

J&K militants intensify attacks

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Dec. 29. — At least six people, including a National Conference leader and two women, were killed as militants intensified their attacks in Kashmir today.

Police said militants fired upon Farooq Ahmad Zargar, an NC leader, at Safakadal here. He was critically wounded and later succumbed to his injuries in a hospital.

NC leaders and support-

'Lowest violence in 2004'

JAMMU, Dec. 29. — With a 25 per cent dip in militancy-related incidents in the state in 2004, J&K has witnessed "lowest violence" in the last 14 years, police sources said here today. "J&K this year witnessed lowest violence in last 14 years with about 900 incidents less compared to the previous year," a source said. — PTI

ers are continuously targeted by militants. Hundreds of former ministers, legislators, party workers and supporters have been killed in the 14-year-long militancy in J&K.

Also today, a woman, her daughter, a civilian and a

militant were killed during an exchange of fire at Lalgam-Tral in south Kashmir, police said. Four civilians and a securityman were also injured.

Police said a passenger bus was on its way from Srinagar to Tral. When it

reached Lalgam village, security forces asked the passengers to get down from the vehicle for frisking. As the frisking was going on a militant fired on the troops. The security forces retaliated and shot dead the militant. The three civilians who were killed in the encounter have been identified as Jameela, her daughter Rifat Jan and Nazir Ahmad Dar.

In Sopore, militants shot dead a BSF personnel at point blank range this afternoon.

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THE STATESMAN

LoC five-spot plan to unite Kashmiris

PRANAY SHARMA

Islamabad, Dec. 28: India has proposed five spots along the Line of Control and the international border where members of divided families could meet, in a move to bring the people of the two Kashmiris together.

Kashmiris on either side of the border could meet at Mendhar, Puni, Uri and Tangdhar along the LoC and Suchetgarh on the international border. The meetings

will take place on specified days under the joint supervision of Indian and Pakistan security forces.

Foreign secretary Shyam Saran made this proposal to his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Khokhar this morning when they met to discuss the Kashmir problem. The two-day foreign secretary-level talks concluded here today.

India's proposal is a smart move. Delhi has stressed it is committed to address the Kashmir problem seriously,

but the complex nature of the problem makes it impossible to look for any quick fixes. It says the only option in the interim is to take steps that are "people-oriented" and will help in reducing their suffering.

If Pakistan rejects the proposal, India can make it appealing as if Islamabad is not keen to provide Kashmiris any relief despite its public posturing. If it accepts the suggestion, it would help create a soft-border and transform the LoC from

a barrier to a bridge between the two Kashmiris.

Both sides are keen to get the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on the road quickly, but Saran would not unequivocally say if Delhi was willing to give up its insistence on passports being the only valid document for passengers. "Our stand will be flexible and practical," he said.

The meeting ended on a positive note with the neighbours agreeing to a mechanism that will lessen the harassment

of fishermen and civilian prisoners. Saran and Khokhar also agreed to continue with the composite dialogue and accepted a tentative set of dates that ensures the two sides will remain engaged until next July. The foreign secretaries will meet in Delhi in August to review the progress of talks.

THE KASHMIR STORY-II

Need For Emotional And Organic Integration

By JALEES TAREEN

The trouble that was sparked in 1989 and the state of confusion, chaos, distrust and turmoil for 15 long years has left the Kashmiri population with a mindset which did not exist prior to 1985. Today it is a divided society. Perceptions and opinions are divided between the elite and masses and even among the masses, between populations under different age groups. The top ten per cent of the elite are indifferent. Their interest lies in getting the best out of life. They send their children for higher studies mostly to South Indian universities. After their studies they send them to the West or the Middle East for jobs. They tend to have property in Jammu, Delhi and even Bangalore.

The remaining 90 per cent of the population have different perceptions. Poor peasants, the labour class, petty businessmen, boatmen and those who depended on tourism for their livelihood are exhausted. They all want the peace with dignity, freedom and security.

A confused lot

The educated population can be put into two categories. In the first category are those who were teenagers in 1989-90 and who are in their forties and who have spent their youth in turmoil. They have seen the worst of militancy and its effect on their lives. They are the alienated lot who neither trust Pakistan nor do they look to the rest of India as their home. In a way, this generation is though not a lost generation, yet to heal the scars is difficult. Those who are now in their teens were kids when militancy started. They have grown up in the shadow of guns, bomb blasts, killings, insecurity, uncertainties and harassment. This is a confused lot.

I could read through their eyes all that they were willing to say. Their priority was their education and their careers which to most looked dark. They have little interest in the dispute with Pakistan or militancy and, for that matter, any political activity. This is evident from the fact that neither the colleges nor the university has any political activity. There is not even a student union, and the walls of colleges and university campus are spotless. This is in contrast to the Jammu region where even teachers are active office-bearers of political parties. The Kashmiri educated youth do not know which way to go though he

looks towards Indian sub-continent for his possible future.

The question back home is, will peace return to Kashmir if there is a negotiated settlement with Pakistan? An average Kashmiri does not believe that Pakistan is their master. Not many have a soft corner for Pakistan

rage Kashmiri who has not crossed the tunnel of Banihal thinks that the rest of India is a land of gods and Godhra incidents. He is ignorant of the colourful mosaic of unity in diversity and the multi-cultural heritage.

Likewise, most Indians think that a Kashmiri is a radical, a



today as they all believe that the green pasture shown by Pakistan in 1989 was only an illusion. This became evident during the reaction of the people and local media during the visit of Pakistani journalists. In some of the interactions, young Kashmiris journalists put embarrassing questions and blamed Pakistan for damaging their culture and Kashmiriat. This reaction has sent a signal to Pakistan which has compelled General Musharraf to change his stand on a referendum. But we need to accept the fact that today the Kashmiri is many times more alienated with the rest of the land than what it was in the early 80s.

Estranged ties

The distance and the distrust are visible from the estranged relationship between our soldiers and the local Kashmiri. Though the physical integration of Kashmir is ensured, emotional and organic integration is lacking. It so happened that in our security concerns, the human aspect was overlooked. The distance has increased. Misunderstanding and misperception have become deeper. An ave-

terrorist and is communal. The fact is both these perceptions are wrong. A Kashmiri is in fact the least communal on the Indian sub-continent. Never in the history of Kashmir were there communal riots and disputes. Most of us do not know that over 8,000 non-Muslim boys and girls come to Kashmir and join the one-year B Ed programme in 46 B Ed colleges in the remotest corners of Kashmir. They come from Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Uttaranchal, Rajasthan and even Delhi. They are not only safe but enjoy their stay and return happily.

The solution lies in a newer strategy to emotionally and organically integrate them with the country apart from the physical integration of the land. It calls for a lot of damage control and measures which give a real healing touch and a meaningful ten-year action plan.

On the political front, it is felt that the Hurriyat leaders and even militant organisations should be invited for a dialogue to persuade them to participate in the democratic process. It is not easy but not impossible. It may call for flexibility on either side on matters like autonomy,

investment, economic support, educational and industrial development package. If they participate in the election process, a more representative government will emerge. This followed by a new strategy of winning the youth through education, love, care, opportunities and greater acceptance coupled with negotiations with Pakistan on issues of border and cross-border infiltration would yield long-lasting results. Whatever the model and alternatives discussed, and agreed upon with the Pakistan authorities, it will fetch lasting peace only if it is coupled with a healthy and meaningful participation of larger representatives of the people in the government, and an all-out action plan for integration of the Kashmiri population. The distrust and disgust in the minds of youth have been building up during the 15 years of turmoil in the valley. Their frustration should not be allowed to get the better of them.

Non-violent in nature

Although the Kashmiri by nature is not violent, if the pressure of frustration builds up in the minds of the youth, it may be exploited by vested interests and may take newer forms of extremism. The challenge before us lies in (a) negotiation with Pakistan with clear a commitment on all issues; (b) negotiation for participation of the Hurriyat and all other separatist or militant organisation in the democratic process, (c) and a simultaneous action plan for damage control and organic as well as emotional integration of Kashmiri youth with the country through a series of measures on different fronts.

Secession of Kashmir would be a second disaster for Indian Muslims. The first was partition when the elite, rich and intellectuals moved away leaving behind the less educated, the poor and under-privileged to live in poverty, illiteracy and misery. I would like to see in my lifetime a Kashmir, more integrated with the national stream of nation-building and the Indian population accepting them more affectionately and without suspicion and discrimination. Education, equal opportunities, greater acceptance and love is the only solution to win the young Kashmiri over a period of time.

(Concluded)

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THE KASHMIR STORY-I

Common Citizens Pay The Price

By JALEES TAREEN

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The complexities of the Kashmir problem have been discussed by many writers, most of whom come to Kashmir on short visits. As vice-chancellor of Kashmir University for three years till mid-July this year, I observed Kashmiris, especially the youth, from close quarters and it gave me access to whispers which most would not listen to.

The Kashmir freedom movement ((Tahrek-e-Azadi) which started in early 1989 with large-scale infiltration of Pakistani-trained militants and young Kashmiris from the rural areas, disillusioned almost every Kashmiri in the first two to three years as every one thought that Pakistan will fetch them independence in a matter of months, or that they will join Pakistani-occupied Kashmir.

The early years

For a short period, most of the population got directly or indirectly involved or at least remained silent supporters of this movement. The educated lot, children of the elite, big businessmen and commoners, all saw a carrot before them and supported the movement. That was the time when the Indian security forces marched in during the Jagmohan period. The mass support proved a short-lived bubble which just exploded within two to three years when the ugly face of militancy surfaced and started to turn the peaceful lives of Kashmiris into sleepless nights.

The killings became indiscriminate. Both innocent Muslims and non-Muslims became targets. Extortion, illegitimate circulation of money, collapse of the administrative machinery, jobs at gunpoint, kidnapping and torture, deaths of innocents in cross-fires and crackdowns, disappearance of youth, custody deaths became a daily affair. Militancy entered the education system and the university. Teachers and officers were kidnapped

The author is former vice-chancellor of Kashmir University and is now chief executive officer of South Asia Foundation

and tortured. The major blow came when some professors were killed along with the vice-chancellor, Professor Mushirul Huq. The Director of Doordarshan, Lassa Kaul, head of HMT, Mr Khera and a number of prominent persons were the victims.

The rich started becoming rich

the people under the patronage of Pakistan, but they stayed away from participation in the democratic process.

Today, the structure of Kashmiri society has undergone a tremendous change. The crime rate has gone up. At one time a single girl could walk home or drive in



her and the poor became poorer. A new class of neo-rich emerged. A change in the cultural ethos in Kashmir became more visible. Unheard of evils started to show up. Most of the educated youth who were initially involved rejected the movement because of the way in which it progressed. This compelled a majority of the supporters of the freedom movement to change their thinking. They started to gradually withdraw from the movement. The Indian forces dealt with the situation with a stern hand. Active militancy went down at the university, the townships, mosques and shrines particularly after the Hazratbal action in 1992 and Charar-i-Sharif gutting in 1995.

Social breakdown

The militants withdrew and moved to the hills and forests and the outskirts of the townships to target security forces, camps, convoys and political figures. The people gradually became indifferent and they even lost faith in the democratic process. The All Party Hurriyat Conference emerged to give a united leadership to the voice of

the middle of the night, but today she has to reach home before it is dark. Wedding processions (Baraat) which were taken out throughout the night are forced to be concluded by 10 pm. Car thefts, house breaking, drug addiction, liquor consumption are on the rise.

Ironically, there is no licensed liquor vendor in Kashmir, yet consumers get their quota without difficulty. The collapse of tourism has hit every one hard for the last 15 years. A walk into downtown Srinagar or through the boulevard along Dal Lake or, for that matter, any of the towns of Kashmir would reveal depressed, speechless faces draped in *phiran* (long Kashmir gown) — people without jobs and occupations.

The situation for the last three years has been confusing and pathetic. The common Kashmiri is paying a price for the turmoil of the last 15 years. No one knows who kills whom. No one trusts anyone. Bullets are exchanged between security forces and militants, between groups of militants, between political parties, between militants and surrendered militants. In the recent

past, a new word has been coined — “mystery killings” where they say a third invisible force operates. Young boys in their twenties target a person even outside a mosque with a pistol and walk away. No one knows who sponsors them. Grenades are hurled on political rallies, army convoys and security camps without regard to security measures.

Kashmiri voice

Common citizens pay a price for all this. The security forces have camped in every nook and corner, narrow lanes in civilian areas, parts of schools, colleges and hostels. Every commuter in public or private transport is searched, frisked and questioned. Women, children, schoolgoers and university students face this ordeal every day. No one feels safe. Educational institutions have been turned into army camps. Yet schools and colleges are overcrowded. Roads at school times are flooded with uniformed, smartly dressed children happily rushing to classes. Almost 50 per cent of the students are girls. As the V-C of Kashmir University, I interacted with a cross-section of people during my three years. There was unanimity that every one now wants peace, normalcy and that their dignity should be returned.

There has been a thinking that peace will return to Kashmir if there is a negotiated settlement with Pakistan even without the participation of the representatives of the people of Kashmir. There have been debates as to who is the first party to the dispute — the Kashmiri leadership or the Pakistan authorities. What issues will be settled with Pakistan? We have two major issues with Pakistan: the issue of the international border and the issue of infiltration from Pakistan and the operations of the ISI in India. If these two issues are resolved and assuming that infiltration of militants from the border stops, and Pakistan stops its activities in Kashmir, will that satisfy the Kashmiris and bring peace? Most people do not seem to think so.

(To be concluded)

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THE STATESMAN

Major accused of rape faces court martial

HT Correspondents
Jammu/Srinagar, Dec 18

MAJOR REHMAN Hussain, accused of raping and molesting a woman and her daughter in Kupwara on November 6, will be tried by a general court martial on Monday.

The GCM proceedings will be conducted at Uri and Brigadier Syed Ata Hasnain will be the presiding officer. "These proceedings will be transparent and the media will be allowed to monitor the proceedings," Lt-Col. V.K. Batra, defence spokesman of 15 Corps, said. Major Hussain of 30 Rashtriya Rifles was suspended soon after the case surfaced and has been in army custody since.

In the GCM, he will be questioned on the allegations levelled against him by Ashiqa Begum and her daughter Shabnam. The incident had evoked strong protests across Kashmir forcing the government to order a probe. The army had also ordered an internal inquiry.

A joint court of inquiry between the army and the police was set up and the DNA samples of Rehman, the woman and her daughter were sent to the Central Forensic Science Laboratory at Chandigarh. Besides the blood samples, Shabnam's clothes, which she wore on the night of incident, was also sent for tests. These were sealed in presence of the Kupwara district magistrate. The report has not been revealed yet.

Although there is some evidence of friendship between

A LOWDOWN

- The alleged rape took place on the day of Shivraj Patil's maiden visit to the Valley
- The next day, a series of protests began, first in Handwara and then in other parts of the state
- The army opened fire in Handwara and other places; two protesters were killed
- Army chief Vij ordered an internal inquiry on November 24
- The Major was taken into custody, blood samples were sent for DNA tests to Chandigarh
- On Dec 7, Hurriyat Conference and NC held the first joint protest against the rape and subsequent police firing

the major and the woman who later made the allegation apparently to escape social opprobrium, the army has sent a strong message that there will be no hand-holding of the accused for actions that are perceived to be human rights violations.

The decision to court martial Major Hussain is the latest in the series of strong punitive measures taken against army officers for impropriety. Last week, Brigadier R.P. Singh was sentenced to nine-months RI for selling liquor from army canteens to the public.

জরুরি মতবিনিময়

নেপালের রাজধানী কাঠমাণ্ডুতে জম্মু-কাশ্মীর ও অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিরা তিন দিনের এক বৈঠকে মিলিত হইয়াছিলেন। এমন নয় যে ওই বৈঠক হইতে কাশ্মীর

সমস্যার স্থায়ী মীমাংসার কোনও সূত্র বাহির হইয়া আসিয়াছে। তেমনটা হইবে, ভারত বা পাকিস্তান, কোনও দেশই তাহা আশা করে নাই। তবে কাশ্মীরের রক্তাক্ত ইতিহাসে এই প্রথম বার সীমান্তের দুই পারের কাশ্মীরিরা মুখোমুখি বসিয়া পরস্পরের মতামত ও অবস্থান জানিবার ও জানাইবার সুযোগ পাইয়াছিলেন। ইহার প্রয়োজন ছিল, কেননা এত কাল কাশ্মীরিদের বক্তব্য ভারত বা পাকিস্তানের বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্রদের মারফতই কেবল প্রচারিত হইত। দুই দেশেরই কাশ্মীরিরা এ ভাবে 'পরের মুখের ঝাল' খাইতে অভ্যস্ত ছিলেন। এই প্রথম কোনও মধ্যস্থতাকারী ছাড়া তাঁহারা মতবিনিময়ের সুযোগ পাইলেন। এই সুযোগ করিয়া দিতে ভারত কেবল নরমপন্থী ছরিয়তের দুই নেতা আবদুল গনি ভট্ট ও মিরওয়াজ ওমর ফারুককেই নয়, কট্টরপন্থী সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানিকেও কাঠমাণ্ডু সফরের ছাড়পত্র দিয়াছিল। মুখোমুখি বৈঠক শেষে কোনও যুগান্তকারী ঘোষণাপত্র স্বাক্ষরিত হয় নাই, হইবার কথাও ছিল না। তবে দুই পক্ষই আইনের শাসন ফিরাইয়া আনা, শান্তিপূর্ণ পথে আলোচনা চালাইয়া যাওয়া ইত্যাদি গণতান্ত্রিক ক্রিয়াকাণ্ডে তাঁহাদের আস্থা জ্ঞাপন করিয়াছেন। ইহা সুলক্ষণ।

শুধু তাহাই নহে, কাশ্মীরের বর্তমান নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখার রদবদলের কোনও প্রস্তাবও আলোচনায় আসে নাই। বরং ওই রেখা বরাবর বর্তমান স্থিতাবস্থা রক্ষার উপরই জোর দেওয়া হইয়াছে। অসমর্থ, পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ সম্প্রতি দুই কাশ্মীরের ভৌগোলিক সীমানায় রদবদলের যে প্রস্তাব করিয়াছিলেন, পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিরাও তাহা অনুমোদন করেন নাই। বরং ধর্ম বা সম্প্রদায়ের ভিত্তিতে কাশ্মীরের পুনর্বিভাজনের সম্ভাবনা উড়াইয়া দিয়া প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ যে অনমনীয় অবস্থান লইয়াছেন, তাহাই প্রকারান্তরে প্রতিধ্বনিত হইয়াছে। তবে ইহার বাহিরে দুই কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিদের এই বৈঠককে অতিরিক্ত কোনও গুরুত্ব দেওয়া বোধহয় ঠিক হইবে না। মনে রাখা দরকার, পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিদের মতো জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিদের বৈধতা একা ছরিয়তের নাই। ভারতীয় কাশ্মীরে অর্থাৎ জম্মু-কাশ্মীরে গণতান্ত্রিক পদ্ধতিতে নির্বাচিত একটি সরকার রহিয়াছে। ছরিয়ত সেই নির্বাচন বয়কট করার ডাক দিলেও কাশ্মীরিরা সে ডাকে সাড়া দেন নাই। শাসক ও বিরোধী পক্ষে তাঁহাদের প্রেরিত জনপ্রতিনিধিদের কাশ্মীরের ভবিষ্যৎ লইয়া ভারিত হওয়ার অধিকার আছে। সর্বোপরি কাশ্মীর সমস্যা কেবল কাশ্মীরিদের সমস্যা নয় যে দুই কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিরা আপসে তাহা মিটাইয়া ফেলিবেন। কাশ্মীর সমস্যা মূলত উপমহাদেশের দুই প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্র ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সমস্যা। দুই রাষ্ট্রের কর্তৃপক্ষদেরই ইহার সমাধান বাহির করিতে হইবে। সেই সমাধানের প্রক্রিয়ায় অবশ্যই কাশ্মীরিরাও যোগ দিতে পারেন। কিন্তু 'কাশ্মীরের ভাগ্য কেবল কাশ্মীরিদেরই নির্ধারণ করিতে দেওয়া উচিত', এই ধরনের অবস্থান আপাতদৃষ্টিতে মহৎ শুনাইলেও কার্যত বাস্তবসম্মত নয়।

আসলে সমস্যাটি বহুমাত্রিক। এবং দুই কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধিদের পারস্পরিক আলোচনা বড় জোর তাহার অন্যতম মাত্রা। কাঠমাণ্ডুর বৈঠক হইতে যেটুকু সফল মিলিয়াছে, তাহা হইল, অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধি এবং ছরিয়তের সদস্যরা উভয়েই হিংসা ও সম্ভ্রাসের পথ পরিহারের উপর জোর দিয়াছেন, আইনের শাসন প্রবর্তনের কথা বলিতেছেন। তাঁহাদের এই বক্তব্য উপত্যকায় জঙ্গি সম্ভ্রাসকে নিরুৎসাহিত করিতে পারে। জঙ্গিরা যদি জানে, জনসমর্থন ক্রমে তাহাদের ছাড়িয়া যাইতেছে, তবে কাশ্মীর উপত্যকায় তাহাদের আশ্রয়-প্রশ্রয় পাওয়া যেমন দুর্লভ হইয়া উঠিবে, তেমনই অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে তাহাদের ঘাঁটি বা প্রশিক্ষণ কেন্দ্রগুলিতেও জেহাদি সংগ্রহের স্রোতে ভাটার টান দেখা দিবে। উপত্যকায় সম্ভ্রাসবাদী আক্রমণের প্রবাহ আগের তুলনায় কমিয়া আসার মধ্যে এই পালাবদলের ইঙ্গিত অস্পষ্ট নয়। সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানি পাকিস্তান সফরে এত ব্যগ্র এবং পাক বিদেশ দফতরের ভারত সফররত প্রতিনিধির সঙ্গে মোলাকাতে ব্যাকুল হইলেও কাঠমাণ্ডুতে 'আজাদ কাশ্মীর'-এর নেতাদের সহিত সাক্ষাতের ছাড়পত্র পাইয়াও আগ্রহ দেখান নাই। হয়তো তিনি বুঝিয়াছেন, তাঁহার জেহাদি কট্টরপন্থা কাশ্মীরের প্রেক্ষাপটে ক্রমশ প্রাসঙ্গিকতা হারাইতেছে। যে ভাবে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক উন্নত করার কেন্দ্রীয় বিষয় হিসাবে কাশ্মীরকে শনাক্ত করিয়া কূটনীতি ও বিদেশ নীতির কাঠামোর মধ্যে তাহাকে অন্তর্ভুক্ত করিয়াছে, তাহাতে সম্ভ্রাসবাদের আমদানি এবং জেহাদি মতাদর্শের মৌলবাদী উপত্যকার রাজনীতিতেও অবাস্তব হইয়া পড়ার নিয়তি-অজ্ঞান।

16 DEC 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Hurriyat leaders allowed to go to Kathmandu

● Prime Minister clears the way

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 11. Eight Kashmir leaders, belonging to the separatist camp, left here today to attend the Pugwash Peace conference in Kathmandu, Nepal. Among them were Shabir Shah, Abdul Gani Bhatt, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Sajjad Lone and Bilal Lone. The theme of the three-day conference is "Jammu and Kashmir and the India-Pakistan Dialogue: the Prospectus Ahead."

