundamentalist organisation has been established. The ISI's logistical role in this drama is being probed," a top officer said.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2003

INDIA'S CRUISE MISSILE

LESS THAN A month after it was showcased as one of the star attractions during the Republic Day parade, BrahMos was successfully test-fired from a warship off the coast of Orissa. This was not the first trial of the country's supersonic cruise missile, BrahMos having been test-fired first in 2001 and then in the following year. But the recent launch is significant in a couple of ways. This is the first time that this jointly developed Indo-Russian cruise missile was launched from a ship. Moreover, it marks the final phase of the trials on the BrahMos, which is slated to enter production this year and which is expected to hit the international arms markets when manufactured in sufficient numbers. The BrahMos is essentially an anti-ship missile but is distinguished by the fact it can be launched from a variety of platforms, land, air, sea and sub-sea. It is also distinguished by the fact that it is the only supersonic cruise missile in existence; all cruise missiles in use, even in the United States, are sub-sonic or fly below the speed of sound.

High speed, stealth properties, advanced jamming protection and highly explosive warheads are some of the features that combine to make this the deadliest anti-ship missile in the world. With a target range of a little less than 300 kilometres and a payload of up to 300 kilograms, the eight-metre-long missile can be carried aboard a ship or submarine or, with some modifications, on an aircraft. The BrahMos may be effectively employed by all the three armed services, though it is the capabilities of the Navy that will be the most greatly augmented by the induction of the missile — its sea-skimming abilities capable of posing a serious threat to enemy warships.

The development of this state-of-the-art missile is a reflection of the widening of the India-Russia defence relationship, a transformation from the routine buyer-seller track to a totally different level of military-technical cooperation. Under the agreement signed in 1998, India and

Russia set up the joint missile venture and are equal partners in developing, manufacturing and marketing the missile. It is an example of how the India-Russia defence relationship now encompasses a wide range of activity that includes joint research, design, development and co-production. With defence experts believing that the BrahMos will have no equal anywhere in the world for another few years, expectations have already been raised about selling the missile to a mutually agreed list of countries, which are friendly with both India and Russia. Recently, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, said that India was getting enquiries from a number of countries for the BrahMos and that it could also be made available on an arms exchange basis. The exact marketing strategy for the missile is something for the two countries to work out and will become relevant only after it is inducted in the required numbers in the Indian and Russian armed forces.

The BrahMos (which is derived from Brahma-putra and Moscow) uses indigenous internal guidance and other software but it would have been impossible, if not at least extremely difficult, to develop such a missile within a short time frame. Russian collaboration has been critical towards its development in just four years. With purchases of around \$ 10 billion from Russia over the last few years, India remains an important purchaser of Russian arms. Russia's military-industrial establishment is plagued by the lack of orders after the end of the Cold War, and has looked increasingly outwards to keep it afloat. India has utilised the situation in Russia not merely to buy more arms but also to explore ways of widening the very nature of the defence relationship. New Delhi is aware that doing this holds out the hope of India becoming an exporter of sophisticated weapons in the years to come. The development and successful test-firing of the BrahMos would suggest that the possibility is real.

15 FEB 2003

Hurriyat's Delhi office closed

Statesman News Service & PTI

NEW DELHI, Feb. 9. — Three days after its two leaders were arrested on charges of receiving money from Pakistan's deputy high commissioner for terrorists, the Hurriyat was forced to close its office in the capital today.

The separatist group, which was running Kashmir Awareness Bureau in a rented apartment in Malviya Nagar, was asked to vacate the premises by the house-owner.

The owner, a woman, was apparently "under pressure", following the arrest of Shabir Ahmad Daar and Anjum Zamrooda Habib, to ask the Hurriyat to vacate the premises, police sources said. Yesterday, VHP and Bajrang Dal activists had demonstrated outside the KAB office and demanded that the premises be vacated. The building that housed the office has some residential apartments as well.

Hurriyat chairman Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat made it clear on Friday that the group was considering to close the office for alleged "harassment" of its leaders at the hands of Delhi Police.

The development comes even as Delhi Police was contemplating to move court to seek closure of the office, which the Hurriyat opened in November 1995.

The Hurriyat is feeling the heat on another front too. The group called for a bandh demanding the release of the

seniormost leader of its executive, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, but the government had already taken a decision in Mr Geelani's favour. As a result, the response to the bandh call was lukewarm.

Getting punched on both ends, the Hurriyat today accused the Centre of "doling out carrot and stick treatment" to the Kashmiri leadership and iterated its stand that a "meaningful dialogue" to resolve the issue was possible only with Pakistan's involvement.

"We welcome Geelani's release, but at the same time we shouldn't read too

Pak shelling kills 2

JAMMU, Feb. 9. — A police officer and a woman were killed and seven wounded in shelling by Pakistani troops in Poonch district today..

Pakistani troops started targeting Balakote in Mendhar sector with mortar shells this afternoon. A shells landed near a police station injuring three policemen. One of them, Mulak Shah, later died in hospital.

The woman and four civilians were wounded in shelling from across the LoC in the same area. Indian troops retaliated and the exchange of fire continued till the evening. — PTI

months. On the closure of the Hurriyat office, Prof. Bhat said it was an attempt to "clip the wings of the conglomerate".

Id truce: The Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen today called off all its militant operations in J&K for a week from tomorrow because of Id-ul-Zoha, which falls on Wednesday, a report from Srinagar adds.

A spokesman for the pro-Pakistan outfit said the "commanders" had been directed not to attack security forces or surrendered militants anywhere in the state during the six-day period.

Anjum's group alleges frame-up

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Feb. 9. — The Muslim Khawateen Markaz, whose chairperson Ms Anjum Zamrooda Habib was arrested in Delhi on Thursday night for allegedly receiving funds for militants, has claimed she had gone to the capital to obtain a visa from the Thai embassy and that she was carrying the money for tickets and other expenses.

The MKM spokesperson said Ms Habib was invited by a Geneva-based human rights group to attend a conference in Thailand. "New Delhi is trying to frame Habib because she has been highlighting human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir at various fora. It seems the government wanted to take revenge on her."

The spokesperson said Ms Habib was carrying with her Rs 3 lakh. "She was carrying the money because she had to leave for Thailand to attend the conference. She comes from an affluent family and Rs 3 lakh is not a big amount... Levelling false charges against her is part of the government's plan to defame the Hurriyat and other rights and social groups working for the resolution of the J&K issue."

The spokesperson said Ms Habib, along with Congress MLA Khemlata Wakhloo, went to Geneva last year to internationalise the plight of Kashmiri women before the world's media.

THE STATESMAN

10 FEB 2003

Immigration policy soon, says Advani

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 8

THE CENTRE is considering an immigration policy for the country keeping in mind the "massive" illegal infiltration from Bangladesh, L.K. Advani said on Saturday.

Addressing the media after a meeting of the chief ministers at the annual conference on internal security, the Deputy Prime Minister said the government was "determined" to send back illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

A pilot project of the multi-purpose identity card scheme would soon be launched in some border states. A national citizens' register and some strong legislations would also form part of the

Sneak-in bid

BARELY TWO days after taking back 213 illegal immigrants, the Bangladesh Rifles tried to push a group of over 100 people from across the border in Cooch Behar's Sitalkuchi area on Saturday. The attempt was thwarted by the increased BSF deployment in the area following the Satgachi standoff. **HTC, Kolkata**

immigration policy, he said.

The issue of illegal immigration from Bangladesh dominated the meeting. Advani said even states like West Bengal, which

till recently played down the magnitude of the problem, have veered round to the view that it posed a major threat to the country's security.

"No time-frame has been set to send back the illegal immigrants. The states are now unanimous on the issue," Advani said, adding that there were an estimated 1.5 crore Bangladeshis living illegally in the country.

Addressing the same meeting, the Prime Minister said: "No issue, howsoever justified in the eyes of one or the other party, can justify confrontation and communal violence. Law and interests of the nation are supreme. Peace and communal harmony are of overriding importance for the country's security."

The issue of communal disturbances and the Sangh parivar's "divisive tendencies" came up when Madhya Pradesh CM Digvijay Singh demanded immediate action against the Bajrang Dal under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, saying any more delay in this would put a question mark on the country's secular credentials.

Most states opposed the proposed Federal Law Enforcement Agency (FLEA) to investigate crimes to be categorised as federal offences. Instead, some states wanted more power for the CBI. But Advani said law and order is a state subject and FLEA would only strengthen the power of the states. "It would not diminish their authority."