The separatist leaders' departure hinged on an informal signal from the Union Government to Nepal. Not all of the separatist leaders possess passports (though Indians do not need passports to enter Nepal); those who did not possess a passport were unwilling to produce an alternative "Indian" identity card. The separatist leaders were insisting on travelling only on "identity cards" provided to them by the local administration in Jammu and Kashmir.

Indian officials, especially those belonging to the "agen-

cies", were not too keen on letting the separatist leaders dictate the terms of travel. Neither the Home Ministry nor the External Affairs Ministry was too excited about these leaders' participation. However, according to a senior official, the matter was settled after the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, ruled that these leaders be allowed to travel, without making them feel compromised.

The Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, is also said to be in favour of allowing the separatist leaders to go to Kathmandu. In fact, Mr. Shabir Shah and Syed Ali Shah Geelani, leader of an All Parties Hurriyat Conference faction, both under house arrest, were released two days ago to enable them to come to Delhi to take the flight to Kathmandu. Mr. Geelani, however, could not leave because of a medical emergency.

Intra-Kashmir dialogue

According to the senior official, this is the first time that the Centre is facilitating an intra-Kashmir dialogue, enabling

leaders from Jammu and Kashmir to meet their counterparts in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). So far, the "track II" endeavours have tried to promote an India-Pakistan dialogue. A number of leaders from the Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir are expected to participate in the Kathmandu meet, besides a number of Indian and Pakistani "experts".

Aziz-Dixit dialogue put off

The Tariq Aziz-J.N.Dixit "track II" dialogue, meanwhile, has been put on hold after some elements in the Pakistan establishment were suspected of having violated the confidentiality of the two principals. The Indian side feels that they are unhappy with the progress in the Aziz-Dixit interaction, especially after the success of the Musharraf-Manmohan Singh meeting at Roosevelt Hotel in New York in September. These elements began leaking details of the Aziz-Dixit process to sections of the Pakistan and the Indian media.

12 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Infiltration up in the last month, says Pranab

HT Correspondent

New Delhi, December 8

DEFENCE MINISTER Pranab Mukherjee has said the reduction of troops deployment in Jammu and Kashmir had generated a lot of goodwill though infiltration attempts by militants to get into the state had increased during the past month.

However, he maintained that the government could reconsider the decision to reduce troops if the situation demanded. "The question of redeployment is always there because it depends on the situation. So far, the decision has been well received all over the country, including from the people of J&K," the minister said in response to a query from Samajwadi Party member Amar Singh in the Rajya Sabha.

There were 15 attempts of infiltration during September-October, in which seven militants were killed and 30 could have sneaked into the country. Though there was no slowdown in attempts by militants to sneak into the state, better gadgets had brought down the level of infiltration, Mukherjee told the House. He quoted estimates that show the level of infiltration in October this year had come down by 60 per cent.

09 DEC 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

08 DEC 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

US may not take proactive role on Kashmir

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The visit of US defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld to South Asia will indirectly serve to focus attention on the stand the Bush administration adopts on Indo-Pak relations in its second term. Islamabad will increasingly use the key status it enjoys in Washington's so-called war on terror and the current thaw in Indo-Pak ties to seek headway on the vexed question of Kashmir. This being so, the Musharraf regime will urge the US to get India to adopt a more

flexible stance on substantive discussions on Kashmir.

However, there are three reasons which suggest that Washington is unlikely to place any such pressure on India at this stage. First, this is a reflection of the Bush administration's preoccupation with events in Iraq. Second, Washington is wary of the high diplomatic and strategic risks involved in playing the role of a facilitator in a seemingly intractable dispute. Finally, the US



D Rumsfeld

has, over the past few years, generally pursued a reactive rather than proactive approach in formulating its policy on the Indo-Pak issue. Given the considerable easing of tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad, Washington will therefore not feel compelled to be drawn into playing a more assertive role in pushing the peace process forward. Instead, the US can be expected to use the growing economic and political dimensions of its bilateral re-

lationships with New Delhi and Islamabad to try and continue to stabilise the situation on the subcontinent by addressing the symptoms rather than the root causes of the Indo-Pak conflict. But it is debatable whether such an approach will succeed in keeping Indo-Pak tensions under check in the long run in the absence of progress on the substantive issue of Kashmir, not least because Islamabad's current stand has essentially been shaped by tactical considerations and not by any real change of heart on the subject.

... ..

কাশ্মীর নিয়ে সাহায্য চান মুশারফ, ব্লেয়ার নারাজ

আবনী বসু • লন্ডন

৬ ডিসেম্বর: কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ ব্রিটেনের সাহায্য চাওয়ার কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই সেই সম্ভাবনা খারিজ করে দিলেন ব্রিটিশ প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্লেয়ার। দু'দিনের ব্রিটেন সফরে এসে এখানকার একটি সংবাদপত্রকে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে মুশারফ বলেন, শান্তি আলোচনায় ব্রিটেনের সাহায্য পেলে তিনি খুশি হবেন। আজই পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের সঙ্গে বৈঠক শেষে যৌথ সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে মুশারফের এই আশায় জল ঢেলে ব্লেয়ার বলেন, "আমার মনে হয় সেটা সম্ভব নয়। নিজেদের মধ্যে

আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমস্যা মোটান্তে ভারত-পাকিস্তানের উদ্যোগের প্রতি আমাদের পূর্ণ সমর্থন আছে। আলোচনার গতিকে আমরা কোনও ভাবেই বাহত করতে চাই না।"

মুশারফ তাঁর সাক্ষাৎকারে বলেছেন, "দুই দেশই দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমস্যা মোটান্তে রাজি হয়েছে। কিন্তু ব্রিটেন সাহায্যের হাত বাড়ালে একটা চাপ তৈরি হবে।" সেই চাপ দিতে রাজি হননি ব্লেয়ার। সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গে মুশারফ বলেন, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ায় কাশ্মীরিদের যুক্ত না-করলে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা মোটানো সম্ভব নয়। উপত্যকার মানুষের সম্মতি ছাড়া কোনও সমাধান সুত্র মানবেন না তিনি।

দ্বিপাক্ষিক আলোচনা প্রসঙ্গে মুশারফ বলেন, ৩০ বছর ধরে আলোচনা চলছে। কিন্তু কাজের কাজ কিছু হয়নি। তাঁর কথায়, মনমোহন সিংহ সমস্যা মোটান্তে যথেষ্ট আগ্রহী, মানুষ হিসাবেও তিনি 'খাঁটি'। "কিন্তু কাশ্মীরের মতো জটিল সমস্যা মোটান্তে গেলে শুধু আগ্রহ থাকলেই হবে না, সাহস আর সিদ্ধান্তের নমনীয়তাও দরকার।"

মুশারফ মনে করছেন, দেশে মৌলবাদীদের আক্রমণের শিকার হওয়ার ঝুঁকি নিয়েও কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে তিনি যে সাহস দেখাচ্ছেন, ভারত তা দেখাতে ব্যর্থ। কাশ্মীরে সেনা কম্যান্ডার উদ্যোগকেও গুরুত্ব দেননি মুশারফ।

নর্দিনের ব্যতিকা সফরে বেরনো পাক বৃশ ভুল করেছেন এমনটা মুশারফ বলতে চাননি।

প্রেসিডেন্ট কাল আমেরিকা সফর সেরে ব্রিটেনে এসেছেন। তার আগে কাল একটি মার্কিন টেলিভিশন চ্যানেলকে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে মুশারফ বলেছেন, "ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানোর সিদ্ধান্ত ভুল ছিল। কেননা সাধারণ মানুষ দেশে বিদেশি সেনার উপস্থিতি পছন্দ করে না। কিন্তু এখন তড়িঘড়ি সেনা প্রত্যাহার করে নিলে সেটা আরও বড় ভুল হবে।"

তবে ইরাকে সেনা পাঠানো নিয়ে মুশারফের মন্তব্য বৃশ প্রশাসনকে ক্ষুব্ধ করতে পারে পাঠিয়ে করে অনুষ্ঠানের পরেই চ্যানেলে বার্তা পাঠিয়ে পাক সরকারের মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, সেনা পাঠিয়ে বৃশ ভুল করেছেন এমনটা মুশারফ বলতে চাননি।

Time to get serious on Kashmir

By **Teresita C. Schaffer & Howard B. Schaffer**

SENIOR FIGURES in Islamabad, Delhi and Srinagar have recently made some unconventional statements on Kashmir. Despite major differences among them, a few bits of common ground are beginning to emerge. This invitation to look beyond established policies may herald the beginning of a long-overdue redefinition of the most emotional issue on the Indian-Pakistan agenda. To move things forward, the Governments involved should match their words with visible gestures that show they are serious.

Consider the following:
* On October 25, President Musharraf suggested "as food for thought" that Kashmir should be seen as seven regions, two of them now administered by Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas) and the other five by India. He suggested that they be demilitarised as a prelude to considering a change in their status. He mentioned such possibilities as U.N. administration, Indo-Pakistani condominium and independence, with the clear assumption that they need not all be handled the same way.

* On November 18, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was winding up his first visit to Kashmir and preparing to receive Pakistan's Prime Minister, Shaikat Aziz, a senior Indian official floated in the press a series of "principles" to guide settlement talks. These included the familiar caveats that India would not consider changes in the map or a realignment of regions on communal lines. However, it also included a clear statement that self-rule needed to be much expanded for Kashmiris on both sides, and that the goal should be a settlement with open borders and free interaction. The official said that restoration of most of the pre-1953 arrangement on autonomy for Jammu and Kash-

mir was not unthinkable. In other words, the Indian Government is prepared to take another look at the autonomy proposals put forward in 2000 by the elected State Government in Jammu and Kashmir and rejected without discussion by the previous Indian Government.

* While both statements were predictably controversial in India and Pakistan, personalities in Kashmir, from Chief Minister Mufti Mo-

* Fourthly, while India and Pakistan are clearly still trying to achieve as much as possible of their original goals, they recognise that a settlement must be politically acceptable in both countries and to the Kashmiris.

We may now be seeing the first steps toward a new public discussion of how to define the arena within which a solution to Kashmir can be sought. The Indian and Pakistani officials and leaders who are scheduled to meet in the next few months have a unique opportunity to move forward in the long, complicated search for a settlement. First, they should try to expand the common ground that is starting to emerge, and work toward a rough agreement on the principles that could guide a settlement. The goal should be a solution that is peaceful, honourable, and practical for all the stakeholders.

But the real objective should be action, not just words. New Delhi and Islamabad need to agree on concrete steps that could change the situation on the ground in Kashmir and symbolise the willingness of the two Governments to overcome their differences.

The establishment of a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is the most promising of these measures. This highly visible action would convey to Kashmiris and to people all over India and Pakistan that there is now hope for a new beginning.

(Teresita C. Schaffer is director of the South Asia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. Howard B. Schaffer is director of studies at the Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University. Both are retired U.S. Ambassadors with long experience in South Asia.)

New Delhi and Islamabad need to agree on concrete steps that could change the situation on the ground in Kashmir.

that any Indian troop withdrawal would have been announced, let alone initiated, if the Indian Government did not believe that infiltration was down. And both Governments have maintained the ceasefire across the Line of Control for a year now. Pakistan has done this despite India's continued work on a fence along the LoC.

Looking carefully at the most recent statements, one can identify a few bits of common ground.

* First, both Governments now acknowledge that Kashmir is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic place, and that the problem is primarily one of people.

* Secondly, there is a general recognition that Kashmiris are stakeholders in the dispute, and that stronger and more complete self-rule for them needs to be part of a settlement.

* Thirdly, Indians, Pakistanis, and Kashmiris all hope for a solution that leaves Kashmiris free to move back and forth. A senior Indian official was quoted as saying there should be the ambience of "a borderless world."

ammed Sayeed to several senior figures in the Hurriyat Conference, reacted with hope and expressed an interest in hearing more.

The details of these proposals are very far apart, and many of them raise serious problems. But the important thing is that very senior people are encouraging the public to take a fresh look at how to resolve the Kashmir issue by thinking about ideas that are not part of their standard positions.

Other unconventional ideas have also become part of the public debate, notably one developed by a group of retired Indian and Pakistani officials and published by the Kashmir Study Group (in which both the authors are members). This "Way Forward" proposes the creation in Kashmir of one or two demilitarised "sovereign entities" without international personalities, while the Line of Control remains in place as long as India and Pakistan wish it to.

Strengthening this call for new thinking on Kashmir is a series of concrete actions by India and Pakistan. In October, India allowed a group of Pakistani journalists to visit

Ultras storm CRPF camp, kill 5 jawans

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar: Five Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans were killed and two injured when Al-Mansoorian militants stormed a CRPF camp guarding the telephone exchange at Sopore in Baramulla district on Friday morning.

This was the fifth attack on a CRPF camp in Kashmir Valley by militants this year after the force took over the responsibility of protecting key establishments across the state. About 27 CRPF men have been killed in the attacks.

A spokesman of the outfit, which is a shadow group of the Lashkar-e-Tioba, told a local news agency that a special



CRPF jawans guard a camp in Srinagar

squad of the Al-Mansoorian had stormed the camp and inflicted "heavy losses" on the security personnel.

Two militants attacked the camp around 6 am by hurling grenades and opening fire on a jawan who was guarding the telephone exchange at Town Hall. The police said the CRPF men returned the fire, and in the ensuing encounter, five jawans were killed and two wounded. The injured soldiers have been hospitalised.

Reports said the militants had entered the camp when about ten jawans were inside. Traffic in the vicinity has been suspended and people in the nearby houses have been shifted to safer places.

04 DEC 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Govt outlines plan on J&K peace

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 29. — Carrying forward its peace process, the Centre today outlined a nine-point strategy that included initiation of dialogue with all groups in Jammu and Kashmir, especially those which shunned violence, to achieve the twin objectives of peace and development in the militancy-hit state.

The other salient features of this strategy include promotion of interaction with the people of Pakistan and pursuing of the opening of Jammu-Sialkot, Uri-Muzaffarabad and Kargil-Skardu roads, which would help people-to-people contact and open up trade, a home ministry statement said here. While Sialkot is in Pakistan, Muzaffarabad is capital of Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir and Skardu lies in the Northern Areas controlled by Islamabad.

The strategy was finalised following Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil's visit to J&K earlier this month during which he met a cross-section of people. As part of the measures, communication eq-

upment, gadgets, weaponry and ammunition and training in skills and technology for security forces and intelligence agencies would be upgraded.

Besides initialising a dialogue with all groups in J&K, especially those which eschewed the path of violence, the strategy talked about accelerating economic development, promoting culture, tackling unemployment and public grievance, avoiding human rights violation by security forces and intensifying involvement of media in the process of reconstruction in the state.

On accelerating economic development, the spokesman said the Centre would ensure "balanced" development of the three regions of J&K — Jammu, Kashmir Valley and Ladakh. This would also include expediting completion of infrastructure projects — railways, roads and power, fuller implementation of schemes for development of agriculture, horticulture, tourism, trade, handicrafts and industries with emphasis on provision of basic necessities like drinking water, educa-

Ghazanavi test-fired Mufti demands compensation

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 29. — Pakistan successfully test-fired a new version of its short-range, nuclear-capable missile today. Army spokesman Maj. Gen. Shaukat Sultan insisted the testing of the Ghazanavi missile will have no negative impact on the peace process with India, which had no immediate comment on the launch. He said more such tests will be carried out soon. — AP

tion, healthcare, women's empowerment and creation of employment opportunities. The strategy would also focus on preserving and promoting the cultural uniqueness of J&K.

Another key area would be creating employment by raising additional battalions of India Reserve Battalions, central paramilitary forces and Army from remote and border areas of J and K to prevent alienation of the youth. On avoidance of human rights violations, the statement said prompt and transparent enquires, strict action by security forces against offenders will be undertaken.

JAMMU, Nov. 29. — Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today sought compensation for the losses suffered by the state following the signing of the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan in the 1960s. He said as it was not possible to change the clauses of the treaty, the state should at least have rights over its rivers. Inaugurating a two-day seminar, "Political Economy of Jammu and Kashmir", at Jammu University this morning, Mufti Sayeed said the treaty had not taken into consideration the state's interests.

"The rivers of J&K irrigate almost the whole of Pakistan but the state cannot optimally utilise its waters to generate power, which would have speeded up its economic growth". He added that despite the abundance of water resources, the state was not in a position to utilise them fully. It cannot construct dams to store water for generating power, and hydel projects have to harness water from rivers that cannot generate the required amount owing to low water discharge. —SNS

30 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

CRPF jawan runs amok, kills seven colleagues in J&K

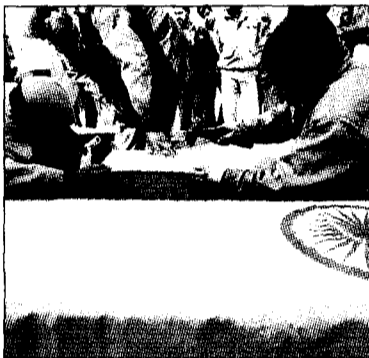
TIMES NEWS NETWORK & PTI

Jammu: A drunk CRPF jawan ran amok after a heated exchange with his superior, killing seven personnel and injuring two, before he was shot down at a CRPF post in Baramulla, Jammu and Kashmir, late on Saturday night.

After the routine roll call at CRPF's 152 battalion camp in Deewan Bagh, Baramulla, there was a heated exchange between company commander inspector Sadhu Ram and constable Saman Deka.

Constable Deka, according to sources, was drunk and could not take the verbal 'humiliation' at the hands of his superior. After half an hour, he barged into Sadhu Ram's room and shot him dead with his rifle.

He didn't stop there, going on a killing spree in another room, which belonged to head constable K D Sharma. The indiscriminate firing left Sharma and constables Maria Pillai, Hardeep Singh, Kuldeep Singh and Tarakh Nath Dev dead. The next



CRPF jawans prepare coffins for their departed colleagues

room was sub-inspector Chandra Ram's. As Deka entered his room and opened fire, Chandra Ram retaliated. The exchange of fire left both Deka and Chandra Ram dead.

CRPF spokesman A K Singh said on Sunday that a court of inquiry had been ordered into the incident.