Buddha speaks in Delhi's voice

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 8: Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee today echoed the A.B. Vajpayee government's charge of heightened activity by the ISI from across the Bangladesh and Nepal borders.

At the chief ministers' conference on internal security in Delhi, Bhattacharjee also endorsed the Centre's drive against illegal immigrants.

"The ISI is operating mostly from neighbouring countries. On the question of dealing with illegal infiltrators from Bangladesh, our state government is in agreement with the govern-

ment of India that whenever such infiltration is detected, the foreign nationals should be pushed back," he said.

Bhattacharjee wanted the Centre to step up security along the border, including that with Bhutan, because separatists operating in the state were being trained and armed inside the Himalayan kingdom. The state government had definite information of 14 militant camps operating from inside the Himalayan kingdom, he said.

Bengal added its voice to the Assam government's constant complaints about Bhutan. Thimpu's ties with India are excellent, but the country has not been able to prevent northeast-

ern separatist groups setting up camps there.

Bhattacharjee asked New Delhi to urge the Bhutanese government to close down these camps. Cadre of separatist organisations such as the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation are being trained and armed by the United Liberation Front of Asom and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland and are supported by the ISI.

"There is an urgent need to dismantle the Ulfa camps — about 14 in number — located inside Bhutan where KLO militants are given training and shelter," he said.

"Another worrisome issue relates to the activities of the

ISI in the state," said Bhattacharjee, who was the first speaker at the conference.

Between November 1996 and December 2002, the state administration arrested 125 persons for spying, carrying weapons and explosives and waging war against the state. "Hard evidence is available with us showing that many of those arrested have been operating from outside our borders," the chief minister said.

However, he fell short of falling in line with deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani's suggestion for a federal agency to deal with specific crimes, saying law and order was a state subject.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 FEB 2003

Deportation on CMs' agenda

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — Chief ministers from across the country will meet here tomorrow to deliberate on issues concerning internal security including deportation of illegal immigrants and multi-purpose identity cards.

The conference is a follow-up to the one attended by heads of state police and chief secretaries last month where the Centre had given a call to state governments to identify, locate and throw out illegal immigrants as they pose a threat to national security — 11,500 from Pakistan and an estimated 15 million from Bangladesh.

Dhaka had taken objection to the remarks and subsequently refused to accept the 213 Bangladeshi immigrants for about a week, leaving its citizens stranded along the Indo-Bangla border till yesterday. Bangladesh insisted that it be shown proof of their Bangladeshi citizenship before it

accepted them but did not come forward to evaluate the proof that Indian agencies had.

Notwithstanding Dhaka's reluctance to accept its citizens, the Centre is tomorrow expected to reiterate its stand on this point and ask states to get on with the job. In an indication that the recent imbroglio along the eastern border had not softened New Delhi, Mr LK Advani had yesterday asserted that though the immediate crisis was over, the problem of illegal immigration was yet to be resolved.

"There are certain decisions of the government (on the Bangladeshi illegal immigrant issue). We are taking important steps to implement them," he had said, echoing the point he had made in Kolkata earlier — that Bangladeshi infiltrators had "no right" to reside here permanently.

An official spokesperson said tomorrow's conference would deliberate on the 94 recommendations of the group of ministers on internal security covering constitutional, legal, administrative and organisational aspects.

Envoy named in cash-catch FIR

Dirt pierces Pak diplomacy cover

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 7: In a sign of the depths India-Pakistan relations have plumbed, Islamabad's charge d'affaires in Delhi, Jalil Abbas Jilani, was today named in the first information report on the arrest of two Kashmir activists on charges of accepting money for terrorist activities.

Only diplomatic immunity saved Jilani, the deputy high commissioner, from being mentioned as an accused under the new anti-terrorism Act.

Anjum Zamarud Habib, a member of the Muslim Khawateen-e-Markaz which is a part of the separatist Hurriyat Conference, was picked up yesterday evening from near the Pakistan high commission with Rs 3.07 lakh on her person.

Delhi police said she had confessed to being provided the money by Jilani. Anjum told a special judge that she had received the money from the Pakistan high commission as a "nazrana" (gift) for Hurriyat chairman Abdul Gani Bhat. Bhat denied that the group was "involved in any way, overtly or covertly, in any financial deal".

Pakistan protested against the accusation. The foreign ministry said in Islamabad that allegations "accusing...Jilani of providing money to representatives" of the Hurriyat were "ridiculous and baseless".



Anjum in New Delhi. (PTI)

Anjum said she had gone to the high commission to collect a book titled *Independent Survey of Elections* on Bhat's request and denied that the money was meant for terrorists.

Shabir Ahmed Dar, who is in charge of the Delhi-based Kashmir Awareness Bureau run by the Hurriyat, was also arrested yesterday and Rs 2.15 lakh found in his Malviya Nagar house.

Both were remanded in police custody for 10 days by the special judge, S.N. Dhingra, and

QUOTE

The campaign was part of a strategy by the BJP government... to whip up anti-Pakistan hysteria for electoral gains

PAKISTAN

charged under Section 22 (2) of the anti-terrorism Act.

The section says that a person commits an offence if he or she receives money or "other property" with the intention to use it for the purpose of terrorism. The police have slapped only sub-clause 2 of Section 22, without adding sub-clause 1, because they cannot name Jilani as the provider of the Rs 3.07 lakh to Anjum for diplomatic constraints. Sub-clause 1 says that a person commits an offence if he or she invites another person to give money for terrorist activities.

With Bhat's name coming on record, the government may take action against him.

Senior police prosecutor D.P. Agarwal said a page of a telephone diary recovered from Anjum contained the names of militant organisations receiving funds. The police alleged that Anjum wrote in the diary yesterday the amounts given to these outfits, including the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Al Omar, Hizb-ul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammad. The page has "20" and "30" scribbled against these names.

Anjum contradicted the prosecution version by saying that the police forced her to write the names of the organisations and amounts against them. As she was being taken back into custody, she said: "Mere sath vishwasghat kiya gaya hai (I have been betrayed)." (See Page 7)

RAJA BHAIIYA AND THE LAW

THE MURDER IN broad daylight of the key witness in the case against the independent MLA, Raghuraj Pratap Singh and his father, Uday Pratap Singh, in Pratapgarh highlights afresh the extent of lawlessness in this eastern Uttar Pradesh town. True that there is hardly any evidence to establish Raja Bhaiya's role in the murder. He has, after all, been in jail for over a month now. But then, those in the civil administration could not have been unfamiliar with his clout in Kunda and the several villages in the region and left Rajendra Yadav, on whose complaint the MLA and his father have been detained under POTA, without the necessary protection. The documents that the police officials claim to have gathered from the MLA's premises and the records in the various police stations in Pratapgarh should have convinced the civil administration of the need to ensure protection for Yadav. While the statement by the police that Yadav's death will not affect the case against Mr. Singh and his father (since his statement had already been recorded) may be true given the provisions in POTA, the fact is that the shootout is bound to have its adverse impact on the administration's task of gathering further evidence. The fact that a key witness could so easily be done away with will prevent anyone else from coming out with evidence against the violent ways of Mr. Singh in the region. The reality, known to anyone familiar with the politics and the social set-up of this region, is that Raja Bhaiya has indeed remained a law unto himself in Kunda.

The sequence and the timing of Mr. Singh's arrest and the invocation of POTA against him (and his father) clearly smack of political vendetta rather than any honest desire on the part of the Chief Minister, Mayawati, to cleanse the State's political stables of criminal elements. While the exclusion of Mr. Singh from her Cabinet (despite pressure from sections in the BJP including the former Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh) after she was elected Chief Minister was reflective of her

animosity towards this strongman from Pratapgarh, his arrest and the subsequent raid at the Bethi palace (from where a huge cache of sophisticated arms was found according to the State Government) were clearly in response to the role played by Mr. Singh in building dissidence within the BJP against its continuance in the coalition with the BSP. The attempt by sections within the BJP to prevail upon Ms. Mayawati not to pursue the charges against Mr. Singh and his father and the remarks by some in the BJP establishment that the case against Mr. Singh was indeed an instance of POTA being misused can be explained on this basis. Their pleadings on behalf of Mr. Singh and his father reflect the tensions within the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit arising out of the party's decision to back a Dalit as Chief Minister. In other words, an influential section within the BJP, belonging to the Rajput community, found a leader in Raja Bhaiya and raised the banner of revolt against the BJP leadership demanding that the party withdraw from the coalition. This indeed was the immediate context in which Mr. Singh was arrested.