This is not the first incident of its kind in J&K. In several other instances, soldiers from the army and

paramilitary forces have gone amok, killing their colleagues and superiors. Such shootouts generally stem from frustration and stress. Home-sickness and relentless participation in counter-insurgency operations, which invariably lead to alcoholism, were also to be blamed for such tragedies, said Singh.

CRPF director general J K Sinha said Deka, who was recruited in 2003 and was in J&K on his first posting, was not present during the roll call and was reprimanded and given three days of 'fatigue duty', a kind of punishment. CRPF additional director general Shyam Mehra would inquire into the incident and submit his report in three days, he said.

Union minister of state for home Sripakash Jaiswal told reporters in Kanpur that the jawan had taken the extreme step due to frustration or tension. He added that the government would try to address the causes of frustration and tension among security personnel working in difficult areas.

29 NOV 2004

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Four *fidayeen* shot in Valley

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, Nov. 27. — Security forces today shot dead four Lashkar-e-Taiyaba militants who were allegedly planning to carry out *fidayeen* (suicidal) attacks in Kashmir in an encounter. The militants identified as Tajamul War and Bashir Ahmad Hajam from Kulangam in Handwara, Ali Mohammad Kamran from Sialkot and Abdul Rasheed Baloch from Multan in Pakistan, were killed at Nishat.

Following a tip-off, a team comprising special operations group (SOG) officers and the CRPF laid an ambush at Fore Shore Road at Nishat. When the militants were passing by, they were challenged

and an encounter ensued in which the four militants were killed.

A police spokesman said the militants were planning to carry out a *fidayeen* attack on the International Hotel at Sonawar where senior government officers and other dignitaries are staying.

The timely action of the security forces had helped in averting a major tragedy. Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed praised the police action and said they had averted a major tragedy by eliminating the group at Nishat today.

"I congratulate the state police for averting a major tragedy. The *fidayeen* were carrying maps with them and were planning to carry out attacks", Mufti Sayeed said.

28 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

Hurriyat factions refuse to unite

By Bisheshwar Mishra/TNN

New Delhi: Ego got the better of the Hurriyat Conference leaders as they defied their mentor and refused to unite despite pressure put by Pakistan premier Shaukat Aziz to do so.

Pakistan is desperate to knock the feuding Hurriyat factions into a unit for which a seat would have to be arranged at the negotiation table on the ground that they represented the aspirations of Kashmiris. An international recognition for its auxiliary, Pakistan hopes, will also help him to argue to an increasingly sceptical world that the militancy in J&K is an expression of an "indigenous movement" or, for that matter, a "freedom struggle".

The expectation, however, suffered a rude jolt with different Hurriyat factions, engaged in bitter one-upmanship, paying no heed to the persuasion even while they swore by the need for unity.

"Unity hogi. Ek din vo bhi ho jayegi (Unity will happen. A day will come when we will unite)," remarked JKDFP leader Shabir Shah soon after the dinner at the Pakistan high commissioner's residence late Tuesday night. JKLF's Yasin Malik said, "Unity could happen in the future", insisting that what was more important was the "inclusion of representatives of the Kashmiris in the dialogue between India and Pakistan". Malik even threatened: "If India and Pakistan do not listen to us, then we will launch a non-violent agitation on both sides of Kashmir."

Observers feel that that Pak-

istan's chief objective at this juncture is to distract international attention from the support to terror from across the LoC. With the different terrorist coming under international scanner post-9/11, their patron, the ISI, is finding it ever difficult to persist with the myth of "freedom struggle". A united Hurriyat can be useful for creating the impression anew that the the entire Kashmir valley would like to be part of Pakistan, observers feel.

The plan, however, refuses to get off the ground because of the conflict among the separatist leaders who make up for Hurriyat.

For a while, the Pak authorities tried to project hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani (who professed merg-

Observers feel that Pakistan's chief objective at this juncture is to distract international attention from the support to terror from across the LoC

er of J&K with Pakistan) as the main leader of the Hurriyat. But a majority of Hurriyat members rejected this proposal. Geelani was, in fact, ousted from the conglomerate.

The heightened international sen-

sitivity to fundamentalist militants was forced Pakistan curtail its patronage of Geelani and turn to the moderate moderate elements in the conglomerate.

The new preferences were quite evident at the Pakistan House dinner on Tuesday night when the Pak authorities paid more attention to the moderate young Hurriyat leader, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, much to the dislike of hardliner Geelani. According to sources, the Pak authorities turned down Geelani's request for an exclusive meeting with the Pak premier.

His plea that only he had the experience and age to lead the conglomerate was also ignored by Aziz.

Permanent troop reduction

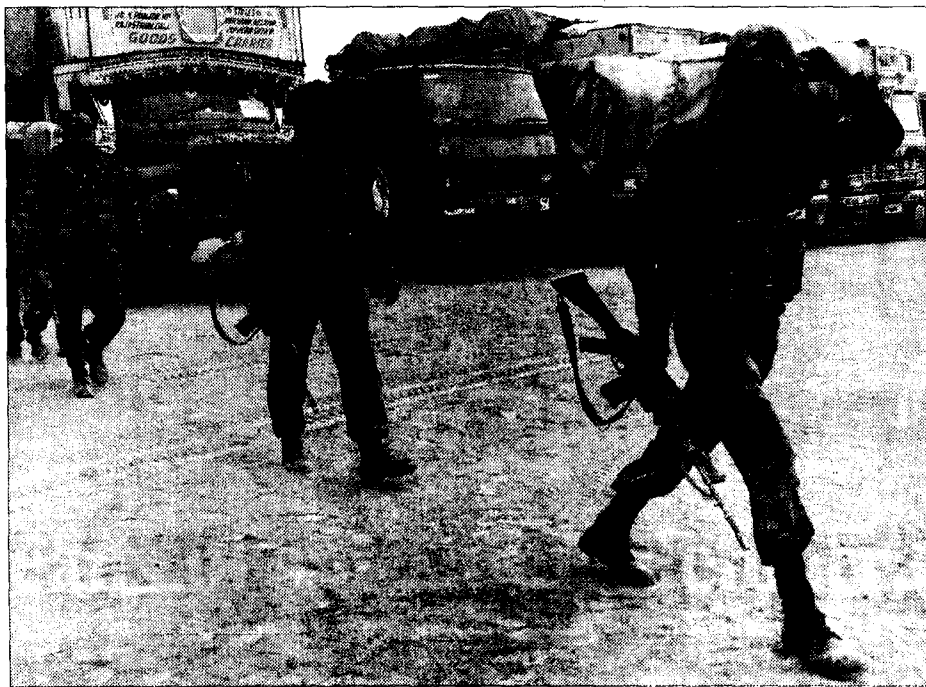
JK DUTT lays down pointers to help Kashmiris utilise the Prime Minister's proclaimed economic grant without any fear of cross-border terrorism

P RIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh's directive to reduce the Indian Army's force levels in Jammu and Kashmir is more of a public relations exercise than a meaningful step towards containing the principle scourge plaguing that hapless state namely, Pakistan-sponsored cross border terrorism. Truth be told, this point was conclusively proved when a pair of terrorists were liquidated by our security forces close to the venue of the Prime Minister's public address at Srinagar during his recent visit there.

No matter how attractive the economic packages grandiosely announced by successive Prime Ministers, such an offer is of little use so long as the citizens of the state are precluded from reaping the benefits accruing out of the largesse bestowed on them. They have little option but to remain subdued by the terrorists on the one side and the security forces on the other. The bare truism is, security forces are deployed permanently in J&K solely because of the terrorism factor, a factor that has prevailed with impunity over the past 17 years ever since we surrendered the initiative to Pakistan and only responded to terrorism by fire-fighting. Depleting security forces will hardly aid in pushing our debased cliché, "winning the hearts and minds" of the Kashmiris – not to mention other parts of the human anatomy!

Another fallacy that does the rounds year in and year out is our self-delusion that infiltration goes down during the winter months. We take fiendish delight in announcing that infiltration figures have reduced in this season even if it reduces from 100 to 99! We do not seem to realise that on the contrary, the infiltrators make full use of winter to stock up their arsenals in various bases and strong points in our part of J&K so that when the campaigning activities start from spring onwards, they are totally geared up for operations against us. Our pathetic Intelligence apparatus is an asset to the terrorists' game plan. Kargil and Hill Kaka for instance, clearly demonstrated this.

To top it all, both New Delhi as well as Islamabad are aware that it is infinitely more profitable for them to keep the Kashmir problem alive than solve it a la Niccolo Machiavelli's infamous axiom. Hence all this talk of extending a hand of friendship et al is in effect high-grade theatricals devoid of any sincerity of purpose. These one-act plays periodically staged by both countries manage to convince their respective naïve people that the political leaders are simply dying to resolve Kashmir, the only snag being obduracy and intransigence by "the other side." Such *tamasha* has been going on since 1947.



Indian Army soldiers prepare for their departure as part of the withdrawal. — AFP

Be that as it may, if we assume that Manmohan Singh is serious about tackling terrorism in J&K, what methodology should be adopted by us in order to achieve this objective? Pleading with Islamabad to faithfully stand by President Pervez Musharraf's January 2004 declaration is not going to cut any ice. We must overcome our lotus-eating belief that by playing the January 2004 record incessantly, Musharraf will do us a favourable turn.

A paradigm of this lotus eating is our attitude to similar terrorist strikes launched on our soil in North-east India by Bangladesh-based insurgent groups. When the number and intensity of strikes rises to a high political decibel, we superciliously apprise Dhaka of the location of the insurgent camps functioning from Bangladesh. On its part, Dhaka promptly denies our charge and the matter ends there. One of the most offensive acts in this context was the Pyrdiwah-Boraibari outrage of a few years ago when 18 of our Border Security Force jawans were butchered by terrorists operating from Bangladesh and their dead bodies were slung on bamboo poles – as is done with animals' carcasses – and contemptuously flung across the international border into India. And New Delhi's reaction was casting reproachful looks towards Dhaka. Period.

To revert to J&K, it has been amusing to see that we have finally taken a leaf, albeit a woefully modified one, out of Northern

Command's comprehensive plan for thwarting terrorist infiltration. This plan was submitted to the government some 20 years ago but elicited no action from the powers that be for reasons best known to them. All that has happened is we have set up an electrified fence along the Line of Control in J&K. Such a fence is an eyewash because it is child's play to cut it, electrification and all. A couple of cases have already come to light where modern de-electrification-cum-neutralising equipment has been seized from marauding infiltrators. In fact, electric fencing as a concept by itself has become outdated.

There is one particular age-old item however, that has stood the test of time as the most effective contextual ingress-blocking agent namely, the landmine. A high-density minefield laid in conjunction with barbed wire entanglement and seeded with improvised explosive devices, trip grenades, booby traps, touch flares and the like adequately covered by registered artillery and mortar tasks supplemented with machine gun sweeps makes a virtually impenetrable obstacle belt against infiltrators. High technology surveillance systems to include terrestrial, electronic and human agencies should be incorporated in this obstacle belt.

Thus a Berlin Wall type defensive line should be established over a depth of three to four kilometres along our side of the LoC from Point NJ 9842 westwards to Poonch and then south to Kathua. The villages with-

in this belt have to be relocated away from this area so that the concerned villagers can lead a normal life instead of being constantly targeted by Pakistani gunfire.

This apart, strong village defence units must be organised by inducting ex-servicemen from all over India. These units must be equipped with Kalashnikov weapon systems, replacing what they currently hold namely, obsolete bolt action rifles and – hold your breath – *lathis!*

Reportedly, these half-baked units were activated after the Chhattisingpura massacre of March 2000 by the state government. Village defence units have to set up tactical nodal points in J&K and carry out aggressive hunter-killer patrolling from these nodal points in accordance with a well-crafted schedule.

Another imperative action by us is to remodel the physical communication layout in J&K. National Highway 1A connecting Pathankot with Leh being the main artery between India and J&K passes within "urinating distance" of the LoC and is extremely vulnerable to interference from Pakistani pickets.

There is no gainsaying this disadvantage. The same goes for the railway line to Jammu. A fresh road and rail network through Himachal Pradesh has to be created which should become the major connector with the existing one being relegated to secondary position. The new network to and from J&K will be immune to disruption by Pakistani elements even in the event of a regular war.

If our Prime Minister genuinely wants to help the Kashmiris in utilising his proclaimed economic grant without any fear of terrorism then the *modus operandi* suggested above should be followed. This was what Northern Command had suggested. Once this is put into effect, a large quantum of our security forces, especially the Army, can be pulled out from J&K for good. It behoves our government to conscientiously translate the Prime Minister's objective on the ground.

Tailpiece. Ideally of course, we should play the same game with Pakistan as they do with us. For every terrorist strike on our soil we should destroy two PoK based terrorist camps with precision-guided munitions while maintaining our efforts at peace negotiations with a smile! However, this will warrant altering our national psyche from the ongoing Gandhian philosophy of absorbing punishment to Subhas Bose's "blood for blood" theme. Do we have it in us?

(The author is a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the Indian Army.)

26 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

India open to Kashmir options

New Delhi: Moving guardedly on the vexed Kashmir issue, India on Wednesday said it was willing to look at various options but made it clear that these must be based on ground realities.

"We move forward in a measured fashion. We regard the process of confidence building as not separate from dealing with the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. They are, in fact, linked together," foreign secretary Shyam Saran told reporters after the maiden meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Shaukat Aziz.

Saran said it was conveyed to the Pakistani side that India was committed to addressing all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, in a "sincere and purposeful manner". On Aziz's remarks that



progress in resolving the Kashmir issue will have to be made in tandem with progress on other issues, he said, "We are moving in tandem." Saran said India had a

"people-centric" approach to Kashmir issue and was "not looking at territorial solutions".

Pakistan insisted that granting of most favoured nation (MFN) status to India was linked to the solution of the Kashmir issue. Aziz made it clear at a breakfast meeting with select journalists that granting of MFN status to India, which will open up the Pakistani market for Indian exporters, would not be considered in isolation. Aziz, however, was very keen on the gas pipeline project which would bring natural gas from Iran to India over land through Pakistan, which would make his country richer by \$600-800 million annually as transit fee. India insisted that Pakistan grant it MFN status for moving ahead on the proposed 4.16 billion dollar project. PTI

Delhi develops taste for Kashmir on table

Aziz to read political pulse

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Nov. 22: On the eve of Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz's visit, South Block appears to have come out with a new coinage — "flexibility with realism" — to resolve outstanding issues between the two countries and carry forward the peace process. Aziz, who arrives tomorrow afternoon in what will be his first visit to India as Prime Minister, is coming here as the outgoing chairperson of Saarc. But Pakistani officials claimed he would also look at



Aziz in Colombo on Monday. (Reuters)

ways to normalise relations between the neighbours.

Indications suggest Delhi will be upfront about a discussion on Kashmir which will reflect "the reality and the ground situation". Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had recently made it clear in Srinagar that there will be no redrawing of India's boundary, nor would Delhi support any proposal for another partition in the sub-continent on religious lines.

He had also hinted that Delhi was willing to consider political and economic autonomy for Kashmiris while sup-

porting any move for a "soft border" between the two Kashmiris. His remarks were seen as the UPA government's formal response to some proposals of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf last month to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

Musharraf had suggested that Jammu and Kashmir (including the part in Pakistan's possession) be carved into seven regions and demilitarised as a prelude to letting them choose their rulers.

Singh's remarks have not gone down well with Musharraf who has made public his disappointment. But Indian officials said the onus was now on Pakistan to show whether it was willing to continue with the peace process.

Apart from holding talks with his Indian counterpart, Aziz will meet most top members of the Indian leadership during his two-day stay. Meetings are lined up with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Foreign minister K. Natwar Singh and petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar will meet him tomorrow. Aziz will also hold talks with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and leader of the Opposition L.K. Advani on Thursday.

That Aziz would meet Opposition leaders shows that Pakistan is trying to assess whether there is consensus in India on continuing with the peace process.

Pakistani officials said they were not "too worried" about Singh's statements in Srinagar. "It will be stressed by Prime Minister Aziz during his talks with Indian leaders to ensure that the two sides do not do anything that will negate the achievements of the past year," an official said.

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GOODBYE BOYS, HELLO AZIZ



Jawans wave their colleagues goodbye near Srinagar on Monday as troops pulled out of Kashmir. (PTI)

Pak praise for troops pullout

Colombo, Nov. 22 (Reuters): The reduction of troops by India in Kashmir had helped reduce tension, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said today, but added he did not expect this to lead to a breakthrough in talks with Indian leaders this week.

In Colombo ahead of his first official visit to India, Aziz said in an interview that he was encouraged by progress in talks over the Kashmir issue, but said any permanent solution was likely some way off.

"I think the fact that India has started to reduce its troops is welcome. This is from one particular area and we hope that this process will continue, particularly in the urban areas, where there's a large concentration of troops," Aziz said.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has said his country might be willing to drop its plebiscite demand and last month made new proposals, saying Kashmir could be demilitarised and placed under UN control, put under joint control or even given independence. But Musharraf says India must also show flexibility.

Aziz said he did not expect a breakthrough in talks with his Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh.

"Pakistan's stand is very consistent. We don't change our stand every time we take a trip to a country," Aziz said. "This is part of a process. I don't think we are looking at one trip to change everything, but I think it's a step-by-step process."

"We have to move our discussions from strictly the tactical level to the strategic level, and that's how we can look at solutions, which will find a sustainable end result," he said.

Hurriyat steps up unity drive

MUKHTARAHMAD

Srinagar, Nov. 22: Unity moves within the All Parties Hurriyat Conference appear to have gathered pace on the eve of the Pakistan Prime Minister's visit to India.

"We have been invited to meet Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz as members of the erstwhile Hurriyat executive committee," said Abdul Gani Bhat, the former chairperson and

chief spokesperson of the Mirwaiz Omar Farooq-led group of the separatist conglomerate.

"All the seven erstwhile executive committee members and (Democratic Freedom Party chairman) Shabir Ahmad Shah will meet Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in Delhi," Bhat said.

Much significance is being attached locally to the invitation by Aziz. "The Pakistan Prime Minister has in-

ited us for an exchange of ideas on the possible solution to the Kashmir problem. If India follows suit, we will consider it fairly seriously," Bhat said.

The separatist leaders invited to meet the Pakistan Prime Minister include Bhat, Omar Farooq, Shah, hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Bilal Gani Lone and Mohammad Yasin Malik.

"This is a clear indication that the ongoing unity moves within the Hurriyat, which had faced a vertical split last year, have the blessings of the Pakistan government," said a political analyst here.

Omar Farooq had recently secretly met Geelani, throwing up rumours that the two groups were in the process of working out an agreement on unity.

Last year, Geelani had taken exception to the ac-

ceptance of the Centre's talks offer and formed his own group of the Hurriyat. He had accused the People's Conference — a moderate constituent of the conglomerate founded by slain Kashmiri separatist leader Abdul Gani Lone — of "fielding proxy candidates during the 2002 Assembly elections" and had demanded that the organisation be expelled from the Hurriyat.

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THE STATESMAN

More troops leave Kashmir

51-3

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 22. — The Army today announced the withdrawal of more troops from Jammu and Kashmir in keeping with the Prime Minister's recent statement.

About 2,000 troops have already moved out of the state and today, the defence ministry announced the de-induction from Uri, in the 15th Corps area, and Kalakote, in the Rajouri sector. More troops will be moved out of Kalakote very shortly, perhaps in the first week of December. Both areas are close to the Line of Control.

A total of 10,000 to 11,000 troops are going to be pulled out from different parts of the Valley in phases, given that militancy does not go out of control. Some troops have already been moved out of Kupwara and Badgam.

During winter, the level of operations traditionally comes down and the government has said that if militants become more active, the troops will be sent back. The fence built along



Army jawans on their way back from Kashmir, in Srinagar on Monday. — AFP

the LoC has also helped. At present, the Army has about 4 lakh troops spread over three Corps in the state.

The 15 and the 16th Corps are more responsible for fighting militants. Special forces — division-level units — are also deployed in the state.

In Udhampur, at the Northern

Command headquarters, Army chief General Nirmal Chander Vij today said that the reduction of troops from Kashmir was being done after taking into account all security concerns.

In the second phase of reduction of troops, around 1,200 troops of 3-Mahar Regiment were moved out. The 3-Mahar

Regiment was based in Uri sector for the last two years.

The de-inducted troops will be taken to Delhi from where they will be sent to Congo as part of a UN peace keeping force.

"We are doing de-induction with much sincerity to the extent where our own interests are not compromised," the Army chief said while talking to reporters today at the Northern Command headquarters.

Gen. Vij declined to comment on Gen. Musharraf's comments that reduction of troops from J&K was "cosmetic."

"We are very sincere and it is there on the ground for everyone to see," the Army chief said. Gen. Vij said that the Prime Minister is of the view that the reaction on ground would be served carefully. "If the reaction is other way, which makes us feel that we need to take care of it, the decision lies with us," he said, "let me assure you that whatever de-induction is taking place, is after making sure that our security concerns are not compromised. You need not worry about it."

Patil's autonomy suggestion for J&K

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Nov. 21. — Home minister Mr Shivraj Patil has suggested that more autonomy could be considered for Jammu and Kashmir after discussions with groups opposed to violence.

In a note to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, he said: "The Centre is committed to carrying forward the dialogue with all groups and with different shades of opinion in J&K on a sustained basis." He has spoken about efforts to bring peace and added that the government is ready for discussions on a wide range of issues with all groups. He has spoken of engaging the Hurriyat, strengthening the mainstream parties and providing security cover similar to the kind that the Prime Minister gets.

In his report, presented last week, he spoke of discussions with SPG officials and increase in secu-

Mr Patil has called for opening of roads between Jammu and Sialkot in Pakistan, Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in PoK, and Kargil and Skardu in the northern areas administered by Islamabad



ty arrangements for Union ministers visiting J&K is also recommended. The suggestions come after assassination attempts on top Kashmiri leaders including the Abdullahs.

The recommendations may require Cabinet clearance and approval of Parliament and the J&K government. He added that the Northern Army commander should be made the principal advisor of the Unified Headquarters, set up by the government in 1996. Mr Patil called for regular meetings of the unified headquarters, headed by the chief minister, he said.

Mr Patil has called for opening of roads between Jammu and Sialkot in Pakistan, Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in PoK and Kargil and Skardu in the northern areas administered by Islamabad for more people-to-people contacts. He wants nine more India Reserve battalions and one CRPF battalion

to be raised. He also wanted the state government to help municipal corporations, district bodies, panchayats and cooperatives to bring about a sense of normalcy and people's participation. The Home Minister has called for improved coordination between security forces and intelligence agencies. This, he said, would be useful when public meetings are addressed by political leaders. The agencies should be equipped with the latest communication equipment and gadgets and provide better training and skills to match the sophisticated devices and modern equipment used by the terrorists, he said.

To provide protection to remote villages in mountainous areas, local villagers should be encouraged to form village defence committees, he said, noting that adequate protection should be given to informers. Mr Patil said a total of 58 important terrorist leaders have been eliminated this year.

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মতে পাক অভিযোগ অবাস্তব

অগ্নি রায় • গুয়াহাটি

২১ নভেম্বর: ‘অবাস্তব কিছু মন্তব্যের উপরে বিদেশনীতি নির্ভর করতে পারে না। কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের স্ফোভকে আমল না-দিয়ে এই ভাবেই নীতির প্রক্ষেপে তাঁর অনড় মনোভাব পরিষ্কার করে দিলেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। এবং সেটা করলেন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজের বিমান ভারতের টারম্যাক ছেঁওয়ার ঠিক দু’দিন আগেই।

কয়েক দিন ধরে ইসলামাবাদের ক্রমাগত করে চলা মন্তব্য, অভিযোগ এবং প্রচ্ছন্ন হুমকিকে আজ মনমোহন কার্যত উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন ‘অবাস্তব মন্তব্য’ বলে। পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ বলেছেন, শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে প্রয়োজনীয় ইতিবাচক মনোভাব দেখাচ্ছে না ভারত। তার জবাবে মনমোহনের বক্তব্য, ‘সুসংহত আলোচনার জন্য প্রয়োজন আন্তরিক প্রয়াস। ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে সেই আলোচনার জন্য

আন্তরিক প্রয়াস রয়েছে।’

প্রধানমন্ত্রী আপাতত ব্যস্ত শওকতের সঙ্গে ২৩ নভেম্বরের বৈঠকের কৌশল স্থির করতে। দু’দেশের কূটনৈতিক ও রাজনৈতিক উদ্ভাপ যে কিছুটা বাড়বে, তা তিনি শ্রীনগরের হাড় কাঁপানো ঠান্ডাতে বসেই আঁচ করেছিলেন। আর তাই বিভিন্ন রাজ্যে জঙ্গি-সমস্যা মোকাবিলায় শান্তি ও উন্নয়নের প্যাকেজ বিতরণের পাশাপাশিই প্রধানমন্ত্রী নিজেকে কূটনৈতিক কর্তব্যের জন্য প্রস্তুত করে রাখছেন।

যেমন আজ সকালে। সাংবাদিক সম্মেলন শেষ করে বিমান ধরতে দ্রুত বেরিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। মওকা পেয়ে প্রশ্ন করা গেল, ‘মুশারফ বলেছেন, ভারত অশান্তি সঙ্কেত (ব্যাড ভাইবস) পাঠাচ্ছে। বলছেন, ভারতের বিদেশনীতি অনমনীয়। ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে শান্তি ফেরাতে যা আদৌ সহায়ক হবে না। আপনি কী বলছেন?’ এক মুহূর্তও ভাবলেন না প্রধানমন্ত্রী। উত্তরটা যেন তৈরিই ছিল এমন ভাবে বললেন,

‘অবাস্তব কিছু মন্তব্যের ভিত্তিতে রাষ্ট্রনীতি নমনীয় না অনমনীয়, তা মাপা যায় না। তার চেয়ে বরং আন্তরিকতার সঙ্গে আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়াকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়া প্রয়োজন।’ মুশারফের নাম না-করে মনমোহন সিংহ বললেন, ‘উচিত হল কার্যকরী কথাবার্তা বলা।’

কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গে ভারতের ভূমিকায় পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ অসন্তোষ প্রকাশ করার পরেই অবশ্য সুর নরম করার চেষ্টা শুরু করেছে পাকিস্তান। পি টি আই-এর খবর, পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরি আজ বলেছেন, মুশারফের যাবতীয় মন্তব্য ‘দুঃখ’ থেকে করা। ‘রাগ’ থেকে নয়। ভারত সফরে রওনা হওয়ার আগে পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী আজিজও বলেছেন, মনমোহনের সঙ্গে তিনি কাশ্মীর-সহ দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের সব দিক নিয়েই কথা বলবেন। প্রসঙ্গত, শ্রীনগরে মনমোহনের করা দু’টি জোরালো মন্তব্যে ইসলামাবাদ প্রকাশ্যেই কূটনৈতিক হতাশা ব্যক্ত করেছে। মনমোহন বলেছিলেন, ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে

আর দেশভাগ হবে না, হবে না দেশের মানচিত্রের পুনর্নির্মাণও।

ভারত যে এই নিয়ে কড়া মনোভাব বজায় রেখেই আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে আন্তরিক, সেটা আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রী পরিষ্কার করে দিয়েছেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, ‘পরশু পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী নয়াদিল্লি আসছেন। তাঁর সঙ্গে সমস্ত খুলে থাকা দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয়ের সমাধান খুঁজতে আলোচনা করব। দু’দেশের সুসংহত আলোচনা যাতে হয়, তা ভারত অত্যন্ত গুরুত্ব দিয়ে দেখছে। আশা করছি, পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে গঠনমূলক আলোচনা হবে।’

তবে এই সঙ্গেই হালকা চালে মনমোহন বলেন, ‘কে বন্ধ হবে না হবে, তা আমরা নিজেরা পছন্দ করে নিতে পারি। কিন্তু প্রতিবেশীর ক্ষেত্রে তো পছন্দের সুযোগ নেই। ভৌগোলিক অবস্থানই প্রতিবেশী দেশের নির্ধারক। তবে প্রতিবেশীর সঙ্গে ভাল সম্পর্ক তৈরির জন্য পারস্পরিক সম্পর্ক তৈরি করতে হবে।’

22 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Drop patronising attitude, peeved Pervez tells Delhi

Indrajit Hazra
Lahore, November 20

IT WAS Pervez Musharraf playing the op-ed page analyst to perfection. Addressing the inaugural session of the 4th South Asian Free Media Conference, the general explained why he had unleashed the "Musharraf Plan" during an iftar party on October 25 to the incredulity of the Indian side. "I did it very deliberately. I don't do things without thinking," he said.

The Pakistani President mentioned two reasons for his "suggestion". One, he had asked dozens of people — Indians, Pakistanis and Kashmiris — for an amicable solution to the Kashmir problem. "I've not got an answer from a single person.

Which is why I thought to myself, let me get the ball moving."

Reason No. 2: "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and I signed a joint statement agreeing to discuss options in a purposeful manner. Suppose we reach some kind of option and the people or the Assemblies shoot down this option? I think it was essential to throw the debate open so that we know what the people want us to do." In a pastel

J&K HG-1 21/11
'J&K PULLOUT TACTICAL, NOT STRATEGIC MOVE'



An army convoy leaves Rajouri district on Saturday.

jacket and a yellow tie, the general can be passed off as the champion of democracy.

"It's a misconception that I've offered a solution. All I have done is identified geographic, ethnic and religious regions. These haven't been cooked up. They are there," Musharraf said, adding rather cryptically: "What have I said? I haven't said anything. But I have said a lot. I have shown a direction."

At a lunch meeting with Indian journalists later, the general reiterated his disappointment over Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's utterings in Srinagar recently. "If I say Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of Pakistan, how does it sound? Is India ready to leave its stated position behind and move ahead? India says that it is willing to listen. What does this mean? Will we do the talking while they listen? This patronising attitude — please cut it out!"

Was he irritated and getting impatient with India? "Well, I am not clear what India's position on Kashmir is. I want a very sincere and frank answer. No more jugglery with words. We are willing to meet midway. I'm willing to move despite extremist

views. Is India willing to do that? I won't move an inch forward if they don't."

Responding to India's troops cut, the President remarked, "We're happy, thankful that you have reduced forces. We welcome it. Thank you very much. What else do you want me to say?" But he went on to add that the move, though welcome, was a "tactical move, not a strategic one".

■ See also Page 3

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বিপাকে

চাপ বরদাস্ত নয়, ফের বার্তা পাকিস্তানকে

অগ্নি রায় • জম্মু

১৮ নভেম্বর: এক টিলে দুই পাখি। পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজের আসন্ন ভারত-সফরের ঠিক আগে খোদ কাশ্মীরের মাটিতে দাঁড়িয়েই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ ইসলামাবাদের উদ্দেশে জোরালো বার্তা পাঠালেন যে, নয়াদিল্লি কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান চাইলেও তা পাকিস্তানের চাপে মাথা নুইয়ে নয়। পাশাপাশি, 'নতুন কাশ্মীর' গড়ার ডাক দিয়ে, কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারি চাকরিতে নিয়োগের উপরে নিষেধাজ্ঞা তোলার কথা ঘোষণা করে ও যুবকদের কর্মসংস্থান বাড়াতে নতুন নতুন প্রকল্প তৈরির সিদ্ধান্ত জানিয়ে হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকেও যথেষ্ট চাপে ফেলে দিলেন মনমোহন। কাশ্মীরি আমজনতাকে তাঁর দৃঢ় আশ্বাস, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে কথা চলুক বা না-চলুক, রাজ্যে উন্নয়নের চাকা ভবিষ্যতে আর থেমে থাকবে না।

কাশ্মীরে বিশ্মৃতপ্রায় উদ্বাস্ত 'পশ্চিম'দের কথাও ভোলেননি প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কাশ্মীর থেকে বাস্তব হারিয়ে এসেছেন যারা, তাঁদের সবার জন্য দু'কামরার কোয়ার্টার দেওয়ার কথা ঘোষণা করেছেন তিনি। মনমোহনের কথায়, "আমি নিজে '৪৭ সালে পাকিস্তান থেকে বাস্তব হারিয়ে এসেছি। উদ্বাস্তদের সমস্যা আমি বুঝি।"

আগামী ২৩ নভেম্বর শওকত আজিজের ভারত সফরের মুখে মনমোহনের দু'দিনের কাশ্মীর সফর ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা তৈরি করল। কূটনৈতিক সূত্রের মতে, মনমোহন কাশ্মীরের মাটিতে দাঁড়িয়ে ইসলামাবাদের উদ্দেশে দু'টি সাক্ষ সংকেত পাঠিয়েছেন। প্রথমত, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান নয়াদিল্লি চাইছে ঠিকই, কিন্তু তা কোনও ভাবেই পাকিস্তানি চাপের কাছে নতি স্বীকার করে বা তাড়াহুড়ো করে নয়। দ্বিতীয়ত, সম্ভ্রাস বন্ধে পারভেজ মুশারফ প্রতিশ্রুতি রক্ষা না-করলে আলোচনার অগ্রগতির কোনও সম্ভাবনাই নেই। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর পাশাপাশি আজ বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহও পঞ্চশীলের পথে ফিরে গিয়ে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা বলেছেন। তবে তাঁরও বক্তব্য, হিংসা বন্ধের বিষয়টি আলোচনার একটি অত্যাবশ্যকীয় অঙ্গ হতে হবে।

মনমোহনের কাশ্মীর সফর আসন্ন বেশ কিছু কূটনৈতিক ঘটনাক্রমে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রভাব ফেলবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। সেগুলি হল:

- বুশের জয়লাভের পর আমেরিকার কাশ্মীর নিয়ে পুনর্মূল্যায়ন
- পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে নয়াদিল্লির বিভিন্ন শীর্ষ নেতার আসন্ন বৈঠক
- জম্মু কাশ্মীরে আরও সেনা-প্রত্যাহার
- সিয়াচেন নিয়ে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সেনা প্রধানদের আসন্ন বৈঠক
- ভারত-পাকিস্তান বিদেশসচিব পর্যায়ে ডিসেম্বরে অনুষ্ঠিত বৈঠক
- বাংলাদেশে সার্ক সম্মেলনে মুশারফ-মনমোহন দ্বিতীয় পার্শ্ববৈঠক।

তবে মনমোহনের কাশ্মীর-সফর প্রসঙ্গে পাকিস্তান সতর্ক ভাবেই প্রতিক্রিয়া জানিয়েছে। কাল ও আজ শ্রীনগর ও জম্মুতে মনমোহন ফের দ্ব্যর্থহীন ভাবে বলেছেন, কাশ্মীর ভারতের অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংশ ও আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত বদলানোর কোনও প্রসঙ্গই ওঠে না। সংবাদ সংস্থার খবর, এই প্রসঙ্গে পাক বিদেশ দফতরের মুখপাত্র মাসুদ খান বলেছেন, "এই প্রসঙ্গে দু'দেশের অবস্থান তো জানাই। তবে তার মধ্যেও আমরা নতুন দিগন্ত উন্মোচনের চেষ্টা করছি।" আর পারভেজ নিজে বলেছেন, "নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখা যে কাশ্মীর-সমস্যারই অঙ্গ, তা তো আমরা জানি। তবু দু'পক্ষকেই নমনীয়তা দেখাতে হবে।"

নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখার এ পারে অশান্ত 'ভূস্বর্গে' দরাজ ভাবে আর্থিক ও সমাজের বিভিন্ন বর্গের প্রতিনিধির সঙ্গে ক্রমাগত কথা বলে প্রধানমন্ত্রী 'মিশন কাশ্মীর'-এ

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

● কাশ্মীরে রোগ সারতে এখনও ঢের দেরি.... পৃঃ ৫

চাপ বরদাস্ত নয়, ফের বার্তা পাকিস্তানকে

প্রথম পাতার পর

কোণঠাসা করে দিয়েছে হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকেও। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ২৪ হাজার কোটি টাকার ঘোষণার ব্যাপারে আজ সকালে প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাতে গিয়ে হরিয়তের মুখপাত্র শাহিদ উল ইসলাম তাই কিছুটা দ্বিধাগ্রস্তভাবে বললেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সমস্ত প্রস্তাবে আমরা প্রতিক্রিয়া জানাব, সে রকম আশা করার কোনও কারণ নেই। তা ছাড়া, প্রধানমন্ত্রী যে ঘোষণা করেছেন, তা যথেষ্ট বিশ্রাস্তিকর।"

কেন বিশ্রাস্তিকর, সম্ভবত তা খতিয়ে দেখতেই আগামী সপ্তাহে বৈঠকে বসছেন মিরওয়াজ ওমর ফারুকের নেতৃত্বাধীন হরিয়তের মধ্যমপন্থী অংশ। সেখানে আলোচনা হবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সফরোত্তর পরিস্থিতি নিয়েও। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল আসার পর ও প্রধানমন্ত্রী উপত্যকায় পা দেওয়ার আগে পর্যন্ত বিভিন্ন সময়ে নিজেদের দাবিতে সোচ্চার হয়েছিল হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব। আজ সেই আওয়াজ যেন কিছুটা মিইয়ে গিয়েছে। যদিও ভাঙব তবু মচকাবে না-র ভঙ্গিতে শাহিদ বললেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে আমরা রাজনৈতিক সমাধান আশা করেছিলাম। কিন্তু তাঁর এই সফরে রাজনৈতিক কোনও উপাদানই নেই।"

মনমোহনের সফরের ঠিক আগের দিন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের সঞ্জয় বাডু

যথেষ্ট ইঙ্গিতপূর্ণ ভাবে বলেছিলেন, "হরিয়তরাই তো শুধু কাশ্মীরের প্রতিনিধি নয়। প্রধানমন্ত্রী বিভিন্ন সম্প্রদায়ের মানুষের সঙ্গে কথা বলবেন।" প্রকৃতপক্ষে মনমোহন গতকাল সকালে কাশ্মীরে পা দেওয়ার পর থেকে আজ পর্যন্ত শুধু যে দু'টি জনসভা করেছেন তা-ই নয়, দেখা করেছেন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রতিনিধি, সেনা-প্রতিনিধি, সরকারি কর্মচারি, সমস্ত রাজনৈতিক দল (বি জে পি-সহ), বাণিজ্য-প্রতিনিধি, এমন কী ফল-চাষীদের সঙ্গেও। আর হরিয়তের সঙ্গে আলোচনার জন্য শুধু যে কোনও প্রয়াসই করা হয়নি তা-ই নয়, সুযোগ পেলেই হরিয়ত নেতাদের উদ্দেশে চোখা চোখা বাক্যব্যয় ব্যবহার করতে ছাড়েননি মনমোহন।

দুপুরে ২৪ হাজার কোটির ঘোষণায় মানুষের মন জয়ের পর সন্ধ্যাবেলা এক প্রশ্নের উত্তরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মন্তব্য, "কে মধ্যমপন্থী কে নরমপন্থী জানি না। এ টুকু বলতে পারি, আমরা আশা করব ওরা আলোচনার টেবিলে বসার কোনও শর্ত রাখবে না। পাকিস্তানে যেতে দিতে হবে তবেই আলোচনা করব, এই ধরনের শর্ত রাখা ঠিক নয়।" কিছুটা কোণঠাসা হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব পরে জানিয়েছে পাকিস্তানে যাওয়া না যাওয়াকে তাঁরা ভারতের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার পূর্বশর্ত হিসাবে রাখতে চান না।

জঙ্গি হানার মুখেও মনমোহন শান্তিকামী



কাশ্মীরের জন্য ২৪ হাজার কোটি

অগ্নি রায় ও রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

১৭ নভেম্বর: প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে প্রথম কাশ্মীর-সফরেই তাঁকে 'স্বাগত' জানিয়েছে জঙ্গিদের আত্মঘাতী হামলা! তাও জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের জন্য ২৪ হাজার কোটি টাকার আর্থিক উন্নয়নের 'ঘোষণা' এবং 'নিঃশর্তে শান্তি আলোচনা'-র কথা জানিয়ে দিলেন মনমোহন সিংহ।

দীর্ঘ ১৬ বছর পর কাশ্মীরে এলেন কোনও কংগ্রেসি প্রধানমন্ত্রী। শেষ গিয়েছিলেন রাজীব গান্ধী। তার পর মনমোহন। এবং এত দিন পর এসে মনমোহন জানিয়েছেন, বেকারি দূরীকরণ, পরিকাঠামো উন্নয়ন এবং নতুন বিনিয়োগের জন্যই তাঁর এই আর্থিক উন্নয়নের ঘোষণা। তাঁর কথায়, "কাশ্মীরের মানুষের, বিশেষত মহিলাদের স্বাস্থ্য, শিক্ষা এবং সামগ্রিক অবস্থা নিয়ে আমি চিন্তিত। মহিলাদের আরও শক্তিশালী করতে হবে। যাতে তারা

দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস, আমরা সেই কাশ্মীর তৈরি করতে পারব। যে কাশ্মীর শান্তির প্রতীক হবে।" বলেছেন, "হিসসা বন্ধে আমাদের সরকার খোলা মনে যে কারও সঙ্গে কোনও শর্ত ছাড়াই কথা বলতে তৈরি। শর্ত একটাই, অপরাধকেও সেনা নিঃশর্তে শান্তি কামানো করে।"