The political backdrop to the case should in no sense be seen as holding a brief for Mr. Singh and his father. This former Raja of Kunda is known for his aggressive ways in sustaining the feudal set-up in the region and his track record is such that the Election Commission had even passed orders (during the Lok Sabha elections in 1998) barring his entry into his own Assembly constituency. The Commission's order, then, was based on its assessment that Mr. Singh's very presence in the constituency could vitiate the poll process. Mr. Singh was a member of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet at that time and this indeed is reflective of the extent to which the political discourse in the State was criminalised. The action initiated by the Mayawati dispensation against Raja Bhaiya now may smack of political vendetta. But then, such a measure was long overdue and necessary to enforce democracy.

KUNDA

- 5 FEB 2003

Another 'mystery' plane spotted near Chennai

110-11 By T.S. Shankar

CHENNAI, FEB. 4. In another case of spotting of a mysterious aircraft over the Chennai skies, air traffic controllers found the movement of an "unidentified U.S. Air Force" plane, flying between 31,500 feet and 33,500 feet and 170 to 180 nautical miles east of Chennai airport, well outside the Indian territorial waters and air space.

However, the Monopulse Secondary Surveillance Radar (MSSR) at the airport tracked down and recorded the "blip movement" of the aircraft.

The MSSR had picked up the "blip movement" not only on January 31, but also on February 2, 3 and 4. The authorities are trying to determine if it is the same aircraft in all the cases.

Highly-placed sources in the National Airports Division of the Airports Authority of India (NAD-AAI) told *The Hindu* that the "unidentified movement of the jet", which had kept its transponder on, was spotted between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m., keeping the air traffic controllers on "tenterhooks."

All efforts made by the Chennai air traffic controllers to establish radio contact proved futile and the "mystery plane" did not respond to any of the radio channel frequencies, even the emergency one. The "unidentified" jetliner suddenly disappeared from the MSSR radar coverage after 1 p.m. The NAD-AAI authorities in New Delhi, including the Executive Director-Air Traffic Management and the Director-General of Civil Aviation, have been informed about the "mystery plane movements", the sources said.

PTI reports from New Delhi:

The Civil Aviation Minister, Shahnawaz Hussain said that "even today an unidentified plane was sighted 180 nautical miles off Chennai ... and it did not respond to our signals". The ATC immediately informed the Air Force and the matter was also brought to the notice of the Defence and External Affairs Ministries, he said.

199-11

Dons' arrests: MEA, CBI still await confirmation

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, FEB. 4. Even as reports of a crackdown on underworld gangsters by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities in Dubai filtered down here, indicating arrest of six dons, including two brothers of Dawood Ibrahim, neither the Ministry of External Affairs nor the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was in a position today to confirm them.

While the Ministry of External Affairs maintained that it had sought confirmation of the arrests from the Indian mission in Dubai, the CBI said it was yet to receive any communication.

Apart from Noora and Mush-taqin, the two brothers of Dawood Ibrahim, the prime accused in the March 1993 Bombay serial blasts case, four others arrested were said to be Mohammed Dosa, Aftab Patki, Iqbal and Izaj Pathan.

Sources in the CBI said Interpol Red Corner notices of arrest had been issued against

Noora, Izaz Pathan and Mush-taqin in the aftermath of the Bombay blasts as all three were accused in the case. Aftab Patki was said to be the brain behind the counterfeit currency racket that frequently used the hawala channel for illegal transfer of illegal money. He is one of the top criminals wanted by the Mumbai police.

In accordance with the established international methodology of fighting crime, the Interpol branch of Dubai police should have informed their counterparts in the CBI which represents Interpol-India, but the agency was still groping in the dark about the arrests or crackdown. However, sources were inclined to believe that the Dubai sweep came in the wake of the January 19 murder of Sharad Shetty, the trusted aide of Dawood Ibrahim, who was managing the financial affairs of the D-company in Dubai.

It was also pointed out that the authorities in Dubai were

keen to send out the message to the world that they would not allow the city to become a haven for criminals.

Sources said there were reports that Dubai police had rounded up at least a 100 other suspects who could throw more light on the Shetty murder case. Four members of the rival Chhota Rajan gang widely believed to be behind the murder of Shetty have reportedly been arrested.

It was also believed that the gangsters had landed in Dubai to prepare and operate a network for the cricket-betting racket as the World Cup fever caught on.

Among others, Mohammad Dosa carried a reward of Rs. 10 lakh as one of the key accused in the Bombay blasts case. He had organised the landings of RDX, arms and ammunition at Dighi coast in coastal Konkan region in January 1993, just two months before the deadly blasts that killed nearly 300 people and injured 700 others.

THE HINDU

- 5 FEB 2003

Purulia armsdrop

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 4: Delhi High Court today issued a notice to the CBI to file a reply on the action it has taken to arrest fugitives Kim Davy, alias Neils Christian Neilsen, and his two associates accused in the Purulia arms dropping case.

Justices Dalveer Bhandari and S.K. Agarwal asked the CBI to file a reply by February 24 on a writ petition by Calcutta-based legal activist Deepak Prahladka, seeking a CBI report on the steps being taken to arrest and extradite Danish nationals Kim Davy, Peter Haestrup and Brian Thune.

Prahladka alleged that though he had informed the CBI about Davy and his associates through a letter dated October 5 last year, the agency failed to take any action.

"...Neither has the CBI filed any report before the sessions

court on their arrest and extradition nor has it informed the petitioner of the action taken on the information given by him about Davy and his associates," Prahladka said in the court.

A huge quantity of arms and ammunition, including 350 AK-47s, anti-tank grenades, pistols and rocket launchers, were dropped in Purulia district on December 17, 1995.

Davy managed to escape from Mumbai airport four days later while Peter Bleach of Britain and five Latvians — Alexander Klichine, Igor Timmerman, Igor Moskvitine, Olag Gaidash and Evguenu Antimenko — were arrested.

The six were sentenced to life imprisonment by a Calcutta court in 2000 for waging war against the nation. Bleach continues to be behind bars, but the five Latvians were granted pardon by the President a couple of years ago and Davy was declared proclaimed offender.

Raja Bhaiyya witness killed

9-06/2003 (POTA) 1-6 2/12
YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, Feb. 3: Two motorcycle-borne gunmen today shot dead a key witness in the case filed under the anti-terror law against Independent MLA Raghuraj Pratap Singh and his father Raja Udai Pratap Singh.

The witness, Rajendra Yadav, was one of the principal complainants on whose report the case against the rebel legislator and his father was built up.

"He was shot dead in Kunda town of Pratapgarh district around 10.15 am and we are trying to establish their (the killers') identity," Uttar Pradesh additional director-general of police Vikram Singh said.

The 70-year-old Udai Pratap was arrested on January 25. He was charged with conspiracy to eliminate chief minister Mayavati on Republic Day and detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Raghuraj Pratap, alias Raja Bhaiyya, who was already in jail, was named co-accused along with two of his jailed supporters.

Although independent observers view today's development as a setback for the prosecution, Vikram Singh maintained that the murder would have no impact on the case.

Pratapgarh police officials said Yadav had come to Kunda from his village, Ban.

"The assailants seemed to be waiting for him and sprayed him with bullets at him. He died before he could be rushed to hospital," district superintendent of police A.R. Ganesh said.

Yadav was also a key witness in the case related to the recovery of a human skeleton, jewellery and arms and ammunition from Udai Pratap's Beti Palace, a senior police official said.

The murder has hardened Mayavati's attitude. After a meeting with Kalraj Mishra, former state chief of her ally, the BJP, she refused to withdraw the anti-terror case against Raja Bhaiyya, his father and supporters. "This only shows what dangerous criminals Raja Bhaiyya and his father are," she told Mishra, who called on her today to intercede on behalf of the MLA and his father.

NDA allies, rivals seek terror-law revision

KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, Feb. 2: NDA allies, in league with Opposition parties, are expected to mount a campaign for scrapping "some draconian" provisions in the anti-terrorism legislation, despite law minister Arun Jaitley's assertion that there was no need for an amendment.

This comes in the wake of an uproar in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu over the misuse of the law that was enacted by a joint session of Parliament last year, bypassing the Rajya Sabha where the ruling alliance does

not have a majority.

A private member's Bill is likely to be introduced in the budget session of Parliament to amend the Act. Opposition parties are expecting support in passing the Bill from the allies and even a section of the BJP leadership.

The MDMK, an NDA ally, was the first victim of the Act — its chief Vaiko was arrested last July and is still languishing in jail. Vaiko's friends in the DMK, the PMK, the Akali Dal and the Samata Party accused Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalithaa of taking "vindictive" action.

MDMK leaders had recently submitted a memorandum signed by a crore people and leaders of various political parties, except the ADMK, to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, drawing his attention to the misuse of the Act meant to deal with terrorists.

In Uttar Pradesh, a section of BJP leaders and Union agriculture minister and Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Ajit Singh criticised the arrest of Independent MLA Raja Bhaiyya and his father, Uday Pratap Singh, under the anti-terror Act, allegedly at the behest of Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayavati.

Senior BJP leaders Rajnath Singh and Vinay Katiyar went on record, accusing chief minister Mayavati of misusing the Act, while Lok Janashakti Party chief Ram Vilas Paswan said he would talk to BJP allies and Opposition parties to get the draconian provisions removed.

"The time has come to plug the loopholes so that the anti-terror legislation can never be misused for political purposes," said Samata spokesperson Shambhu Shrivastwa.

Shrivastwa said that though his party has no brief for Raja Bhaiyya, it was incorrect to book

a person with criminal antecedents under an anti-terrorist Act. "Did they have a minister in the government for five years who had ISI and terrorist links? It appears (to be) a case of misuse of the law. We are of the view that political problems should not be sorted out through (any) administrative measures."

Refusing to comment on Mayavati's or Jayalalithaa's action, Jaitley said: "There is no need to change the provisions of the Act enacted to fight terrorism. All major democracies in the world have enacted even harsher laws to fight terrorism."

Maintaining that there were sufficient in-built safeguards in the Act, Jaitley said a vigilant judiciary could take corrective steps.

Lambasting the law minister, Paswan said: "The victims could go to court? What does it mean? The law was made because the courts were taking a long time. There was a clause against journalists also. The Prime Minister had assured Parliament that it would not be misused, but what happened? Political opponents are booked under the Act. It appears IPC and CrPC have become redundant."

3 FEB 2003

Kargil should have been a warning and, yet, the Defence Ministry has to catch up on a huge backlog if it wishes to save casualties in the next war with Pakistan

LESSONS FOR THE ARMY

By JK DUTT

ON the occasion of Army Day (observed every year on 15 January), our uniformed fraternity needs to reflect and introspect on two war scenarios — one real and the other surreal. The real war was Operation Enduring Freedom while the surreal one was Operation Parakrama. The global military exercise that has been in vogue for several years now, termed Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), was tested to full capacity in Afghanistan and produced more than satisfactory results.

Unfortunately, India's half-hearted attempts at RMA have remained just that. Our defence ministry has to catch up on a huge backlog of this exercise if it wishes to save casualties in the next war with Pakistan. Kargil should have catalysed India's military nexus in going flat out for a well-rated RMA but, sad to say, other than a few perfunctory changes, it turned out to be a case of *plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose*, meaning no change is the best change!

An examination of the RMA outputs as manifest during Operation Enduring Freedom would be rewarding. Five items are highlighted. First, special troops were infiltrated in small groups into Afghanistan, equipped with global position indicator systems. These "fire controllers" brought to bear extremely accurate bomb and missile strikes using a combination of precision target information and precision guided munitions. The accuracy obtained was anywhere up to 10 metres from the target, something that was a 100 per cent improvement over what was seen at the Gulf War of 1991.

Second, meticulous and prolonged reconnaissance was resorted to for ensuring a continuous intelligence panorama. Certain specific localities were covered every hour on the hour. The most effective apparatus for reconnaissance was the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV). It

The author is Lt. Col. (retd.), Indian Army.

procured round the clock surveillance for battle commanders located far away from the scene of operations but who were able to utilise the incoming information to exemplary profit via weapon systems.

Third, excellent communications were probably one of the prime contributory factors in the successful campaign. Communication networks between ground forces, the air force, the fleet air arm, the central com-

types.

The overriding feature of the campaign was the synergy that was displayed among land, sea, and air forces. General Tommy Franks, the overall operations commander for Afghanistan attributed this inter-service cooperation and coordination as the epitome of American military synergy, surpassing all previous ones in the wars that the USA had fought.

India's armed forces are woe-

The bedrock of decisive military action against an aggressor has to emanate from our political will



mand HQ, and the Pentagon were robust and dependable. Communication failures were few and far between and in many instances were rectified through secondary or parallel channels.

The time lag between detecting a target and destroying it was around 20 minutes which must be a record in its own right. Fourth, UAVs were boldly deployed in the predator role. These unmanned craft dropped laser guided missiles scoring hit after hit. The UAVs proved to be singularly cost effective because if a UAV was knocked out by enemy fire, the loss was nothing compared to that of a manned aircraft. And fifth, battlefield suppression of enemy anti-aircraft weapons was carried out in an overwhelming manner. Ground attack aircraft inclusive of B1 and B52 bombers could loiter for prolonged periods of time with little fear of being downed. The Northern Alliance greatly appreciated the role of close support from the air by combat aircraft of all

fully short in RMA levels as expected from a defence set-up. Beginning at the political layer, we seem to have learnt nothing from Kargil. A cryptic military historian compared our infantry assaults in Kargil to those of the first world war! This was because we had never been serious about creating a RMA culture from top to bottom. The Subramaniam Committee report for example has been gathering dust in some corner after a bit of lip service was paid to it.

Besides the success story characteristics enumerated from Operation Enduring Freedom and which should become our lodestar, several other requirements need to be met. There is dire necessity for us to raise an equivalent of the Marine Corps — ideally, an Amphibious Strike Command. The "naval soldier" is very much in demand in the realm of securing a strategic leverage in modern warfare. In the Indo-Pak context, a command of this nature comprising two naval infantry divi-

sions with supporting arms and services under a vice-admiral has long been overdue, to be sure from the aftermath of the 1965 war. The 1971 conflict saw a minuscule ad hoc effort by us to land a regular infantry battalion in erstwhile East Pakistan. A command as suggested could have totally jeopardised Pakistan's Kargil plot by seizing a beach-head along the Karachi coastline in a coup de main operation.

Our special troops on being injected into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Bangladesh could have destroyed terrorist camps with the help of global positioning-cum-missiles. We have developed an indigenous UAV that must be typed up for multi-purpose action. Defence against Pak-sponsored terrorism warrants our taking the war into enemy territory by "pre-emptive retaliation".

The absence of synergy among the three services is glaring, witness the sabotaging of the appointment of a chief of defence staff. The efficacy of our Army Air Corps is suspect considering the air force styming its raising for two decades or so. Inter-service rivalry — petulance really — has to be ironed out especially if we wish to secure amphibious clout.

However, the bedrock of decisive military action against an aggressor has to emanate from our political will. India's political establishment is notorious for not possessing such a will barring 1971. Time and again this establishment has fallen short of producing this much-needed will — Operation Parakrama is a sickening sample. Consequently, the body language that India conveys to an adversary has ever been our traditional Fabianism. This has to change.

Our leadership has to emulate that shown by the USA in Operation Enduring Freedom when we are faced with the next reply of Operation Parakrama. There is only one principle that works, as advocated by Mao Zedong: "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun".

Push comes to shove on the eastern front

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
AND AGENCIES

Siliguri\New Delhi: BSF and Bangladesh Rifles personnel were ranged along the Indo-Bangla border at the Satgachi border outpost in West Bengal's Cooch Behar district since Friday morning after 213 Bangladeshis were pushed into India at gunpoint and the BSF stopped them within five yards inside Indian territory along the zero line.

While the BSF claimed the 213 people were Bangladeshis, the BDR claimed they were Indians. Sources in the Intelligence Bureau said there was tension between the two countries and Bangladesh had sounded a red alert on its side.

As the tensions mounted, India made a demarche to Bangladesh conveying the government's concerns about the illegal immigration of Bangladeshi citizens running into millions. India's concerns were conveyed in an

aide memoire handed over to acting deputy high commissioner Shahadat Hussain by the director, Bangladesh, in the ministry of external affairs, K. Bhattacharya.

Denying that Indian nationals were being pushed into Bangladesh, an external affairs ministry spokesman said that any such allegation or implication was baseless and absurd.

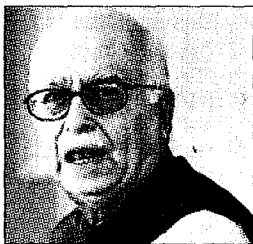
However, Bangladesh's foreign secretary Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury reiterated in Dhaka that Bengali-speaking Indian Muslims were be-

ing pushed into its territory. Mr Chowdhury threatened to show the "situation on the ground" to foreign diplomats in that country.