কাশ্মীরের মানুষের সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে পাকিস্তানের উদ্দেশ্যে আজ স্পষ্ট বার্তা পাঠিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। বলেছেন, "আমার সরকার পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সমস্ত যেকোনো বিষয় মিটিয়ে ফেলার জন্য কার্যকরী কথাবার্তা বলতে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ। তবে শর্ত একটাই। পাকিস্তানও সেই শর্তে সম্মত হয়েছিল— পাকিস্তানের অধীন ভূখণ্ড কোনও ভাবেই আমাদের বিরুদ্ধে সন্ত্রাসে ব্যবহার করা চলবে না।" সেক্ষেত্রে পাক-ক্রোসিডেট পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে এ নিয়ে তাঁর কথাবার্তার বিষয়টিও মনমোহন আজ জানিয়েছেন। "মুশারফকে বুঝিয়েছি, দক্ষিণ এশিয়ায় শান্তির জন্য যৌথ ভাবে কাজ করা উচিত। দীর্ঘমেয়াদি হিসায় আপনারা

চালাচ্ছি।" এও বলেছেন যে, "আমাদের পক্ষে আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত বদলানো সম্ভব নয়।" তাঁর কথায়, "ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে দেশভাগ অসম্ভব।" ঘটনাটিকে আজ মনমোহনের সফরের দিনই কাশ্মীর থেকে সেনা সরানো শুরু হল। মনমোহনের আশ্বাস, "যদি অনুপ্রবেশ বন্ধ হয়, পরিস্থিতির উন্নতি ঘটে, হিংসা কমে, তবে আমার পক্ষে আরও সেনা কমানো সম্ভব হবে।" তাঁর কথায়, "কবে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে আলোচনা ফলপ্রসূ হবে, তার জন্য আমরা বসে থাকতে পারি না। সেই বিলাসিতা দেখানো আমাদের সাজে না। আমি চাই, আজ, এই মুহূর্ত থেকে শান্তির পথে যাত্রা শুরু হোক।"

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সভা থেকে খুব বেশি হলো ৫০০ গজ দূরে ডালগেটের এক শপিং কমপ্লেক্সে ঘণ্টা তিনেক সংঘর্ষের পরে জওয়ানেরা দুই জঙ্গিকে গুলি করে মারেন। সংঘর্ষে দুই জওয়ান ও এক নিরীহ নাগরিক এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

হাজরতসাহেব প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ, গঙ্গা মেখানকার প্রধান মৌলবি। বধবার।

সিটি আই

মনমোহন শান্তিকামী

প্রথম পাতার পর

১৭ নভেম্বর: শের-ই-কাশ্মীর জি-কে-১ স্টেডিয়ামের সামনের রাস্তায় নামার আগেই গান্ধী খেল বাসটি। স্পিড ব্রেকার নয়। পেছনে দু'টো ড্রাম ফেলে রাস্তা আটকে দিয়েছেন সেনারা! সেই সঙ্গে রাইফেলের বাট দিয়ে বাসে দম্ভক বাড়ি। মুখে যৎপরোনাস্তি গালাগালি!

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সফরসঙ্গী হয়ে 'ভূসলগে' পৌঁছনোর মিনিট কুড়ির মধ্যেই এই 'নিশান কাশ্মীর'! কারাকোরাম রেঞ্জ, কনকনে গাভা আর নিরবচ্ছিন্ন চিমার গাছ থেকে সরে গিয়ে সফররত বাস-বন্দি সাংবাদিকদের চোখ আঁড়ের নীতি-উচ্চ টিলার। ক'দিন আগের দীপাবলির বাজির শব্দ আবার কিরে এল ঘুরি!

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতরের অফিসারেরা এও হয়ে দৌড়াচ্ছেন, সেনাদের বোকারের পর্ষ চলছে, দেখানো হচ্ছে পরিচয়পত্র। একই পথে কিছুক্ষণ আগে ঘটিতে ছিল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বনভয়ণ; এ

হরিয়ত এমনও বলেছে যে, কাশ্মীরের মানুষকে আর্থিক প্যাকেজের লোভ দেখিয়ে লাভ নেই। স্থানীয় মানুষ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ঘোষণা নিয়ে সন্দেহ প্রকাশ করেছেন। তাঁদের কথায়, "রাজীব গান্ধীও ১০ হাজার কোটি টাকার প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করে গিয়েছিলেন। তার পরে কিছুই হয়নি।"

মনমোহন অবশ্য রাতে তাঁর সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে বলেন, "আমি কোনও প্যাকেজের লোভ দেখাতে আসিনি। কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আমাদের দীর্ঘমেয়াদি পরিকল্পনা রয়েছে।"

সমাবেশে মনমোহন স্পষ্টই বলেন, জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঙ্গদের সঙ্গে তাঁর দীর্ঘ বৈঠক হয়েছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কথায়, "উনি আমাকে বলেছেন, রাজ্যের উন্নয়নের জন্য কী প্রয়োজন। বিদ্যুৎ উৎপাদন, কৃষি এবং বেকারি দূরীকরণের জন্য তিনি বিনিয়োগ চান। আমি তাঁকে সম্পূর্ণ সহযোগিতার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিয়েছি। জম্মু, কাশ্মীর এবং লাদাখের উন্নয়নের জন্য আমি ২৪ হাজার কোটি টাকা বরাদ্দ করছি।" জনসভায় মনমোহনের বক্তৃতার মাঝেই অবশ্য চাকরির দাবিতে স্লোগান ওঠে। মনমোহন বলেন, "কাশ্মীর আমার হৃদয়ের খুব কাছের। এই রাজ্যে আমি শান্তির বার্তা নিয়ে এসেছি। আমার সরকার চায়, এই রাজ্য আবার শান্তি, আশা, উন্নয়ন এবং বহুমুখী সংস্কৃতির প্রতীক হয়ে উঠুক।"

কনভয় রুদ্ধ, পাহাড় থেকে কানফাটা আওয়াজ

শর্তহীন ভাবে সকলের সঙ্গেই কথা বলতে রাজি। আলোচনা এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে হবে। কিন্তু সেই আলোচনার সন্তোষজনক সমাধানের পথ কবে বের হবে, সে জন্য কাশ্মীরের পূর্ণগঠন ফেলে রাখা চলে না। সেই বিলাসিতা দেখানোর সমার্থ্য আমাদের নেই।" নিরাপত্তার বন্ধ অটুনিতে যে শহরটিকে বিমানবন্দরের নামার পর থেকেই যুদ্ধ-নগরী বলে মনে হচ্ছিল, সেখানে এমন কী করে হল, তার উত্তর দেওয়ার জন্য অবশ্য বিশেষ লোক পাওয়া যাচ্ছিল না। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ, তাঁর কন্যা মেহবুবা, যাদের ছেলে কংগ্রেসি মন্ত্রী গুলাম নবী আজাদ—সকলেরই মনমোহনের শান্তি-বার্তার শরিক হতে উদ্ভূত জমিয়েছিলেন। তবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সমস্ত অনুষ্ঠান ঘণ্টাঘণ্টা করে পিছিয়ে গেল সকলের ঘটনার পর। হজরতবাল সফর থেকে শুরু করে জনসভা।

ধর্মতর্মে আবহাওয়ায় দাঁড়িয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী হিসাবে তাঁর প্রথম কাশ্মীর পারভেট না মনমোহন সিংহ।

করেছেন সমস্ত মানুষের কাছে। জি-কে-১ মাঠে উদ্‌ ও মোকাল ইনসিটিউটে ইংরেজি বক্তৃতায় বারবার বললেন তাঁর 'নতুন কাশ্মীর' গড়ার স্বপ্নের কথা, শান্তি ফেরানোর কথা। কাল সিল্লিতে বলেছিলেন, কাশ্মীরে সব ধরনের মানুষের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে চান। দিনভর তা তিনি বলেছেন: ও। তবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সফর, সব দোকানপাট বন্ধ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। পাহাড়ের কোলে ঘুমন্ত হগরী। ডাল লেকে শুষ্ক হাউসবোট আর শিকারা। পর্যটন যে খুব চেউ খোলেছে মুফতির সময়, তেমনটাও মনে হল না স্থানীয় শিকারা-চালকদের সঙ্গে কথা বলে। সড়ক থেকে স্বাস্থ্য, শিক্ষা থেকে বিদ্যুৎ— প্রতিটি বিষয়ই আলোচনা করে উল্লেখ করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কাশ্মীরের সমস্যা নিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ উদ্ভট করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী— "চিও যেথা ভ্রমশা, উচ্চ যেথা শির..."

প্রথম সফরে এসেই নিজের চোখে জঙ্গি হামলা দেখার পর এর চেয়ে উপযুক্ত লাইন সজ্জবত বলতে পারতেনও না মনমোহন সিংহ।

PM offers unconditional J&K talks

SNS & PTI

SRINAGAR, Nov. 17. — The Prime Minister today offered to hold unconditional talks with "anyone and everyone" who abjures violence. "We will talk to all those who have a concern for Kashmiris. My doors are open to those who want to meet me to usher in peace. I have no conditions but their intention should be genuine," Dr Manmohan Singh told a rally here today.

Unfolding his vision for "a peaceful, prosperous and progressive" J&K, Dr Singh announced an economic revival plan of Rs 24,000 crore over a period of four years. He said J&K needs infrastructure development particularly schools, hospitals, power, drinking water, railway and roads and assured all possible central assistance to upgrade them.



"MY VISIT TO KASHMIR IS A DREAM COME TRUE": The Prime Minister at a rally in Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PTI

As reduction of troops began in the state coinciding with his maiden visit, the Prime Minister said if the conditions improved and infiltration was brought under control there could be further cuts in troop deployment.

(The troop reduction would be in consonance with

"ground realities" the defence minister said at a function in Mumbai this evening. Analysts interpreted that as an indication of the possibility of an even further thinning out of security forces should law and order conditions in J&K show a marked improvement in coming months.)

On the recent proposals made by General Musharraf on Kashmir, Dr Singh told a press meet at Raj Bhavan here this evening that he had heard much through the media about the proposals but his government was yet to know its broader contours. "J&K is an integral part of India and I have told the Pakistani President that any proposal which smacks of division of the territory on the basis of religion and redrawing the boundaries is unacceptable," the Prime Minister said.

He also rejected the demand of the Hurriyat Conference for a visit to Pakistan prior to the next round of talks with the Centre.

Earlier today, two terrorists were killed and three security-men injured after an encounter near the Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium, venue of the Prime Minister's public meeting.

১২ জনকে মেরে 'স্বাগত' জানাল জঙ্গিরা

শুভেচ্ছা সফরে আজ

কাশ্মীরে মনমোহন

অগ্নি রায় ● নয়াদিল্লি

১৬ নভেম্বর: শান্তির প্রস্তাব ও উন্নয়নের বার্তা নিয়ে আগামিকাল কাশ্মীর চললেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। এই সফরেই হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বৈঠক হবে, এমন সজ্ঞাবনা আজ পর্যন্ত নেই বললেই চলে। যদিও আজই মনমোহন জনিয়ে দিয়েছেন যে, তিনি 'খোলা মন' নিয়ে কাশ্মীর যাচ্ছেন ও রাজ্যে শান্তি আনতে আগ্রহী যে কোনও দল বা গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গে কথা বলতেও তিনি প্রস্তুত। আগামী সপ্তাহে পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রীর নয়াদিল্লি সফরের ঠিক আগে মনমোহনের এই শুভেচ্ছা-সফরের মাধ্যমে নয়াদিল্লি ইসলামাবাদের একটি সদর্থক বার্তা কাছে পৌঁছে দিতে চাইছে। তবে এই সফরের ঠিক আগে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া ব্যাহত করতে ও দিল্লির উপরে চাপ বাড়াতে জঙ্গিরা সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠে গত ২৪ ঘণ্টায় ১২ জনের মৃত্যু ঘটিয়েছে।

মন্ত্রিসভার সিদ্ধান্ত, কাশ্মীর সীমান্তে সেনা প্রত্যাহার ও হরিয়ত নেতাদের সম্পর্কে নরম মনোভাব দেখানো হলেও কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানসূত্র বার করার ব্যাপারে অযথা তাড়াছড়ো করা হবে না। আজ মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে স্থির হয়েছে, আলোচনার বল পাকিস্তানের দিকেই গড়িয়ে দেওয়া হবে। কিন্তু বাজপেয়ী সরকার যে ভাবে তাড়াছড়ো করে মৈত্রী করতে চেয়েছিল, সেই রাস্তায় হাঁটা হবে না। ভারত জানিয়েছে, আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া নতুন করে শুরু করতে কোনও আপত্তি নেই। কিন্তু ৫৫ বছরের পুরনো সমস্যা 'জাদুদণ্ড' দিয়ে সমাধান করা সম্ভব নয়। এ দিকে, হরিয়ত নেতা মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুক আজ এক সাক্ষাৎকারে সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, এই সফরে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করার প্রশ্ন উঠছে না। অন্য দিকে, প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের মুখপাত্র সঞ্জয় বাবু বলেন, "শুধু হরিয়ত নিয়ে প্রশ্ন উঠছে কেন, প্রধানমন্ত্রী জম্মু কাশ্মীরের

বিভিন্ন ধরনের মানুষের সঙ্গেই দেখা করবেন। হিংসা ছেড়ে আলোচনা করতে উৎসাহী এমন কাউকেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী ফেরাবেন না।" পরে সন্ধ্যায় গুলাম নবি আজাদের বাড়িতে ঈদ-মিলন অনুষ্ঠানেও প্রধানমন্ত্রী একই কথা বলেছেন। তবে সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, এখনও পর্যন্ত স্থির রয়েছে হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা হলে তা করতে হবে দিল্লিতেই।

প্রসঙ্গত, হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রের মন-কষাকষির অবসানের জন্যও বেশ কিছুদিন ধরেই তৎপর হয়েছেন মনমোহন। এই সফরের



প্রাক্কালে শীতে কাশ্মীরে সেনা কমান্ডার ব্যাপারে তাঁর ঘোষণা বিলম্বিত খুশি করেছে মধ্যমপন্থী হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকে। কটরপন্থী নেতা সৈয়দ গিলানি বিষয়টিকে তামাশা আখ্যা দিলেও, পাকিস্তান এই ঘোষণাকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে। এ দিন নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকে কাল থেকেই সেনা প্রত্যাহারের প্রক্রিয়া শুরুর সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে বলে জানিয়েছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়।

উন্নয়নের প্রশ্নে মনমোহন তাঁর প্রথম সফরে প্যাকেজ ঘোষণার

বাড়াবাড়ি করতে না চাইলেও প্রণববাবু জানিয়েছেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রী গুরুত্ব বুঝে বিভিন্ন আর্থিক ক্ষেত্রে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবেন। জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের জন্য ইতিমধ্যেই যে সমস্ত প্রকল্প বরাদ্দ রয়েছে, অথবা যে সব প্রকল্প ঝুলে রয়েছে, তার রূপায়ণ মসৃণ ভাবে করতে ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে।" এর মধ্যে রয়েছে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর গ্রাম-সড়ক যোজনা, কাশ্মীরি পণ্ডিতদের পুনর্বাসন, জম্মু ছেড়ে চলে যাওয়া উদ্বাস্তুদের জন্য আর্থিক সাহায্য, সন্ত্রাসের শিকার পরিবারগুলির জন্য আর্থিক ও অন্যান্য সাহায্য এবং অবশ্যই চাকরির সুযোগ বাড়ানো।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে, গত দশ বছরে কাশ্মীরের অর্থনৈতিক হাল ক্রমশ শোচনীয় হয়েছে। ১৯৯৭ থেকে যোজনা কমিশনের ব্যয়বরাদ্দে রাজ্যের অংশ ক্রমশ কমেছে। মোট বরাদ্দের ৯০ শতাংশ অনুদান ও ১০ শতাংশ ঋণ দেওয়ার পরেও ১২৫০ কোটি টাকা ঋণ মকুবের জন্য যোজনা কমিশনের কাছে দাবি তুলেছিল ফারুক সরকার। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, রাজ্যের অর্থনীতিকে চাঙ্গা করতে অর্থ-বরাদ্দের পাশাপাশি টাকা যাতে নয়ছয় না হয়, সে দিকেও এ বার বিশেষ নজর রাখা হবে। প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁর জনসভায় যে সব প্রসঙ্গ তুলবেন, সেগুলি হল:

● ২০০০ সালে যোজনা কমিশন রাজ্য সরকারি চাকরিতে নিষেধাজ্ঞা জারি করে। কারণ, সন্ত্রাস জর্জরিত কাশ্মীর নতুন নিয়োগের আর্থিক ধকল নিতে পারবে না। সুফতি সরকারের দাবি, এই নিষেধাজ্ঞা তোলা হোক। এ নিয়ে কিছু বলতে পারেন মনমোহন।

● কাশ্মীরি পণ্ডিতদের পুনর্বাসনের বিষয়টিকেও গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। পুনর্বাসনের জন্য নির্দিষ্ট ও হাজার কোটি টাকার মধ্যে বেশ কিছু টাকা এ বার বরাদ্দ হতে পারে।

● জম্মু-উধমপুর রেলপথের উদ্বোধন হবে। দুর্গম পার্বত্য পথে ২০ বছরের চেষ্ঠায় এই ৫৩ কিলোমিটার রেলপথ তৈরি হয়েছে।

17 NOV 2004

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

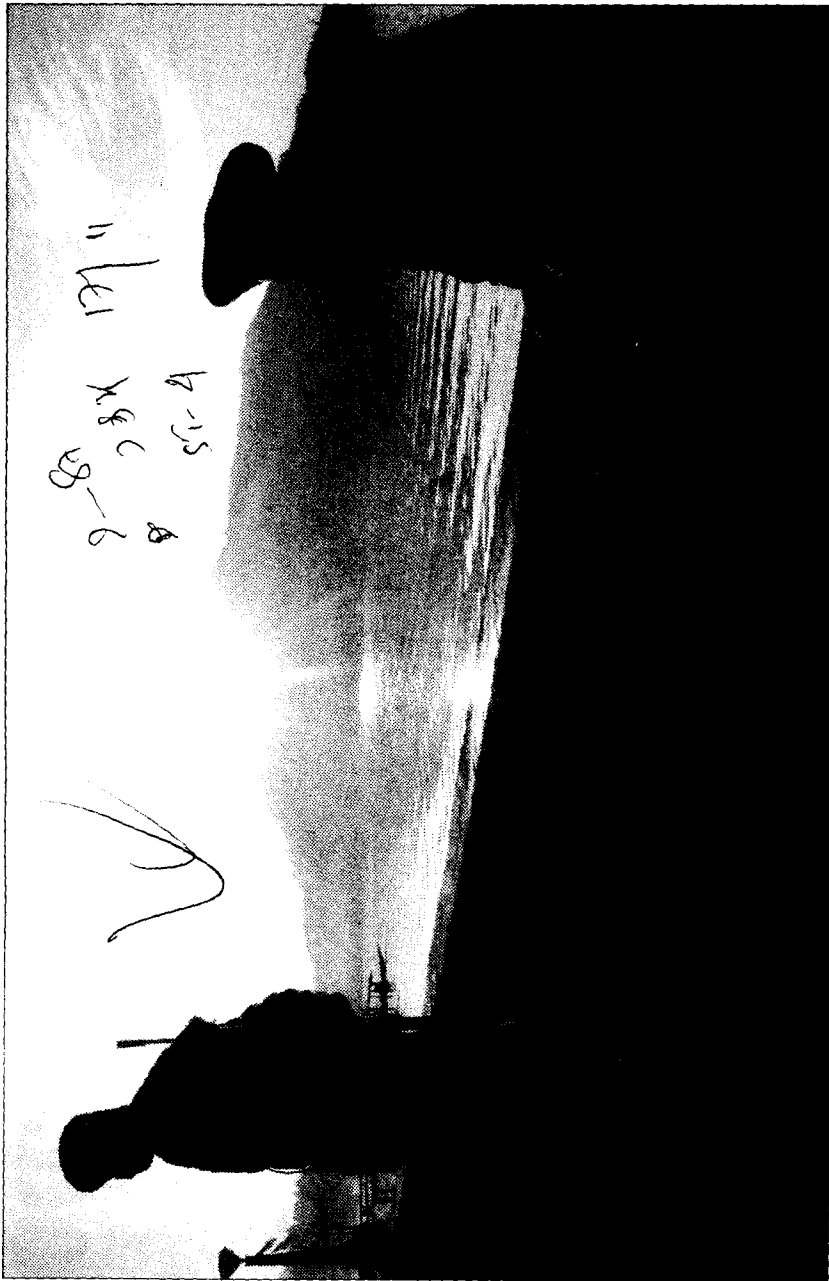
Troop cut from today

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 16.— To coincide with the visit of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to Jammu and Kashmir, the army will begin phasing out troops in the state, with the first batch of 2,000 troops being de-inducted from Srinagar Cantonment tomorrow. The total number of forces to be reduced, and where in the militancy-afflicted state they would be removed from were still being worked out, officials said tonight.