Deputy commandant of the BSF's North Bengal frontier of BSF Satish Kumar said 213 Bangladeshis—68 men, 65 women and 80 children—had been forced by the BDR at gunpoint to cross the border and enter India under cover of a thick fog early on Friday. BSF patrols noticed them and the infiltrators were restricted along zero line within five yards inside India.

Meanwhile, the Delhi police drive to identify and evict

Aborted mission



•Dhaka's stand has forced the Delhi police to stop detection and deportation of illegal immigrants, dealing a blow to deputy PM L.K. Advani's plans to throw out all illegal Bangladeshis.

illegal Bangladeshi migrants has come to a grinding halt after Bangladeshi authorities refused to accept the migrants as their citizens.

IB sources said a train-load of illegal migrants who were to be deported to Bangladesh were now returning to Delhi from West Bengal after Dhaka

claimed that India was trying to throw out Muslim by declaring them as Bangladeshis. This comes as a major blow to deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani's plans to throw out all illegal Bangladeshi immigrants from the country.

Several district deputy commissioners of New Delhi told *The Times of India* that they had been asked not to identify any Bangladeshis and send them to the nodal agency, the Foreign Regional Registration Office (FRRO), where all illegal migrants are brought.

1 FEB 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Maya hits Pot(a) of gold

Another politician demonstrates the political
9/18 'utility' of a draconian law 29/11 \

THE irony is writ large. For the second time in recent times, the BJP is hoist on its own law. Some months ago, J. Jayalithaa slapped Pota on MDMK leader Vaiko, political opponent and a leading member of the NDA stable in Tamil Nadu. Now ally Mayawati has wielded the BJP's pet legislation to put away Raja Bhaiyya, political opponent, who was minister in the erstwhile Rajnath Singh government in Uttar Pradesh. The party that claims a monopoly on patriotism and seeks to pump up terrorism into a magnificent bogey must now confront the 'terrorists' in its ranks! As the BJP-BSP war of words over Raja Bhaiyya's arrest grows shriller in UP—Mayawati announces no one will be spared 'meri sarkar rahe ya na rahe' and Vinay Katiyar brags 'agar Pota laga to sota (whip) chalega'—it is tempting to simply sit back and be entertained. That temptation must be resisted.

In the run-up to the passage of the draconian law in Parliament, these columns unequivocally argued that the law, as it is framed, is open to misuse. It was pointed out that it lacked adequate safeguards against being hijacked by the political regime of the day, to oppress the hapless citizen and to hound the political opponent. The political leadership was called upon to rethink

and reframe the legislation through a participatory debate. In the event, the NDA government bulldozed the law through Parliament by calling a joint session, and those apprehensions festered unresolved. Now, they return to haunt the very regime that spurned them.

A disclaimer is needed perhaps: this is certainly not to be read as a defence of the notorious Raja Bhaiyya. Digging continues apace in the grounds of the Bhadri and Bainti palaces of the jailed legislator in Kunda and mine detectors may unearth yet more hidden treasures of sophisticated arms and ammunition, utensils and jewellery. But it is difficult to believe that Mayawati, who has not exactly been circumspect about the kind of political company she keeps as long as it helps shore up her claim to power, is motivated by righteous indignation at those misbegotten resources—even if she were, there are laws enough to deal with that crime. As she flings 'anti-national' at him, and accuses him of conspiring with the ISI, it is glaringly obvious that she is showing who's the boss in UP. Having just added eight breakaway MLAs from the Congress to her numbers, a bolder, more confident Mayawati has flung down the political gauntlet. Act II in UP will show whether partner BJP is willing or able to pick it up.

Gorshkov deal to be final by March: Fernandes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

MOSCOW, Jan. 18. — The much awaited deal on the acquisition of the 44.5 thousand tonne "Kiev" class aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* would be ready for signing in a package with the lease of Tu-22M3 (Backfire-C) long-range strategic bombers and Akula class nuclear submarines by the end of March this year, Mr George Fernandes said here.

Talking to the Indian media at the end of the Moscow leg of his visit to Russia yesterday, Mr Fernandes said that the landmark Indo-Russian defence protocol signed earlier in the day by him



Mr George Fernandes

with Mr Ilya Klebanov provides for the completion of negotiations by the end of March on the whole package.

"*Gorshkov* is part of the package agreed in the inter-governmental agree-

ment, and all three deals would be signed together," Mr Fernandes said.

According to Mr Fernandes, the *Gorshkov* deal had been kept under the wraps in order to divert the attention of India's "mischievous neighbour".

In the Indo-Russian protocol on defence cooperation signed in Moscow both sides have agreed to do the 'utmost' to make sure that the package is ready for signing by the end of March, Mr Fernandes said.

"There is a sense of urgency on both sides. The negotiations are on for almost a decade now. All the technical aspects have been agreed, only the issue of price remains to be settled," he said.

National Security Advisory Board reconstituted

By Sandeep Dikshit

HD-11
18/1

NEW DELHI, JAN. 17. But for three new inclusions, the Government has continued with the remaining members of the previous National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) for the year.

It has re-nominated leading China expert and former Ambassador to Beijing and Paris, C.V. Ranganathan, as convener of the reconstituted NSAB for 2003-04. Thus Mr. Ranganathan gets two consecutive terms as Convener like the defence expert, K. Subrahmanyam, who had headed the first and second editions of the NSAB.

The NSAB is entrusted with an annual review of the security scenario. The third NSAB, in its final review, had reportedly sug-

gested abandoning the policy of no-first-strike but interacting recently with newsmen, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, had ruled out revising the doctrine proposed by the NSAB headed by Dr. Subrahmanyam.

This is the fourth NSAB that the Government has constituted. Among those re-nominated for the second and last term are the former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission, M.R. Srinivasan, the former Secretary (Economic Relations) in the Ministry of External Affairs, S.T. Devare, the former Army chief, V.P. Malik, the former IAF vice-chief, Vinod Patney, the former Naval officer, K.K. Nayyar, Charan Wadhwa of the Centre of Policy Research, scientist Kalyan Banerjee, the for-

mer Intelligence Bureau chief, Arun Bhagat, the former Director-General of the National Security Guards (NSG) Nikhil Kumar, academician Amitabh Mattoo and the former bureaucrat, R.K. Ahuja.

The Director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), K. Santhanam, the chief of BJP's economic cell Jagdish Shettigar and the former Cabinet Secretariat official, B. Raman, have not been included for various reasons.

Among the new inclusions are Leena Srivastava, B.K.R. Rao and K.M. Warikoo from the JNU.

"As in the past, the term of the NSAB will be for a period of one year from the date of its first meeting," said an official release.

THE HINDU

18 JAN 2003

Floating posts to check infiltration

Srinjoy Chowdhury
in New Delhi

Jan. 17. — To check infiltration, illegal immigration and smuggling, the Centre has decided to have "floating" Border Outposts, called BOPs in shallow-water areas like Sir Creek and the Sunderbans.

The borders along Sir Creek and more so the Sunderbans are "porous" and are causing concern to officials. These BOPs, basically large barge-like vessels, could be the answer to many problems in the Sunderbans and Sir Creek (separating India and Pakistan) in the Gujarat area. Each one will be about 150 feet long and 55 feet wide and carry 35 personnel.

They are likely to be flat-bottomed and will move slowly, but attached to them will be four speed-boats. These will be able to intercept fast moving craft bringing in illegal immigrants, weapons or smuggled goods into India very quickly. Four

Listen to the 'Air Warriors'

MUMBAI, Jan. 17. — The IAF's mission has been to keep our skies secure, an assignment it has been admirably carrying on for decades. But the aim of this new breed of "Air Warriors" is to soar into the hearts and senses of the Indian people by taking Indian and Western melodies into symphonic flight.

And towards this end, Mumbai will witness the "Air Warriors in Concert" for the first time tomorrow and the day after at Homi Bhabha Auditorium and Bandra Joggers Park.

Formed in Kahat in the North-Western Frontier in 1944 with one officer and 47 airmen, the Air Force Band has a rich and chequered experience spanning 58 years.

There are now seven Air Force bands across the country and though initially limited to service ceremonies and formal functions, the band has now expanded its repertoire to include soul-stirring martial music, pop, western and Hindustani classical music and a bit of jazz.

The two-hour concerts in Mumbai will feature original compositions and original arrangements of popular tunes like the theme song from *Titanic*, the Mozart composition *Marriage of Figaro*, *Raga Hansadhvani* and the hymn that was a favourite of Gandhiji, *Abide With Me*, among others. — SNS

will be pressed into action very shortly and another 10 will be built later. Each BOP will cost about Rs 12 crore.