Almost six months after he assumed office, Dr Singh plans, during his two-day tour of the state, to "reach out to the hearts and minds" of ordinary Kashmiris. He said his government was "willing to speak to" whoever wishes to abjure violence and speak to the government.

The blueprint for reducing troops was finalised at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security chaired by the Prime Minister today. The Army chief, General NC Vij, gave a briefing on the ground situation in the state during the nearly ho-



THE ASSIGNMENT: Jawans maintain vigil beside the Dal Lake on Tuesday. — PTI

ur-long meeting. Having set the stage for what is being seen as a seminal visit to the troubled state by announcing a reduction in the number of troops stationed there, Dr Singh is expected to

outline his views on the "long-term prospects" for the state's economic reconstruction at a public rally in Srinagar on Wednesday.

"We are not talking of economic packages," an

official in the PMO said, but the Prime Minister will "outline his vision and priorities" for the economic revival of the state during his two day visit.

The Prime Minister said he was "going there with a lot of hope" of "putting behind all the violence". The first visit to the Valley in over a decade by a Congress Prime Minister (after Mr PV Narasimha Rao) will test the already strained security apparatus.

12 killed ahead of PM visit

JAMMU, Nov. 16. — A day before the maiden visit of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to Kashmir, militants stepped up violence and killed twelve persons, including four of a family and a CRPF jawan. Among them, five persons, including a woman, were killed in Budgam district on Monday night. The CRPF jawan was killed outside a bank in Pulwama district.

Police said unidentified gunmen barged into the house of Abdul Rahim Malik at Suzeat Kawoosa, near Srinagar, and tried to kidnap two counter-insurgents present. As the family tried to resist, unidentified gunmen opened fire, killing five people. The two counter-insurgents were identified as Farooq Ahmad Bhat and Ghulam Mohiuddin Bhat.

Terrorists also abducted a youth, Shabir Ahmad, from the outskirts of Srinagar and killed him. In Jammu, two persons were killed and a special police officer wounded when militants fired at them in Tund forest near Bonjwan last evening. — SNS

Troop thin-out

Damage control, many messages for J & K

Political, diplomatic and strategic is the significance of the Prime Minister's announcement of a reduction in force-levels in Jammu and Kashmir. Normally a thin-out would have tactical implications too, happily not this time around. History will confirm that no commander dictates the course of a campaign as powerfully as General Winter and with the snows beginning to block the passes, and the cold always causing a slow-down in militant activity, fewer troops would not mean a dilution of the security effort. Not in the immediate future. Weather apart, the fencing along the LoC and the deployment of unattended ground sensors have curbed infiltration to an appreciable extent. And the year-long cease-fire has reduced tensions. So no major risk will be run by troops thinning down. Even the "hawks" will accept that.

As a curtain-raiser for his visit to the Valley, Dr Manmohan Singh could have come up with nothing better. It has served to sweep away the mess created by intemperate statements and puerile conduct of the Home Minister on what was a pathfinder mission. Regardless of the low esteem in which North Block holds the Hurriyat, the fact that Mehbooba and Mufti, as well as Omar and Farooq have advocated the Centre engaging that outfit would establish that it does have a certain role to play. Reducing troops was a Hurriyat demand: the Prime Minister has not formally accepted it, but in volunteering the move he partially de-fanged that conglomerate, and also sent out an international message. Most of all he has retrieved a situation created by a petulant Shivraj Patil. Not for the first time — his offer to review the Armed Forces Special Powers Act helped cool things down in Manipur. Which raises the query — why did the PMO back off from taking over management of Kashmir affairs from the MHA. The timing the the announcement also sends out a quiet signal to the army. A thin-out might assuage passions ignited by the involvement of an officer of the rank of Major — no lowly jawan or NCO to be sure — in a truly reprehensible rape. It is a quiet rap on the knuckles for the top brass, for had they cracked the whip hard enough after the Manipur incident a repetition may have been averted. Surely the time has come for Army Headquarters to re-create conditions in which wearing the uniform is a matter of honour.

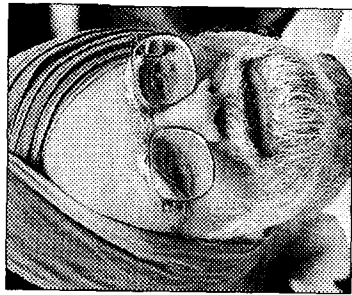
Hurriyat ready to meet Mannohan

Agencies
London, November 15

AFTER HAVING shouldered Home Minister Shivraj Patil during his Kashmir visit, the Hurriyat Conference now says it is ready to talk to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during his visit to Jammu and Kashmir this week.

"Definitely, we'd sit and talk — if invited. If the Indian Prime Minister wants to take any initiative towards the political solution to the Kashmir problem, we would seriously consider it", Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Omer Farooq said in a BBC programme last night.

"We've decided if any in-



Manmohan Singh

itation is extended, we'd sit and talk, but, at the same time, we want to make it clear that since two rounds of talks have already taken place with the Indian government, when the NDA

was in power, it's important now that the Government of India permits the Hurriyat leaders to visit Pakistan, and then the process of talks would be meaningful", Mirwaiz Farooq said.

Asked if they had any hopes from Singh's two-day visit to the state from Wednesday, the Hurriyat leader said: "If the visit is only for an economic package, it would serve no purpose. It would give Kashmiris a feeling that India wants to buy them over."

"But if the PM has something new to offer to take the peace process forward, and if he's to announce some CBMs, which would help towards the political solution, the Hurriyat would certainly

ly welcome it. His recent announcements give hope, but further work needs to be done".

External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh today had a word of caution about the forthcoming talks with Pakistan saying no "miracle" could be expected from them. "This has been continuing for the past 57 years. There could be no miracle. We're trying our best", he told reporters after flagging off the Asean car rally here.

Singh said Pakistan had not sent any formula proposal on the formulation made public by President Pervez Musharraf, but felt PM Shaukkat Aziz might bring it when he comes to Delhi later this month.

J&K HT-9 16/11

Love transforms life of dreaded terrorist

HT Correspondent
Jammu, November 15

AS A dreaded terrorist, he had killed scores of innocents and even raped women in the Valley. Security forces have been hot on his heels for a long time. Now, he is in love with a young girl and wants to shun militancy. He has been in touch with intelligence sources. His mission: getting a safe passage across the border where he could lead a happy life with his girl friend.

He is even ready to get some of his terrorist colleagues killed in return for safe passage. Sources said Dilawar alias Abu Ikrama alias Bilal of Laskere-Tayyeba, who has been responsible for a number of killings and scores of rapes, is planning to elope with a 16-year-old girl.

Sources said the hardcore Laskere-Tayyebate-terrorist accused of killing and raping women is approaching intelligence agencies to get him a safe passage across the border with his girl friend. And in

return he is even ready to get some of his terrorist friends killed.

The rebel in him has disappeared all too suddenly after he met his girl friend and he is now a transformed man. Ikrama is desperate to go back home across the border, said sources. The security forces, however, have been chasing him relentlessly over the past few months.

After raping women in the Khanetar, Kaslabari and Chhatral areas, Ikrama fell in love with a 16-year-old girl called Nazma. Love and romance suddenly gave a new meaning to his life. The path of militancy no longer fascinates him. He has promised himself he will no longer tread the path of violence.

Even though he killed number of innocents, Ikrama is now desperate to lead a normal life shunning subversive activities.

Ikrama has come under so much mental pressure that he was complaining to his mentors on radio that he had spells of blackout and dizziness.

Special J&K stage for PM's speech

Zorawar Singh Jamwal
Jammu, November 15

THE SPECIAL Protection Group has ruled out the Prime Minister's maiden speech from the traditional podium at the Mini Stadium Parade Grounds here due to security reasons.

Official sources said that SPG sleuths, in the state to review security arrangements ahead of Manmohan Singh's visit, have decided to raise the height of

a temporary stage at the stadium according to the measurement prescribed in the blue book to ensure foolproof security for the VVIPs.

The Prime Minister, scheduled to arrive in Jammu on Thursday, will address a public rally at the stadium, besides visiting Kashmiri Migrant Camps at Muthi.

The SPG decision has, however, "disappointed" Congress ministers and

tended to security personnel to be deployed in and around the venue.

Reliable sources said, during the general elections, a special stage was also prepared for the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to address a public gathering at the same venue.

However, during Congress president Sonia Gandhi's tour to the state before the polls, the traditional podium was used.

Hurriyat cool to PM talks

ALOKE TIKKU

28/11 5-8 15/11

New Delhi, Nov. 14: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh laid the ground for his Jammu and Kashmir visit with the decision to cut down on troops, but he may have to return without meeting the Hurriyat Conference leadership.

Efforts to arrange an ice-breaking courtesy call by the Hurriyat have come to nought, with separatist leaders in the Valley sending clear signals to the government that the peace road to Delhi is through Islamabad.

Sources said the Hurriyat has not given any indication of a comedown from its declared stand that talks with the United Progressive Alliance government would start only after its leaders visit Pakistan.

The Hurriyat had made a similar demand before the first round of talks with L.K. Advani, when he was deputy Prime Minister, but later agreed to put it off.

Officials associated with the Hurriyat-Advani talks say the NDA government intended to clear the trip to Pakistan after the third round of talks scheduled in June this year that was expected to see the two sides graduate to discussing "substantial issues".

It was argued that the Hurriyat, which was in contact with Pakistan and the ISI, could not harm Indian interests any more than it had already done.

However, there is a crucial difference in the Hurriyat's stand now.

While the proposed Pakistan visit during the NDA regime was part of the dia-

logue process, this time it has practically made Pakistani leaders party to the talks.

This had prompted home minister Shivraj Patil to delink the talks from the Pakistan trip. He had declared in Srinagar that the government might not have a problem with the visit if an application was sent following proper procedure.

Officials say a view is emerging in the security establishment that once the government has declared that the door is open for anyone to hold a dialogue, it should not focus too much on persuading the Hurriyat to restart talks. There is a message in the Hurriyat flying down to Delhi to meet Pakistani leaders even as they refuse to meet the Indian Prime Minister, an official said.

National security adviser J.N. Dixit had criticised the separatist leaders' "high-horse spirit" when acting Hurriyat chief Mirwaiz Umer Farooq came to the capital to meet the Pakistan high commissioner, but not the home minister.

With the leaders of the Hurriyat and other outfits set to land here for a joint meeting with Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, officials said it could set the tone for another attempt at unifying the separatists.

Shabir Shah, the chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Party, had told reporters in Jammu recently that the state leadership must adopt a united stand to convert consensus into public opinion and find a peaceful solution to the Kashmir conflict.

Delhi to sidestep Pervez's J&K plan

Saurabh Shukla
New Delhi, November 14

NEW DELHI, bracing up for a visit by Pakistani Premier Shaukat Aziz next week, will tread cautiously on General Musharraf's latest formulation on Kashmir, which Islamabad is hard-selling.

"Our Prime Minister is going to India where it (Musharraf's plan) will be discussed," Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said today. Earlier, Indian external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh had said India would look at the formulation if Pakistan proposes it officially.

Musharraf has suggested that India and Pakistan divide Kashmir into seven regions and demilitarise some of the regions on both sides of the LoC, granting them independent status or joint control or putting them under UN mandate.

South Block sources believe the proposal, in its current form, has inherent

defects. First, India will not accept any suggestion of division of the state, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had made clear to Musharraf when they met in New York. Today, Singh said: "There is no scope for third party intervention on Jammu and Kashmir."

Second, the feeling here is that while Islamabad has suggested formulations like this and has been pressing for demilitarisation in Kashmir, it does not talk about the end of violence in J&K which is the biggest impediment to the resolution of the dispute.

So, while Islamabad focuses on the political component of the J&K issue, New Delhi believes that other links — such as cultural and economic relations — should also be promoted. So when Aziz raises the issue with Singh, New Delhi is expected to politely keep the proposal for consideration, even as it seeks Islamabad's response to most of the 72 CBM proposals that it had given.



Siachen deal buzz

INDIA AND Pakistan are likely to reach an agreement on troops withdrawal from the Siachen glacier, Pakistani daily *The Nation* has reported. Since the defence secretary-level talks in August, both sides are using secret diplomatic channels to reach an accord on a troops cut on the world's highest battlefield.

PTI, New Delhi

15 NOV 2004

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 NOV 2004

PM orders troop reduction in J&K

Statesman News Service

PULLOUT IN 10-15 DAYS LIKELY ■ DEFENCE MINISTRY SILENT ON NUMBERS

NEW DELHI, Nov. 11. — The Prime Minister today ordered reduction of troops in Jammu and Kashmir. Coming as it does in the wake of the home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil's failed trip to the state, the recent incident of rape involving an Army Major and the impending visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister, the move clearly has political implications.

A statement issued by Dr Manmohan Singh said troops would be reduced as the security situation in J&K has improved considerably. "In recognition of the improvement in the

situation in the state, the government has decided to reduce the deployment of troops this winter," he said.

The pullout may begin in 10-15 days and though the defence ministry is tightlipped about numbers, it could be small but substantial. In case militant activity increases, the troops will move back.

The move is also an attempt to pre-empt any formal proposals being put forward during the visit of the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mr Shaukat Aziz, later this month, on a resolution of the J&K issue. Pakistan has often criticised the presence of a large num-

Welcome, says Aziz

ISLAMABAD, Nov. 11. — Pakistan's Prime Minister, Mr Shaukat Aziz, today welcomed the statement by Dr Singh to reduce troops in J&K, a move Islamabad hoped would have a "salutary effect" on Kashmir and help further the peace process. Reduction of troops by any country is welcome," Mr Aziz said. Pakistan foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan said: "We welcome this wise decision by the Indian Prime Minister. We understand that the step has been taken to help the peace process." — PFI

ber of troops (over 4 lakh) within J&K, and a unilateral reduction in the number of troops in the state would help take the India-Pakistan composite dialogue process further.

India has three corps (14, 15 and 16) in the state along with anti-militancy "forces" of armymen of over 50,000.

Initial projections regarding the cut have been made in the Army HQ and the Northern Command, based in Udhampur has been asked to conduct an exercise and see how many troops can be cut and from where. After the projections come from Udhampur, a decision regarding the troops will be

arrived at.

There cannot be huge cuts that will reduce the ability of troops to counter infiltration or fight militants inside the state. The number is now about 2,000, down from a high of 3,500 in recent months. A process of 'thinning out' will have to take place but where the troops will be taken out of is yet to be clear.

One thing could benefit the Army. In recent weeks, especially after the building of the fence along the LoC, infiltration of militants has come down to a trickle as the Prime Minister has said. This and the onset of winter, when militancy is at a lower level, could allow the Army more breathing space.

Tripped in the valley

Sf-6
11/11 Patil strong point: Hurriyat is worse

Shivraj Patil went to Jammu and Kashmir with two agendas. First, the official one, to restart the dialogue with Kashmir groups. Second, the unofficial one, to revivify public assessment of his performance as home minister. Patil should thank Hurriyat for clouding the second issue. Its peculiar attitude to talks took attention away from the fact that in Kashmir, as in Manipur and as with the Naxalite problem, the minister came across as not confident enough and not imaginative enough. In Kashmir, the minister held the usual meetings with the usual suspects but other government notables have been there and done all that. The momentum that seemed to have been generated by the LK Advani-Hurriyat talks is now, more or less, dissipated, in part because Patil, like so many other Congress ministers, decided that pragmatism was not part of politics and refused to carry forward even sensible policies of the previous government. An awful lot of confusion was created about the new attitude to Hurriyat. A lot of time was wasted; Patil visited Kashmir almost six months after taking charge. The domestic component of talks are, as a result, going nowhere. What is needed is a politically powerful and administratively astute appointee. Patil's best friends won't necessarily attribute these qualities to him. Sonia Gandhi's reasons for preferring a political lightweight for the job are well known. But she should understand a new home minister, even if a little discomfiting, looks like being better. There's a cabinet reshuffle coming up.

Any new minister will have to bring Hurriyat down to ground, a priority. This group is suffering from a terrible case of delusional complexes. The delusion is that Hurriyat is the sole representative of Kashmiri popular will. Delusion that it deserves a seat at the table of India-Pakistan talks. Delusion that everyone will forget Hurriyat's ambivalence towards violence. The last is the first Hurriyat vice that needs tackling. In the run up to the Advani-Hurriyat talks, the organisation had made appropriate noises about the value of peaceful negotiations. Since then, hardliners and moderates among them have had a few spats and the former seems to have the upper hand. Hardliners have insisted on laying down pre-conditions for government to begin talks. It should be the other way round. The government must ask Hurriyat clearly and firmly whether it abjures violence. Is Patil the man to ask that question?

11 NOV 2004

THE STATESMAN

মা-মেয়ের ধর্ষণ ঘিরে উত্তপ্ত কাশ্মীর

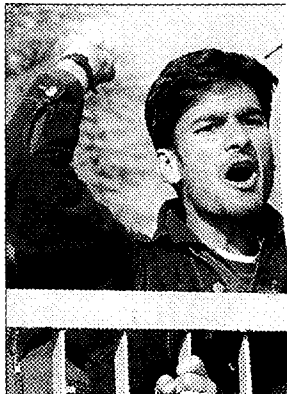
রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

১০ নভেম্বর: রাষ্ট্রীয় রাইফেলসের
জওয়ানদের হাতে আয়েশা ও তাঁর
কিশোরী কন্যা শবনমের ধর্ষণ ঘিরে
কাশ্মীর উপত্যকায় উত্তেজনা ব্যাপক
আকার ধারণ করেছে। অসন্তোষ
বাড়ছে মুফতি সরকারের বিরুদ্ধেও।

গত দুদিনের মতো আজও
শ্রীনগরে বহু বিক্ষোভ সমাবেশ ও
মিছিল হয়। বিভিন্ন এলাকায় পুলিশ ও
বিক্ষোভকারীদের মধ্যে সংঘর্ষ বাধে।
পরিস্থিতি আয়ত্তে আনতে পুলিশকে
লাঠি ও কাঁদানে গ্যাস ব্যবহার করতে
হয়। পুলিশ-সহ বারো জন আহত হন।
ন্যাশনাল কনফারেন্সও বিক্ষোভ
মিছিল বার করে। সোনওয়ারে
রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সেনা পর্যবেক্ষণের প্রধান
দফতরের সামনে গ্রেফতার করা হয়
জেকেএলএফ প্রধান ইয়াসিন মালিক
ও শেখ আব্দুল রশিদকে। 'কাশ্মীরে
ভারতীয় সেনার মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘন'
এই প্রসঙ্গে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের কাছে এক
স্মারকলিপি দিতে গিয়েছিলেন তাঁরা।

৭ নভেম্বর স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ
পাটিলের সামনে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি
মহম্মদ সইদ মন্তব্য করেছিলেন, ১২
বছরের শবনম নয়, শুধু আয়েশাকেই
ধর্ষণ করা হয়েছে। সেই মন্তব্যে গোটা
রাজ্যে ক্ষোভ ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। এক ছাত্র
প্রশ্ন তোলেন, "মায়ের কি কোনও
ইজ্জত নেই?" মঙ্গলবার কাশ্মীর
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে বিক্ষোভের পর আজ
সেখানে ক্লাস মূলতুবি রাখা হয়।

আগামী সপ্তাহে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর
কাশ্মীর সফরের উপরেও এই
উত্তেজনা ছায়া ফেলতে পারে।
আশঙ্কা করা হচ্ছিল, বর্তমান
পরিস্থিতিতে মনমোহন তাঁর সফর
বাতিল করবেন। তবে আজ দিল্লিতে
প্রধানমন্ত্রীর মিডিয়া উপদেষ্টা সঞ্জয়
বারু স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, নির্ধারিত
সূচি অনুযায়ী ১৭-১৮ নভেম্বরই
কাশ্মীরে যাচ্ছেন মনমোহন সিংহ।



PTI

A student demonstrates on the Kashmir University campus in Srinagar on Tuesday.

Mehbooba's convoy faces public ire

Agencies

Srinagar, November 9

AN IRATE mob, protesting against the rape of a woman and her daughter allegedly by an army officer, today pelted stones at PDP president Mehbooba Mufti's motorcade in Handwara town, about 100 km from here, injuring two people.

Mehbooba escaped unhurt in the attack, but one of the vehicles of her motorcade was badly damaged, official sources said. The PDP chief had to beat a hasty retreat from Badrapate village, where she had gone to console the victims, in the face of the residents' ire.

Trouble started as Mehbooba made several promises to the family of the victims for their rehabilitation and residents, questioned Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's remarks on the incident.

ধর্ষিতার বাড়ি গিয়ে আক্রান্ত মেহবুবা

রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

৯ নভেম্বর: আয়েষা ও শবনমের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে গিয়ে বিক্ষোভের মুখে পড়লেন পিডিপি সভানেত্রী মেহবুবা সঈদ। আয়েষা ও তাঁর ১২ বছরের মেয়ে শবনমকে রাষ্ট্রীয় রাইফেলসের জওয়ানেরা গত রবিবার ধর্ষণ করেছে বলে অভিযোগ। মেহবুবা এ দিন কুপওয়াড়া জেলার হান্দওয়াড়ায় আয়েষার বাড়িতে গেলে বিক্ষোভকারীরা তাঁকে আক্রমণ করার চেষ্টা করে। তাঁর গাড়ি লক্ষ করে পাথরও ছোড়া হয়।

জওয়ানদের হাতে আয়েষা-শবনমের ধর্ষণের অভিযোগ উড়িয়ে দিয়েছে সেনাবাহিনী। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদও বলেন, শবনমের উপরে যৌন নির্যাতন হয়নি। আয়েষাকে ধর্ষণ করা হয়েছে কি না, তা খতিয়ে দেখা হবে। এই মন্তব্যের ফলে এলাকায় উত্তেজনা ছিল। তিন দিন ধরে গোটা হান্দওয়াড়া জুড়ে চলছে অযৌষিত বনধ। মেহবুবা যখন আয়েষাদের নানান সুযোগ সুবিধা দেওয়ার কথা ঘোষণা করছিলেন, তখনই গোলমালের সূত্রপাত। একজন জানতে চান, কেন মুফতি এমন মন্তব্য করেছেন। উত্তেজিত জনতা মেহবুবীর উপরে

চড়াও হয়। রক্ষীরা তাঁকে গাড়িতে তুলে দিলে কনভয় লক্ষ করে ইটপাথর ছোড়া শুরু হয়। তাদের ঠেকাতে পুলিশ কাঁদানে গ্যাস ও শূন্যে গুলি ছোড়ে। কয়েক জন বিক্ষোভকারী ও নিরাপত্তা রক্ষী আহত হন। মেহবুবা বলেন, “ধর্ষণের ঘটনা দুর্ভাগ্যজনক। দোষীদের কঠোর শাস্তি দেওয়া হবে।”

এ দিকে, তহরিক-ই-হরিয়ত নেতা আলতাফ আহমেদ শাহের উপরে হামলার জন্য ভারতকে দায়ী করলেন কটুরপন্থী হরিয়ত নেতা সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানি। তাঁর অভিযোগ, ভয় দেখিয়ে ‘স্বাধীনতা আন্দোলন’-এর পথ থেকে তাঁকে সরাতেই তাঁর জামাইয়ের উপরে এই হামলা। অল পার্টি হরিয়ত কনফারেন্স ভেঙে বেরিয়ে আসা পাকিস্তানপন্থী নেতা গিলানি এই হামলার জন্য কেন্দ্র ও মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ সরকারকেই দায়ী করে বলেন, “ভারতের স্বার্থ দেখার জন্য মুফতি মুখিয়ে আছেন। সরকার যা বলছে, তাই করছেন তিনি। ভারত সরকারও আন্দোলন ছাড়ার জন্য সবরকম চাপ দিচ্ছে। ওরা আমাকে জেলে পাঠিয়েছে। আমার পরিবারকে হেনস্তা করা হয়েছে। এ বার আমার জামাইকে খুনের চেষ্টা হল। কিন্তু কোনও রকম চাপেই আমাকে কাবু করা যাবে না।”

কেন্দ্র দাবি মেনে নেওয়ায় বিপাকে ছুরিয়ত নেতারা

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৮ নভেম্বর: নয়াদিল্লির চালে এ বার যথেষ্ট ফ্যাসাদের মধ্যে ছুরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব এতদিন তাঁরা ভারত সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরু করতে চাইছিলেন না এই যুক্তিতে যে কেন্দ্র তাদের পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার সুযোগ দিচ্ছে না। শ্রীলঙ্কায় গিয়ে শিবরাজ প্যাটিল অবশেষে এই প্রস্তাব মেনে নেওয়ায় বিলম্ব চাপের মধ্যে ছুরিয়ত নেতারা। স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের ধারণা, এর ফলে এক অল্পে দু'টি কূটনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ হল। প্রথমত, মিরওয়াজ ফারুখের নেতৃত্বাধীন ছুরিয়তের মধ্যপন্থী অংশ পাকিস্তানের কাছ থেকে আদৌ কক্ষে পাবে না বলেই স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের ধারণা। কারণ ছুরিয়ত তেও গিয়েছে এবং কটনপন্থী নেতা সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানিকেই পাকিস্তান মদত জোগাচ্ছে। তবে

পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার অনুমতি দেওয়ার ফলে মধ্যপন্থী ছুরিয়ত নেতাদের ক্ষোভের বাতাস কেড়ে নেওয়া গেল। দ্বিতীয়ত, এবার শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ার বল গড়িয়ে দেওয়া গেল ছুরিয়ত নেতাদের কোঠে। নয়াদিল্লির পক্ষ থেকে এই বাতাই দেওয়া হল, শর্ত মেটানো হয়েছে, এবার আলোচনার ক্ষেত্রে বরফ গলানো হোক। কারণ পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া এবং ছুরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে ভারত সরকারের আলোচনা একে অন্যের সঙ্গে ওতোপ্রতো ভাবে যুক্ত।

তবে কাশ্মীরে ছুরিয়তদের পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার অনুমতি দিয়ে তাদের বাতাস কাজার এই কূটনীতি এন ডি এ সরকারের সময়েও দেখা গিয়েছিল। তৎকালীন স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী যা করেছিলেন, এখন প্যাটিল তারই পুনরাবৃত্তি করলেন

বলে মনে করছেন কূটনৈতিক পর্যবেক্ষকেরা। গত ছ বছরেরও বেশি সময় ধরে ছুরিয়তদের দাবি পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার। আডবানীও তাঁদের অনুমতি দিয়েছিলেন তবে তা নিরক্ষুণ্ণ ভাবে নয়। তৎকালীন নরমপন্থী নেতা আব্বাস আনসারি-সহ বিভিন্ন নেতার পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার অনুমতি দেওয়া হলেও আডবানী আটকে দিয়েছিলেন গিলানির পাসপোর্ট। ততদিনে ছুরিয়ত ভাঙন ধরে, ও পারম্পরিক বিরোধের জেরে কারও পাকিস্তান যাওয়া হয়নি।

২৩ তারিখ পাকিস্তানের প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ আসছেন ভারত সফরে। তার আগে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের প্রিন্সিপাল সেক্রেটারি তারিক আজিজ আসছেন। শ্রীলঙ্কার-মুজাহফরবাদ বাস সংযোগের পাশাপাশি আলোচনা হবে দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের বিভিন্ন দিক এবং কাশ্মীর নিয়েও। তার আগে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর

এই যোগা কূটনৈতিক ভাবে ভারতকে চাপা রাখল বলে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক এবং কূটনৈতিক শিবিরের দাবি।

প্রসঙ্গত, কাশ্মীর সফরে যাওয়ার আগে থেকেই প্যাটিল বলে আসছেন, বিভিন্ন কাশ্মীরি সংগঠনের সঙ্গে 'বিনাশর্তে' আলোচনায় বসতে রাজি নয়াদিল্লি। "জম্মু কাশ্মীরের সমস্ত সংগঠনগুলির নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে বিনাশর্তে আলোচনায় বসার প্রস্তাব রাখছে ভারত", এ কথা বলার পাশাপাশি উপত্যকার মানুষের জীবনযাপনের মান উন্নয়নের জন্য প্রধানমন্ত্রী তাঁর আসন্ন সফরে (১৭-১৮ নভেম্বর) বিভিন্ন

প্রশাসনিক এবং অর্থনৈতিক পদক্ষেপ করবেন বলেও জানিয়েছেন শিবরাজ। তাঁর বক্তব্য, "আমি গিয়ে সবার সঙ্গে দেখা করে ফিরে এসে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর একটি রিপোর্ট জমা দেব। সেই অনুযায়ী তিনি উপত্যকার মানুষের জন্য

একটি উন্নয়ন-পরিকল্পনা করতে পারবেন।" সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, প্রধানমন্ত্রী কাশ্মীরে গিয়ে ৩ হাজার কোটি টাকার প্যাকেজ ঘোষণা করতে পারেন। কর্মসংস্থান থেকে পরিকাঠামো বিভিন্ন প্রকল্প থাকবে তার মধ্যে।

প্রসঙ্গত ছুরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রের মনকষাকষির অবসানে গত একমাস ধরে তৎপর প্রধানমন্ত্রী। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ প্যাটিল, স্বরাষ্ট্র সচিব হীরেন্দ্র সিংহ, সীমাস্তরক্ষী বাহিনীর অতিরিক্ত ডি জি এ কে মিত্র, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর নিয়ে সরকার পক্ষে মধ্যস্থতাকারী এন এন ভোরা-র সঙ্গে যৌক্তিক করেছেন তিনি। স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শ্রীপ্রকাশ জয়সওয়ালও বলেছেন, "আমরা সবার সঙ্গেই আলোচনার দরজা খোলা রেখেছি। ছুরিয়ত গোষ্ঠীর সঙ্গেও বিনা শর্তে আলোচনা করতে রাজি আছি।"

Hurriyat can visit Pak: Patil

No conditions set for dialogue

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, November 6

THE CENTRE is not averse to Hurriyat leaders visiting Pakistan, Home Minister Shivraj Patil has said. "There is no restriction on anyone coming or going. If they (Hurriyat leaders) want to hold consultation there in a proper method, we will consider it", Patil told reporters here on the first day of his 3-day visit.

"You know it well that some reporters from Pakistan recently came here. Bus service has also been started, and people do come and go. There should be no problem," he said. Mirwaiz Ummer Farooq, head of the of All Parties Hurriyat Conference's pro-dialogue faction had on Friday said that Hurriyat leaders would not hold further talks with the Centre unless they were allowed to visit Pakistan to hold consultations with the Pakistani government and Kashmiri leaders based there.

Patil said that the Central government had not put any conditions on dialogue, but if they (Hurriyat leaders) put any condition, it was for them to think. The Centre was ready to talk to all groups and persons concerned. Asked if any formal invitation for talks was being extended to separatists, he said, "Dialogue does not begin with invitation. For any kind of dialogue,

you have to talk first. "If we get some indication from any group, we will definitely invite them", he said. "We respect Hurriyat leaders. They have held talks earlier. We are ready for further dialogue".

He refused to comment on Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf's recent proposal on Kashmir. Patil arrived here in the morning accompanied by Union Urban Development and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabbi Azad, MoS for Home S. Jaiswal and Raghupati Sahay.

PM to make 'big announcement'

"I have come here to meet people and understand their problems", he said. He assured that the Centre would do every bit to address the problems of the people here. He however left it to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who is visiting the state on November 17-18, to make a "big" announcement. "What we can do and what we are doing will be announced by the Prime Minister when he visits the state", he said adding "that would be a big announcement".

The Home minister earlier held meetings with Governor S.K. Sinha, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, leaders of the Congress, PDP and National Conference. PDP ministers and Mufti Sayed were, however, conspicuous by their absence at the press conference.



HT PHOTO

Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil at a press conference in Srinagar on Saturday.

Omar escapes attempt on life

28/10
 28/10
 28/10

Srinagar: National Conference president Omar Abdullah escaped an attempt on his life when militants triggered a powerful blast in Anantnag on Sunday.

One passerby was killed and another critically injured as the landmine planted in a vehicle parked on the roadside exploded around 11.45 am as soon as the motorcade of National Conference leaders, with Omar in the lead, arrived at the Sarnal graveyard. Party patron Farooq Abdullah was following his son in another vehicle to attend a ceremony for Saifdar Ali Beg, killed by militants on October 21.

Deputy inspector general of police Ravinder Kotwal said two passersby were critically injured in the explosion and one of them later succumbed. No militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the attack. A visibly shaken Omar said, "This is the level of security we have in the state... This was a



Party colleagues surround Omar Abdullah in Srinagar after he, along with his father Farooq Abdullah, escaped unhurt in a bomb attack at Sarnal on Sunday

planned trip and despite that a massive blast took place". The blast took place barely ten feet away from Omar's vehicle as the NC chief, who was at the wheels, alighted. Immediately after the explosion, the security personnel opened fire to give cover to Omar who ducked.

Accusing the PDP-led state gov-

suspicious as two highly protected personalities, me and my father, were visiting the area on prior notice".

Probe ordered

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed ordered an inquiry into the militant attack on National Conference chief Omar Abdullah and his father at Sarnal in Anantnag. Describing the incident as "shocking", Sayeed said acts like these were "the handiwork of enemies of peace who wanted to prolong the misery and agony of the people." PTI

ing provided to the people and specially the National Conference which was being made a scapegoat. Former chief minister Farooq Abdullah also accused the state government of being hand-in-glove with the perpetrators of the blast and demanded a judicial inquiry into the incident. PTI

জ্যামার কাজ করেনি • মুফতি, কেন্দ্রকে তোপ • তদন্তের আশ্বাস পাটিলের

বিশ্ফোরণ, গুলিবৃষ্টি, অগ্নির জন্য বাঁচলেন ওমর

রশিদ আহমেদ ও অগ্নি রায়

শ্রীনগর ও নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ অক্টোবর: জঙ্গি হামলা থেকে ফের এক চুলের জন্য বেঁচে গেলেন নাশনাল কনফারেন্স (এন সি) সভাপতি ওমর আবদুল্লাহ। তাঁর বাবা, কাশ্মীরের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ফারুক আবদুল্লাহও একই সঙ্গে রক্ষা পেয়েছেন। আজ দুপুর বায়োটো নাগাদ দক্ষিণ কাশ্মীরের অন্তর্ভাগে তাঁদের উপরে হামলা চালায় জঙ্গিরা। এই ঘটনায় এক জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। আহতদের মধ্যে আরও এক জনের অবস্থা আশঙ্কাজনক। ঘটনার পরে রাজ্যের পি ডি পি-কংগ্রেস সরকার ও কেন্দ্রের কড়া সমালোচনা করে ওমর বলেছেন, “আমাদের নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে ছেলেখেলা করা হচ্ছে। এই ঘটনার পরেও যদি দিল্লির চোখ না-খোলে, তবে আর কবে খুলবে আমি জানি না।” মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সহিদ তাঁদের প্রাণে মারার চেষ্টা করছেন বলেও অভিযোগ জানান তিনি।

তবে এই ঘটনার জন্য নিরাপত্তার শিথিলতাকে দায়ী করতে নারাজ কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ জানাছেন। “নিরাপত্তার বন্ধ আটুনি” সঙ্গেও কীভাবে বিশ্ফোরণ ঘটল তা খতিয়ে দেখতে তদন্তের নির্দেশ দিচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। ঘটনার সাথে ছয়টুকু পাঠে দিল্লিতে বাসে পাটিল বলেন, “ওমরের নিরাপত্তা পর্যাণ্ড ছিল। কিন্তু তবুও কীভাবে বিশ্ফোরক পোতা হল তা খতিয়ে দেখা হচ্ছে। বিষয়টি নিয়ে রাজ্য

সরকারের সঙ্গে কথা বলব আমরা।”

আবদুল্লাহরা এ দিন রাজ্যের প্রাক্তন মন্ত্রী ও এন সি নেতা সফদার বেগের সমাধিস্থলে যাচ্ছিলেন। গত বৃহস্পতিবার জঙ্গিরা তাঁকে গুলি করে হত্যা করে। কবরখানার মূল ফটকের ফুট দশকে আগে বালির বস্তুর নীচে ল্যান্ডমাইন রাখা ছিল। ওমর গাড়ি থেকে নেমে চার-পাঁচ পা এগোতেই মাত্র ফুট দশকে দূরে বিশ্ফোরণটি ঘটে। হেফ সময়ের হেরফেরে প্রাণে বেঁচে যান ওমর ও তাঁর সঙ্গী চৌধুরী মহম্মদ রামজান, সরিফুলদিন শারিক, মেহবুবা বেগের মতো এন সি নেতারা। আর সামান্য পরে মাইনটি ফাটলে তাঁরা সকলেই মারা পড়তেন। দুই নিয়ন্ত্রিত বিশ্ফোরণ ঠেকাতে ওমরের কনভয়ে জ্যামার থাকে। কিন্তু মাইন বিশ্ফোরণ ঠেকানো তো যায়নিই, উল্টে জামারটি ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে।

মাইনটি ফাটার পরেই জঙ্গিরা নির্বিচারে গুলি চালাতে শুরু করে। গোটা এলাকা জুড়ে তখন চরম উত্তেজনা, যে যে দিকে পারছেন পালাচ্ছেন। ওমর ও অন্যান্য এন সি নেতাদের আভাল করে পাল্টা গুলি চালাতে শুরু করেছেন নিরাপত্তা রক্ষীরা। এই মাঝে এনে পৌঁছান ফারুক আবদুল্লাহ। ৫:৩০ সারিয়ে দিয়ে যাওয়া



ওমর আবদুল্লাহ। বিশ্ফোরণের পরে শ্রীনগরে ফিরে। — রয়টার্স

হয় তাঁকে। গুলি চালাতে চালাতে পিছু হটে জঙ্গিরা। বিশ্ফোরণ ও গুলিতে পাঁচ জন স্থানীয় মানুষ আহত হন। এদের এক জন পরে হাসপাতালে মারা যান। আরও এক জনের অবস্থা গুরুতর বলে জানিয়েছেন রাজ্য পুলিশের ডি আই জি রবীন্দ্র কোতোয়াল। কোনও জঙ্গি সংগঠন অবশ্য এখনও এই ঘটনার দায় স্বীকার করেনি।

এর আগে গত ৮ অক্টোবর রাতে বানিহাল ও রামবানের মাঝে ওমরের কনভয়ে গুলি চালায় জঙ্গিরা। সেই দফাও রক্ষা পান ওমর। আজকের ঘটনার পরে মুফতি সরকার ও কেন্দ্রের উপরে রাগে ফেটে পড়েন ওমর-ফারুক দু'জনেই। ওমর বলেন, “এত দিন জানতাম মুক্তি আমাদের রাজনৈতিক ভাবে শেষ করার চেষ্টা করছেন। এখন দেখছি, তিনি আমাদের প্রাণেও মারতে চান।” মুফতি সরকারের পদত্যাগ দাবি করেছেন ফারুক। তিনি বলেন, “আমার বিশ্বাস, সরকারের সঙ্গে জঙ্গিদের আঁতাত আছে। ওমর আর আমাকে মারার ষড়যন্ত্র করেছিল ওরা। জামরা আগে থেকে ঠিক করেই কবরখানায় এসেছিলাম। অথচ নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থাই করা হয়নি। কোনও পদস্থ পুলিশ অফিসার সেখানে ছিলেন না। এমনকী জ্যামারও কাজ করেনি।” ওমর বলেন, “আমরা এই ধরনের ঘটনা বরদাস্ত করব না। কেন্দ্রকে বারবার বলা সঙ্গেও নিরাপত্তা দেওয়া হয়নি। আমাদের বলির পাঠা করার চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। ওরা যদি চায় নাশনাল কনফারেন্স রাজনৈতিক কাজকর্ম বন্ধ করে দিক, তা হলে আমরা তা-ই করব।”

পাটিলের পক্ষী বক্তব্য, “ওমর জেড-গ্লাস নিরাপত্তা

পান। আজও তাঁর সঙ্গে ভারত-তিব্বত সীমান্ত পুলিশ (আই টি পি বি) ছিল।” তিনি বলেন, এই ধরনের ঘটনার তদন্ত রাজ্য সরকারেরই করার কথা। তবে যোহেতু ওমর আবদুল্লাহর মতো গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নেতার উপর হামলা হয়েছে, তাই কেন্দ্রও বিষয়টি নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাবে। জঙ্গি আক্রমণ নিয়ে মুফতি ও কেন্দ্র সম্পর্কে ওমরের সমালোচনা নিয়ে অবশ্য এখনই মুখ খুলতে নারাজ পাটিল। তিনি বলেন, “এই নিয়ে বিতর্ক বা ভুল বোঝাবুঝি আমি চাই না।”

এ দিকে, কাশ্মীরের কট্টরপন্থী সংগঠনগুলির সঙ্গে কথা বলার ক্ষেত্রে কিছুটা সোনারোনি করছে কেন্দ্র। ছরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলার প্রসঙ্গেও তারা কোনও সুস্পষ্ট অবস্থান নেয়নি। পাশাপাশি রয়েছে পাক-নীতির প্রশ্নে মনমোহন-সরকারের কিছুটা কড়া মনোভাব। এই বাতাবরণের মধ্যেই নভেম্বরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর কাশ্মীর যাওয়ার কথা। আর তার আগেই এই ঘটনা। সব মিলিয়ে কাশ্মীর পরিস্থিতি কিছুটা খোলা হয়ে গেল না? জবাবে শিবরাজ জানাচ্ছেন, “বিভিন্ন সংগঠনের সঙ্গে কথা বললেই তো সমস্যার সমাধান হয় না। উপত্যকায় ৭০ হাজার কর্মসংস্থানের কথা রয়েছে। ১৩ থেকে ১৪ হাজার কোটি টাকার প্যাকেজের কথা ভাবা হয়েছে। তার মধ্যে রয়েছে জলবিদ্যুৎ প্রকল্প, রেলপ্রকল্প, শক্তি উৎপাদন, আবাসন, সড়ক সংস্কার ইত্যাদি। সব কিছু নিয়েই ভাবছি আমরা।”

Abdullahs duck cemetery death

Jammer fails, bomb goes off few feet away

MUKHTARAHMAD AND AGENCIES

Srinagar, Oct. 24: Farooq Abdullah and his son Omar had a narrow escape today when an improvised explosive device was triggered just paces from them, leaving a cloud hanging over the efficacy of the high frequency jammer — an integral part of every Z-plus security retinue — that should have disabled it.