The BOPs, ordered by the

government several years ago, will have several advantages over other craft.

■ First, unlike most craft of the Navy or the Coast

Guard, they will be able to function in shallow-water areas. In the Sunderbans or the Sir Creek areas, leave alone in the Brahmaputra, ships cannot function.

■ Even if they could, they would have to move into these places from other areas and by the time they arrived after getting the necessary intelligence, the infiltrators or smugglers would have disappeared in some of the little creeks. As these BOPs will be permanently placed there, keeping tab on infiltrators will be easier. Just their presence in these sensitive areas will be the equivalent of having floating BSF (or military, if necessary) posts in areas which are rarely patrolled. An effective presence in the Sunderbans, for instance, could be enough of a deterrent.

■ While they are big enough to have 35 people on board, their four motor-boats will have more flexibility and will be able to chase infiltrators or smugglers who may themselves be using fast-moving craft.

Fernandes says no to review of India's nuclear policy

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: India will not review its declared policy of "no-first use" of nuclear weapons since the country has adequate second-strike capabilities in place, defence minister George Fernandes said on Monday.



"We have a nuclear doctrine, and a nuclear and Strategic Forces Command (SFC) chain in position. So, we stand by the no-first use policy," said Mr Fernandes, responding to questions on the sidelines of a function here.

There has been some talk of a review of the country's nuclear pos-

ture especially since the National Security Advisory Board (an expert group which advises the government on national security) recently recommended that India should "reconsider withdrawing from this (no-first use) commitment as the other nuclear weapon states (including Pakistan) have not accepted this policy".

But the Cabinet Committee on Security, while formalising the country's nuclear command and control structure on January 4, had clearly said that India would stick to its "no-first use" policy. At the same time, it had warned that "nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage".

The government, for the first time, had also declared that India would

retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons if attacked with chemical or biological weapons by even non-nuclear adversaries.

On his Russian visit beginning on Tuesday, Mr Fernandes said the two countries would discuss "our equipment and security relationship". While ruling out signing of any major armament acquisition deal, he said officials from the two sides would aim to sort out the existing loopholes in the servicing of Russian equipment and supply of weapons spares.

While India had agreed in principle to acquire the decommissioned Russian aircraft carrier 'Admiral Gorshkov', the price negotiations for the package deal were still to be sorted out, Mr Fernandes said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

14 JAN 2003

Agni-III will give India a shot in N-arm

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
AND AGENCIES

New Delhi: After Pakistan, India now seems to be keen on strengthening its nuclear deterrence posture against China. With the Pakistan-specific 800-km-range 'Agni-I' missile ready for induction, defence scientists are now gearing up to test the long-range 'Agni-III' missile by the year-end.

The 'Agni-III' ballistic missile with a strike range of 3,500-4,000 km will make it possible to engage high-value targets in a wide arc deep inside China. Experts say this missile is required since the 2,000-km-plus 'Agni-II' missile, already inducted into the armed forces, can hit targets only in western China. The 'Agni-II', of course, is capable of hitting most targets in Pakistan.

"Yes, we are developing the 'Agni-III' and it will be tested before the end of this year. The technology is not much different from 'Agni-I' and 'Agni-II'," confirmed scientific advisor to the defence minister and Defence Research and Development Organisation chief V.K. Aatre on Saturday.

Mr Aatre made his comments on the sidelines of a seminar on defence and internal security on the concluding day of the three-day convention of non-resident Indians and people of Indian origin here.

Senior officials claim India is even capable of developing ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) with ranges far in excess of 5,000 km due to the successful space programme of GSLVs (Geo-syn-

chronous Satellite Launch Vehicles) and PSLVs (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles).

"But we don't need ICBMs since our potential adversaries are in our neighbourhood. We just need an effective second-strike capability as a deterrent with the Agni missiles," said an official.

The solid-fuelled 'Agni-III' will be both road and rail-mobile to confer operational flexibility in deployment. It will be an entirely new vehicle, along with a true inertial navigation system, to accord capabilities to deliver a one-tonne warhead beyond the range of combat aircraft.

As for the single-stage 'Agni-I', Mr Aatre said: "We have finished all our development trials. It can be inducted anytime."

Agni-I has been tested twice from a launch pad in Orissa. Asked if two tests were enough for Agni-I's induction, Mr Aatre said, "It is part of the Agni series of missiles which have been tested eight times. We do not need more than the tests we have conducted."

'BrahMos', the anti-ship supersonic cruise missile with a range of 290-km, will also be tested later this month. "It will be the first ship-borne trial," said Mr Aatre. There are also plans to configure this missile to arm the new Sukhoi-30MKI fighters.

Maj-Gen P. Mohandas, chief of Bharat Dynamics Limited, which manufactures missiles and torpedoes, told the seminar that India was developing missile simulators to ensure proper training for the armed forces. "We want the user to be totally trained in missile system operations," he said.

12 JAN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Imran deportation, a strong signal to the underworld

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, JAN. 10. With the swift deportation of Imran Rehman Khan, key suspect in the bomb blast at Ghatkopar in Mumbai last month from Dubai last night on the request from the Indian Government, sources in the law enforcement agencies here feel that a strong signal has gone to the underworld that foreign governments are serious in cooperating to tackle such crime.

After the Anis Ibrahim fiasco, the deportation of Imran has come as a "positive" development for the Government as well as the police and Central intelligence agencies who had done the spadework and provided vital tips. The December two blast in a bus in Ghatkopar had left two persons dead and 51 injured.

Sources also described as significant, the arrest of Shakeel Ahmed Sheikh alias Lamboo Shakeel, pointman of Dawood Ibrahim in India until the early 90s. He was traced in Mumbai with the help of clues provided by the Central intelligence agencies.

Initial reports indicate that Imran was recruited in Saudi Arabia some time in March-April 2002 by the local cell of the militant outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba which was set up with the blessings of Pakistan's Inter-Services

Intelligence (ISI). Sources here said that it was the second Lashkar cell noticed outside Pakistan after the one in Kuwait that had subverted Shahid Ahmed Bakshi of Ahmedabad during February last year to target political leaders.

Bakshi was arrested in the Capital on August 28, 2002, along with an accomplice and bomb-making material, four kg of RDX explosive, a pistol and some ammunition were seized from his possession.

Sources claimed that Imran Khan was given cassettes by the Lashkar cadres exhorting revenge on those who had slain Muslims in Gujarat. He returned to India to form an attack squad comprising his friends Matin, Yunus and Zaheer. Imran was recalled to Saudi Arabia in May 2002 where he submitted his progress report to the LeT. On his return to India, money was received for arms and other supplies through illegal hawala channels. The group was carefully prepared by Imran and given specific instructions regarding the action to be taken by them. Imran left again for Saudi Arabia for fresh instructions and new targets leaving his group to stage the Ghatkopar bomb blasts.

On the other hand, Shakeel, said to be a "prize catch" for the police, was reportedly the overseer and chief executive of the

D-company since 1985 after Dawood Ibrahim fled India. He was responsible for the landing of contraband, including arms and explosives, shipped by the ISI through the D-company along the coastline, which were believed to have been used in the March 1993 Bombay serial blasts.

Originally a resident of Kanpur, Shakeel also acquired a passport in the name of Lari Mohammad Shakeel from Lucknow. Sources said that he could provide considerable information about Dawood's mandate and modus operandi in India, especially his method of running the organisation from Pakistan through Shakeel.

Remanded to custody

PTI reports:

Imran Rehman Khan, who was arrested under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) at the Mumbai airport last night when he was brought to the country from Dubai, was remanded to police custody till January 17 by a special court in Mumbai today.

He was produced before the designated judge, A.P. Bhargale, amid tight security. The judge, who allowed him an interview with his lawyer, refused permission to meet his wife and the facility of home food.

To a query by the court, Imran said he was innocent. He had no complaints against the police, he added. The judge also allowed the prosecution plea to handcuff Khan.

THE HINDU

Govt. drops case against Gilani

By Anjali Mody

NEW DELHI, JAN. 10. Three days after the Government rejected a Military Intelligence report clearing the journalist Ifthikar Gilani as "without authority" and "untenable", it has decided to withdraw its case against him. Mr. Gilani has been incarcerated since June last and charged under the Official Secrets Act for possessing part of a published journal article.

Although defence counsel had very early in the case established that the document, which was the basis for Mr. Gilani's arrest was a public one, police had pressed charges on the basis of the Military Intelligence's opinion, which claimed the information contained was collected by an "enemy agent" and that its possession posed threat to national security.

Police had alleged that Mr. Gilani was in the pay of the Pakistan Government. They pro-



duced e-mail messages from Pakistani journalists to suggest that Mr. Gilani had dubious links with Pakistan and also tried to link him to the assassination of the People's Conference leader, Abdul Ghani Lone. It was on this basis that Mr. Gilani was repeatedly denied bail.

Following the defence arguments that the document was not "secret", the Sessions

Court before which a bail application was pending, directed the prosecution to obtain a "fresh" opinion from the MI. The second opinion, overturned the first, calling it "erroneous". But, in one of the many curious twists in this case, police presented in the court on December 12 a reproduction of the earlier adverse opinion signed by a junior Home Ministry official.

The court summoned the DGMI, who confirmed on December 23 that a second opinion had been sent. The Joint Police Commissioner and Home Ministry officials denied all knowledge of it.

In what was seen as a vindictive act, Home Ministry officials called a meeting on December 26 in which they concluded that the MI's second opinion was "untenable" and that the publicly available information in Mr. Gilani's possession was indeed a threat to national's security.

THE HINDU

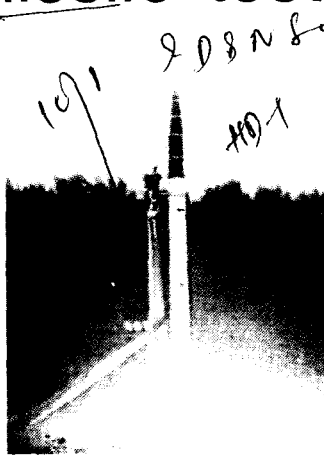
7 JAN 2003

Agni missile test-fired successfully ✓

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, JAN. 9. India today successfully test-fired the 800-km-range Agni missile and plans to undertake more tests shortly before its induction in a newly-raised missile group drawn from the Army.

Test-fired with a one-tonne payload, its most likely warhead, the solid propellant-fuelled missile, fills the gap between the shorter range, Prithvi missile and the 2,500-km-range Agni-II. It will be cheaper than Agni-II and better than Prithvi, since it can be fired from a greater distance and with a heavier payload. Although the Prithvi has been inducted in the 333 Missile Group of the Army, its heavier weapon-carrying capacity is neutralised by Pakistan's M-11 missiles because of the shorter range. The Agni variant tested today can be placed at a much greater distance from the border and, thus, has much more survival capacity during



'Agni' missile blasting off from a mobile-launcher at Chandipur-on-sea, Orissa, on Thursday. — PTI

hostilities. It also has a solid fuel-propellant system which means it can be launched much faster than a liquid fuel-propelled variant. Significantly, official sources said the missile was tested from a mobile platform which means that it has

been nearly configured for use in a real-life setting — the Railways has already manufactured specialised wagons to carry it disguised as regular commercial goods cargo rake.

The launch met all the parameters and was tracked by a network of ground stations and naval ships. Sources said it was designed to carry "special weapon payload" which means a one-tonne nuclear device with a 45-kiloton thermonuclear design tested at Pokhran in 1998. Advanced tests might see the shorter range being tested with heavier payloads.

In addition to the shorter range Agni, India is also planning to test missiles of other capabilities. There are plans to conduct conclusive tests of the Brahmos cruise missile as well as the surface-to-air Akash and the anti-tank Nag missiles. The final phase of guided trials for Akash and the shorter range naval version, Trishul were planned last year.

Muralidhar Reddy reports from Islamabad:

Pakistan has alleged that the test-firing of the Agni missile is a reflection of the "war-mongering mindset" of the Indian leadership and maintained that "Pakistan is above such war-mongering psyche".

The Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid, who is known for his rhetoric, took the strident posture. In contrast, the reaction of the Pakistan Foreign Office was more measured as it sought to dismiss the test as "not an unexpected development".

The Foreign Office spokesman, Aziz Ahmed Khan, in a press statement, said the test was "not unexpected as India's nuclear and missile ambitions were well known." Asked whether Pakistan would respond with its own test, the spokesman said, "Pakistan conducts tests when our technical requirements so demand."

See also Page 12

Nuclear command system credible: India

By C. Raja Mohan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. India has effective command and control over its atomic arsenal but to ensure effective deterrence of adversaries, it will not reveal additional details on how the system would respond in the event of a nuclear attack, authoritative sources here have said.

Reacting to the criticism that there may be less than meets the eye in the nature of India's nuclear control system unveiled over the weekend by the Government, the sources say credible alternative lines of command at the political and military levels have been fully worked out.

If there is a nuclear attack that targets the nation's leadership, "the alternative nuclear command authority will be in a position to take charge" and ensure massive retaliation against the adversary, the sources say.

They added that "there could be more than one alternative command structure" to make certain that an Indian nuclear riposte would inevitably follow an atomic attack on the nation.

When pressed for more information on the command and control system, the sources said that there must be an "effective balance between considerations of secrecy and transparency". If the adversary "knows there are alternative arrangements but not where" he would be deterred from launching the attack, the sources insisted.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Government had said that a Political Council headed by the Prime Minister "is the sole body which can authorise the use of nuclear weapons". The sources suggested that the Political Council would in essence be the present Cabinet Committee on Security.

The Executive Council, which will provide inputs to the Political Council and carry out its orders, is the pivot of the nuclear command and control system.

Headed by the National Security Adviser, it will consist of both senior civil servants and top representatives from the military. It will meet frequently and apprise the political leadership, the sources say.

Orders have gone out for the appointment of a Commander in Chief of the Strategic Forces Command which will control the nuclear systems. The command will be a mixed one with representation from the three military services.

Sources say that in the present scheme of things, a political decision on nuclear weapons will go through the Executive Council to the Strategic Forces Command. The C-in-C of the Command will report to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee.

"We believe we have a good structure in place", the sources declared. "As always, there will be a process of evolution. As we gain experience, we could consider a few changes in the nuclear command and control system," they added.

Indicating that a basic system had already been in place for a while, the sources said "both during the Kargil crisis in the summer of 1999 and the recent military confrontation with Pakistan, India was in a position to retaliate with nuclear weapons if the need arose."

But the sources rushed to add, "we were fairly sure that Pakistan would not go down that road". They also dismissed the reported remarks of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, that India was deterred by the nuclear threat from Pakistan.

No such threat was conveyed to India through the crisis by interlocutors from the United States and Great Britain, as claimed by Gen. Musharraf, the sources claimed.

Asked about the potential of an accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons in the Indian arsenal, the sources insisted that "on both the security and safety aspects of nuclear weapons, we have fool-proof mechanisms".

When questioned about the security of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, the assessment here is that the U.S. might be involved in ensuring that these dangerous weapons do not fall into the hands of jihadis.

Rejecting the charge that there were gaping holes in India's nuclear weapons programme, the sources say both Pakistan and the world know that there is "methodical progress" in building up India's nuclear capabilities and there is no pressure from any international quarter to pare it down.

THE HINDU

8 JAN 2003

'INTELLIGENCE GATHERING TO BE STRENGTHENED'

Pak., Bangla overstayers should be deported: Advani ✓

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, has said that Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals who are living in India illegally should be located and deported.

Addressing the Conference of the Chief Secretaries and the Directors-General of Police here today, Mr. Advani said the 11,500 or so Pakistani nationals and half a crore or so Bangladeshis who had remained in India after the expiry of their visas posed a serious threat to the country's internal security.

He said the powers of the Central Government to deport the overstayers had been delegated to the State Governments and the Union Territories.

The conference today agreed to strengthen Centre-State intelligence gathering arrangements by setting up

Multi-Agency Centres and a joint task force on intelligence. The MAC, which was now operational at the Centre, would be "activated soon" in the States, the Union Home Secretary, N. Gopalswami, told a press con-

ference. The Intelligence Bureau will act as the nodal agency for the MAC, which will include representatives of the Central and State intelligence agencies and the intelligence wings of Central para-military forces.

A.K. Bhandari, Special Secretary in the Home Ministry, said the MAC would pool the information from these separate sources, work out the actionable areas allowing action to be taken quickly.

Mr. Gopalswami said there was also agreement that in the States affected by left-wing extremism, issues pertaining to development and grievance redress should be prioritised. With this in mind, the Planning Commission had allocated Rs. 15 crores a year for five years for each of the nine affected States. This would be used as a "topping up fund" for development activity under existing schemes.

He said several States had also asked the Centre to consider re-structuring the form in which Central funds for police reform were allocated. At present, the State matches the Centre's allocation.

National ID cards soon

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. Hours after the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, spoke of a "serious threat" to internal security from illegal Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals staying in the country and the need to "throw them out", the Centre and the States today decided to introduce National Identity Cards to combat the problem.

A pilot project for issuance of ID cards would be launched in 13 States from April 1 at a cost of Rs. 14 crores, the Union Home Secretary, N. Gopalswami, told reporters after a day-long Conference of Chief Secretaries and Directors-General of Police on Internal Security here.

The States where the project would be started are Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Pondicherry and Delhi. — PTI

THE HINDU

2003

Centre To Prepare Citizens Register, Provide ID Cards

Illegal immigrants from Pakistan must go: Advani

New Delhi
7 JANUARY

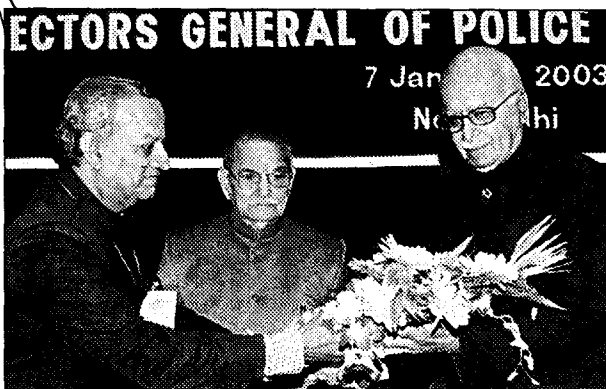
DECLARING a crackdown on 11,500 Pakistanis and 15 million Bangladeshis illegally staying in India, deputy prime minister L.K. Advani on Tuesday directed state governments to launch "special drives" to detect and deport them as they posed a serious threat to national security.

"Over 11,500 Pakistanis have come into the country with regular papers and passports but have overstayed. There is no reason why our states should be soft on them," he told reporters after inaugurating a day-long conference of state chief secretaries and directors general of police here.

"Immediate steps should be taken to identify them, locate them and throw them out. They (states) should launch special drives to detect and deport these foreigners," Mr Advani said, pointing out that powers of the Union government to detect and deport illegally residing foreign nationals have been delegated to States and Union Territories.

Voicing concern over the "serious problem" of illegal immigration from Bangladesh, he said "this problem also needs to be tackled firmly by all state governments". He also asked the police brass to present figures of how many illegally overstaying Pakistanis were traced last year.

Observing that the Centre is seriously considering preparing a national register of Indian citizens and issuing to them multi-



GUARD-IAN ANGELS: L.K. Advani being welcomed by home secretary N. Gopalaswami at the conference of state chief secretaries and directors general of police on internal security in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

purpose national identity cards (MNICs), Mr Advani said these would provide a credible individual identification system and also act as a deterrent for future illegal immigration.

Mr Advani, who also holds the Home portfolio, allayed fears from certain quarters about the practicability of issuing such cards and said "with advanced technology that we have, we can successfully implement this".

Referring to a recent conference on registration of births and deaths, he expressed dismay that many states had no correct figures on demographic changes.

On Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism, Mr Advani said Islamabad's main intention was not to get Jammu and Kashmir but destabilise India. "Secularism and democracy have taken roots in India and this has become an eyesore for our western neigh-

bour which feels that it cannot live together and alongside with such a system," he said.

Observing that Pakistan launched the proxy war after having been defeated in direct wars with India, Mr Advani said Islamabad "will not (not) succeed in its attempt to destabilise India".

Asserting that every effort should be made to defeat and eliminate terrorists, the deputy prime minister said focus should also be on those people who functioned within the country and made it vulnerable to terrorist designs.

Recalling that India has formed joint working groups with several countries to combat terrorism, he said, "No country however big and powerful it may be, can feel safe from terrorist activities. The September 11 attacks on the U S has proved this. — PTI

8 JAN 2003

Govt decides to issue national identity cards

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
AND AGENCIES

New Delhi: Hours after deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani spoke of a "serious threat" to internal security from illegal Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals staying in the country and the need to "throw them out", the Centre and states on Tuesday decided to introduce national identity cards to combat the problem.

A pilot project for issuance of identity cards will be launched in 13 states from April 1 at a cost of Rs 14 crore covering a population of 28.5 lakhs, Union home secretary N. Gopalaswami told reporters after a day-long conference of chief secretaries and directors-general of police on internal security here.

The states where the project will be started are Jammu and Kashmir, Gujarat, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Pondicherry and Delhi.

Inaugurating the conference, Mr Advani disclosed that as many as 11,500 Pakistanis and about 15 million Bangladeshis were illegally overstaying in the country.

Talking to reporters later, he said that 11,500 Pakistanis had come into the country with regular papers and passports but had overstayed. "There is no reason why the states should be soft on them," he said.

"Immediate steps should be taken to identify and locate them and throw them out. They (states) should launch special drives to de-

tect and deport these foreigners," Mr Advani said, pointing out that the powers of the Union government to detect and deport illegally residing foreign nationals had been delegated to the states and Union territories.

The conference with representatives from 35 states and Union territories also agreed to set up a multi agency centre (MAC) to effectively use intelligence inputs to prevent terrorist strikes. The MAC will be headquartered here and have branches in border states. IB chief K.P. Singh said MAC would serve as a data bank of vital information besides helping state police forces in detecting and cracking terrorist modules.

The meet, however, failed to agree on the formation of a central body to tackle federal crimes like terrorism.

● JAN 2003

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Nuclear strikeback button with PM

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Jan. 4: India today formalised and announced its nuclear command and control structure, four years after declaring to the world that it was a nuclear power.

Pakistan had announced its nuclear command and control structure earlier, a few months after their retaliatory (Chagai) nuclear tests in 1998.

The Cabinet Committee on

Security (CCS), at a meeting this evening, announced that a Nuclear Command Authority was being put in place. The nuclear button will be in the hands of the civilian-political leadership headed by the Prime Minister.

The Nuclear Command Authority will also comprise an executive council chaired by the national security adviser.

A separate Strategic Forces Command is being created. This will be the military authority in operational charge of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.

9-1 5/1
However, no formal explanation was forthcoming from the government immediately on the composition of the panels.

The CCS also expounded the country's nuclear doctrine. The brief handed out by the CCS does not suggest that there is a departure from its stated policy of no-first-use unless there is an attack by an enemy using biological and chemical (or nuclear) weapons. India's nuclear doctrine states:

■ Building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent

■ A posture of "no-first-use": nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere

■ Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage

■ Nuclear retaliatory attacks can only be authorised by the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority

■ Non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states

9-0 3 R Security
■ However, in the event of a major attack against India or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons

■ A continuance of strict controls on export of nuclear and missile-related materials and technologies, participation in the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty negotiations and continued observance of the moratorium on nuclear tests

■ Continued commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapon-free

world through global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.

The CCS reviewed existing command and control structures, the targeting strategy for a retaliatory attack and operating procedures for various stages of alert and launch.

An air force officer is likely to head the Strategic Forces Command. Earlier this week, Air Marshal T.M. Asthana was said to be heading the list of probables to head the body.

■ Messages to Pak & world, P5

THE COMMAND

● POLITICAL COUNCIL

Chaired by the PM, only the council can authorise use of nuclear weapons. In effect, its finger will be on the nuclear button

● EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Chaired by the national security adviser, it will provide inputs for decision-making and execute directives of the political council

● STRATEGIC FORCES COMMAND

Headed by a commander-in-chief, it will have operational responsibility

THE TELEGRAPH

5 JAN 2000

Phukan to head Tehelka panel

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, JAN. 4. The Government has appointed Justice S.N. Phukan, a retired Judge of the Supreme Court, as the new chief of the Tehelka enquiry commission. He succeeds Justice K. Venkataswami, who resigned on November 23 last year. Mr. Phukan, who retired last April, hails from Assam and now heads the State Human Rights Commission.

He will take charge of his new assignment later this month.

The probe expose is now in a



crucial stage, with the "draft" report concerning the past defence transactions almost ready

and an enquiry into the financial transactions of Tehelka portal yet to be taken up. The Commission had examined 50 witnesses and passed 720 interim orders, recorded 961 pages of depositions regarding 15 past defence transactions and 3,114 pages in respect of deposition of other witnesses.

It is not clear whether the new incumbent would begin a fresh enquiry or continue from where Mr. Venkataswami had left.

Tehelka to boycott probe panel: Page 10

THE HINDU

5 JAN 2003