Before the smoke had cleared after the explosion, militants strafed the convoy with automatic gunfire near a graveyard at Sarnal in Anantnag, 65 km from here in south Kashmir.

"I saw a plume of dust and debris going up. The commandos escorting the NC leaders took position behind bulletproof cars and fired in the air," said Mohammad Nissar, a National Conference leader travelling in the convoy.

Seven passersby were injured, three of whom have been referred to Srinagar for treatment.

The Abdullahs were unhurt though the IED went off a few feet from them as they disembarked to enter the graveyard around 11.45 am with other senior leaders of the National Conference to attend the Fateha Khawani — memorial prayer — for slain former minister Saffdar Ali Baig. Baig was gunned down on Thursday.

The brunt of the blast was borne by the multi-crore anti-sabotage vehicle carrying the hi-tech jammer at the head of the convoy.

"I had just stepped out of my car. The earth shook under our feet. It was a deadly explosion and the worst thing is that the high frequency mobile jammer was destroyed in the blast. I have doubts about its efficiency to jam radio signals be-

cause the IED, as it looks, was triggered by a remote-controlled device," National Conference president Omar Abdullah said after returning to Srinagar.

Asked if the jammer of the Abdullahs' convoy had failed, a senior police official said "it seems so and of late, militants have been using IEDs of higher decibel frequency level to avoid detection".

This is a sign that militants have possibly upgraded their equipment — bringing in higher frequency detonators — to foil the security forces.

The use of such a detonator was first seen at Qazigund in May this year, when over 30 BSF personnel and their family members were killed in a blast triggered by an IED that a jammer could not disable.

On his return, Omar alleged that the local administration had not made adequate security arrangements.

"No senior police officer was present at Sarnal. Even the district police chief, Ashiq Hussain Bukhari, was mysteriously absent as were other district officers. That is surprising. I doubt they had carried out anti-sabotage checks," he said.

Omar accused chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed of the rival People's Democratic Party of trying "to eliminate the NC top leadership politically and physically".

"The government is playing with our lives. New Delhi must open its eyes to the situation here," he said, demanding a probe by a senior central official. State police chief Gopal Sharma said they have ordered an inquiry, to be headed by the additional director-general of the CID, to find out any possible lapse in sanitisation of the area and why the jammer could not obstruct the IED.



Omar Abdullah at a news conference in Srinagar after the attack in Anantnag. (PTI)

PM plans Kashmir bonanza

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Jammu, Oct. 24: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is expected to announce a Rs 3,000-crore package for Jammu and Kashmir when he visits the state next month.

He would announce the package at a rally in Srinagar, a source told **The Telegraph**.

Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who was recently in Delhi to chalk out the final programme of the Prime Minister's visit that has been postponed thrice since August, had pressed hard for an economic package for the state.

The package, the sources said, would encompass the familiar themes of development, reconstruction and opening of new employment opportunities for the youth, whose accumulated frustration is one of the biggest areas of concern in the state.

Most of the unemployed youth in the past had taken up guns and sustained militancy that is still eating away the social and economic vitals of Jammu and Kashmir.

Observers are keenly watching what a Congress Prime Minister would offer to the state where his party is a partner in the ruling coalition.

In the winter of 1986, the state, ruled by the National Conference-Congress alliance, was showered with sops by then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.

It is almost a practice with Prime Ministers visiting Jammu and Kashmir to announce packages to publicly demonstrate and underline the Union government's concern for the economic well-being of the state convulsed by terrorist violence for the past 15 years.

The economic measures are also seen as part of the government's plans to draw political mileage.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had announced two sets of packages during his visits to the state. But the packages have been implemented more in breach, thus breeding scepticism and frustration among the people.

One of the highlights of Vajpayee's package was over 100,000 jobs for the unemployed youth in the state.

"These have remained far from being realised," said a senior official who feels that announcements of packages only make official files heavier and burdensome without any concrete results on the ground.

SF-6
10/10

Five gunned down in J&K

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Oct. 9. — Five persons, including three militants belonging to the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit, were killed, while a militant was arrested and a hideout busted in Jammu and Kashmir since last night, a police spokesman said here today.

Two JeM militants were killed in a gunfight with the security forces during search operations at Rangwar in Chowkibal area of Kupwara district last night, he said.

The third JeM militant, Fayaz Ahmad Malik, a resident of Hampathri-Kulgam, was killed in an encounter at Kellar forest area in Pulwama district last night.

The spokesman said that militants shot dead one Gul Mohammad Lone inside his house at Hanjan village of Kulgam, in Anantnag district, late last night. Police recovered the body of one Mohammad Abdullah Chara from his village at Kachpathri-Goniwan in Kangan area on the outskirts of Srinagar this morning, the spokesman said, adding that police is investigating the incident.

Security forces apprehended a Harkatul-Mujahideen militant, Gulzar Ahmad Mir, from Kanzgund in Anantnag and recovered an improvised explosive device, two detonators, two hand grenades, a self-loaded rifle with ten rounds and 25 AK rounds, the spokesman said.

He said security forces smashed a militant hideout at Sheikhnar in Sogam area of Kupwara district which led to the recovery of two AK rifles, six magazines, a rocket with two boosters and six grenades.

Meanwhile, a security force jawan was



A peace rally in Srinagar on Saturday. — PTI

killed and 30 others injured when a bomb exploded in a car on the Srinagar-Baramullah National Highway today. Out of those injured 15 were army men, a police spokesman said.

Earlier, defence sources had said that two persons, including an army jawan, had been killed and 12 others injured in a suicide car bombing by militants.

The spokesman said that the explosive-laden car was parked on the roadside. It was detonated when a civilian bus, hired by the army to ferry troops, was crossing the Highway.

While a security jawan was killed, 15 army personnel, including three officers, were injured. An equal number of pedestrians were injured in the explosion.

Three vehicles were also damaged. Pakistan-backed Jaish-e-Mohammed militant outfit has claimed responsibility for the blast.

Malik & associates detained

Police today detained chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, Mohammad Yaseen Malik and three of his close associates, sparking protests from JKLF supporters in Maisuma area here, official sources said.

Malik was taken into preventive custody at Maulana Azad Road in the heart of the city, when he was returning to JKLF headquarters at Maisuma after attending a function, the sources said.

THE STATESMAN

10 OCT 2004

Moving forward on Kashmir

By C. Raja Mohan

IN AGREEING to explore with Pakistan a final settlement of the Kashmir question as part of a normalisation of bilateral relations, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has pushed the India-Pakistan dialogue into what could be an exciting, if not decisive, phase.

Dr. Singh and President Pervez Musharraf seem to have created, for the first time since the Shimla Agreement of July 1972, a basis to resolve the Kashmir question as well as move towards a normal relationship.

Between 1972 and 1989, neither side actually sought a meeting to discuss Kashmir as envisaged under the Shimla Agreement. And since 1989, despite some high-profile summits, the two sides have not been able to find a sustainable framework that allowed simultaneous normalisation of bilateral relations and a resolution of the Kashmir question.

On January 6, 2004, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf put down the broad contours of that framework; the actual implementation of this new approach was left open-ended.

The dialogue at the official and ministerial level, which resumed after the general elections in India, could not find the political formula for moving forward. Last week, Dr. Singh and Gen. Musharraf cleared the air for serious negotiations on Kashmir.

The joint statement issued in New York on September 24 states that the two leaders "addressed the issue of Jammu and Kashmir and agreed that

possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue should be explored in a sincere spirit and purposeful manner."

In return for this Indian willingness, Gen. Musharraf agreed to "restore normalcy and cooperation between India and Pakistan" and implement the various confidence-

took place in New York, would have to come up with a set of agreed markers.

One, the process must be peaceful. Any violence will lead to an end to the conversation. Whether it is written into the joint statement or not, rising levels of terrorism will destroy the promising engagement between

satisfaction. Mutually acceptable ways for ascertaining their wishes must be found within the bilateral framework.

In moving beyond the traditional posturing on Kashmir, Dr. Singh and Gen. Musharraf have created a template in which their representatives can explore the elements of a final settlement.

While the five principles listed above remove much of the political clutter around the India-Pakistan discourse on Kashmir, it will need considerable political imagination and some clever diplomatic footwork to hammer out a settlement of the Kashmir question. But it is by no means impossible.

The boldness demonstrated by Dr. Singh and Gen. Musharraf in New York must now be followed by a series of unilateral and negotiated steps to improve the political and security conditions in both parts of divided Kashmir and establish connectivity between them. Expanded economic cooperation between the two nations and the initiation of new projects such as natural gas pipelines would create a positive environment.

If the current peace process moves forward, there is enough credit to go all around. While Dr. Singh has demonstrated political courage, the ground for a new approach was prepared by his predecessor, Mr. Vajpayee. Maintaining the national consensus at this moment on conflict resolution with Pakistan is indeed critical.

In moving beyond the traditional posturing on Kashmir, Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf have created a template in which their representatives can explore the elements of a final settlement.

the two sides. Two, in any win-win solution, there can be no significant exchange of territory in Jammu and Kashmir. In other words, if both sides have to claim victory from a final settlement, the political focus must shift away from considerations of territoriality. Three, India and Pakistan have always understood that independence to Jammu and Kashmir is not an option.

Four, the problem must be resolved in a bilateral framework. In his address to the United Nations General Assembly, Gen. Musharraf endorsed this proposition with the caveat that this would be the last time such an approach would be attempted. Five, while there can be no independence for Kashmir, common sense dictates that the people of Jammu and Kashmir must get political

building measures that have been proposed in the first round of the dialogue.

In engaging Gen. Musharraf in a serious conversation on Kashmir, Dr. Singh has ended years of Indian defensiveness on the subject. In the last few years, the Indian emphasis has been the terms under which such a dialogue could take place rather than Kashmir itself.

As always, once you break a political taboo, the hand wringing on the eve of it seems overdone. By refusing to avoid a serious conversation on Kashmir, Dr. Singh has demonstrated that India has no reason to be afraid of a final solution to the Kashmir dispute.

Any sensible discussion on Kashmir between the top leaders of India and Pakistan, such as the one that

Hurriyat cocks a snook at govt

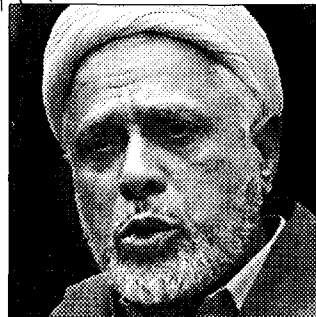
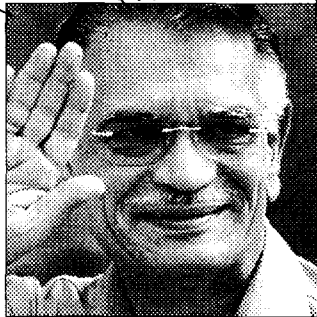
Alleges inconsistency, double policy in New Delhi's peace offer

HTC & Reuters
New Delhi, September 28

THE MODERATE faction of the separatist Hurriyat Conference today accused the Centre of "inconsistency" over the talks on Kashmir issue.

Reacting to Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil's remarks yesterday that the government's dialogue with the separatist amalgam would be held without preconditions, former Hurriyat chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari said, "Patil now says he will be talking to us without any preconditions, but he stated earlier that talks would be held within the purview of the Constitution, which is not acceptable to us".

"We're not going to accept double and triple policies", he said, adding, "There's inconsistency in the Government of In-



Shivraj Patil & Maulana Abbas Ansari

dia over the talks. They're frequently changing statements".

The amalgam, which had two rounds of talks with the Centre when the NDA was in power, would deliberate on the issue when its chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, now in Jeddah to perform a religious ritual, returns to Kashmir, another former chair-

man Abdul Ghani Bhat said.

The Hurriyat Conference will be making a representation to the OIC secretary-general for de-recognising Geelani's faction from the world Muslim conglomerate on the plea that he did not represent the wishes and aspirations of the people of Kashmir. Umer is slated to meet him and sub-

mit his case for the same. Although the ISI has promised Umer help in Rabita-al-Aalam-al-Islami, they were not happy with the move of the Hurriyat to seek derecognition of Geelani from OIC.

In an attempt to resume the dialogue suspended due to new terms set by New Delhi, Patil had yesterday said an invitation would be sent to Hurriyat leaders when he visits Kashmir next month.

"India will attach no conditions to peace talks with Kashmir's separatists," Patil said on Saturday. The Home Minister's comments came a day after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh held his first meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in New York to push forward a sluggish peace process that was getting stuck over Kashmir.

Musharraf goes easy on Kashmir rhetoric at UN

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

New York: Pakistan is giving bilateralism a "last chance" to resolve the Kashmir issue, the country's military ruler Pervez Musharraf told the UN General Assembly on Wednesday in an address that avoided the usual hard edges and harsh rhetoric he uses when speaking on the subject.

"After several abortive attempts, Pakistan and India have been able to initiate a dialogue this year," Musharraf said in a speech that was notable for its restraint, adding that resolution of the Kashmir issue could not be "inordinately delayed". Indian officials had previously told this correspondent that they expected a more temperate address from Musharraf, different from his annual tirades, and that it had been conveyed to the Pakista-

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nis that the tone of the speech would be taken into account when the military ruler met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here on Friday.

On Wednesday, the officials did not respond immediately to what sounded like a warning on the timeline to resolve the issue, although Musharraf committed himself to a peaceful solution. Musharraf referred to his upcoming meeting with Singh, saying, "I would like to convey to him that this is the moment for peace, we must not allow it to slip away."

The Pakistani chief also dropped his annual reference to India's human rights violations in Kashmir. He spoke at length about what he called the illegal Israeli wall cutting off Palestine, but made no reference to the fence India had built along the LoC.

Mufti escapes bid on life

By Shujaat Bukhari

9-82
287
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276/9

ANANTNAG, SEPT. 22. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today escaped a bid on his life when rifle grenades were fired at the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Anantnag, as he was filing his nomination papers for the by-election to the Pahalgam Assembly seat.

Five persons were injured and they were rushed to a hospital in Srinagar. Three of them were in a serious condition.

Mr. Sayeed was accompanied

by his daughter and People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, wife Gulshan Sayeed and a number of Ministers and party leaders.

Three explosions

As the Mufti was filing his nomination papers around 12.45 p.m., three rifle grenades were fired. One exploded mid-air, another in front of the office complex and third in a nearby taxi stand. "The third grenade, which caused injuries to some civilians, exploded 500 m from where the Chief Minister was

filing his nomination papers," the Deputy Inspector General of Police, South Kashmir range, Ravinder Kotwal, said. "There were three simultaneous explosions and people ran for cover," said Manzoor Ahmed, a driver who was injured in the blast. "I was bleeding and cried for help. Security forces in a nearby bunker opened fire in retaliation," he said.

A spokesman of the pro-Pakistan outfit, Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, called up newspaper offices in Srinagar and owned responsibility for the attack.

9. 11 - 18K

Geelani's political secretary shot dead

HD-1 189

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, SEPT. 15. In a major jolt to the hardline faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, his political secretary, Pir Hissamuddin, was shot dead today by assassins who burst into his home on the outskirts of Srinagar.

Witnesses said that three young men came to the house of the Pir, a lawyer, and asked him to come out. "They told him that they wanted his signatures on some paper and as soon as he came out they fired a volley of bullets at him," said one of his relatives. The motorcycle-borne trio then fled. They were not masked and looked very confident, he said.

A profusely bleeding Pir was immediately taken to the Sri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital but doctors declared him "brought dead." Police have registered a case and the "motive behind this killing is being

investigated."

This is the first time that militants have targeted a leader from the hardline Hurriyat Conference. The Pir was appointed political secretary to Mr. Geelani on Tuesday. So far, the leaders of the moderate faction have been targeted for holding talks with New Delhi.

Close confidant

The Pir was a long-time member of the all-powerful Majlis-e-Shoura of the Jamat-e-Islami, Mr. Geelani's parent organisation. He was Mr. Geelani's close confidant and played an important role in the formation of the recently-floated Tehreek-e-Hurriyat backed by the Jamat. He unsuccessfully contested the elections in 1972 and was associated with the working of the Jamat at various levels. He spent a few years in England and Saudi Arabia working with the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, an international organisation representing young Mus-

lims the world over. He was also an active member of the Bar Association.

Mr. Geelani, who is in Delhi, is coming here tomorrow to attend the funeral at the Pir's ancestral village at Aadipora, near Sopore.

'Web of violence'

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, condemned the killing and said that it highlighted the viciousness of violence as a means of agitation. It was time intellectuals and opinion makers of society thought over the present scenario and devised ways for the State to come out of the web of violence," he said.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, head of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat, expressed shock and termed it "an act of cowardice." The Kashmir Bar Association also condemned the incident.

A setback: Page 11

Fidayeen militants strike CRPF camp

Masood Hussain

SRINAGAR 12 SEPTEMBER

USING the same old method of throwing a grenade and barging into a garrison, a group of three fidayeen militants carried out a night-long attack on the main camp of the CRPF 94 Battalion in Dal lake area. Two officers of the rank of deputy commandant's were killed as the commanding officer survived with bullet injury along with four of his subordinates. Two of the three militants were killed during wee hours.

A caller, who identified himself as Abu Inquilabi, the spokesman of al-Mansourian staked the claim for the attack. He said he led the three-member fidayeen group to the York Hotel and identified the two Fidayeen as Abdul Waheed alias Waseem and Sajjad Bin Abdul Gafoor alias Abu



Rush Hour: Indian soldiers rush to their camp after a suicide attack by suspected rebels in Srinagar on Sunday. — Reuters

Ma'az. "They stormed into the formation and engaged the troops in a fierce gun-battle and I returned safely to my hideout," he told reporters.

Details revealed that militants tossed a grenade towards the main entrance and managed to barge in. Most of the paramilitary men, who had called it a day after

a daylong tiring patrolling on 9/11, were taken by surprise as they all were watching a cricket match between India and Kenya.

The attack blocked the exit route as over 50 security-men in the first storey got trapped. With the help of the police and the BSF, most of the security men were rescued by midnight as the fierce gun-battle continued between the two sides. In the initial attack, three security-men were confirmed to have received the bullets. IGP CRPF Ranjit Sinha said the immediate response led to the killing of one of the militants leaving just his only accomplice to fight in all directions. The third one had already escaped. Terming it an act of desperation, Mr Sinha said they restricted the Fidayeen to a corner, a secluded place.

"Had they managed to scatter around, there would have been massive losses," he said.

We'll never give up Kashmir: Pervez

General to convey stand to Manmohan

Agencies
Islamabad, September 12

STATING IN no certain terms that Pakistan would never give up Kashmir, President Gen Pervez Musharraf said he would convey his country's stand to Indian PM Manmohan Singh when they meet in New York later this month.

"We will not give up Kashmir, we have fought wars over it. Pakistan will have to ensure the Kashmiris' interest. I will meet Manmohan Singh (on September 22) and tell him in unequivocal terms about our stand. We will not give up Kashmir," he told a meeting of Army officers and soldiers at a 'Garrison Darbar' in Quetta on Saturday.

But the Pakistani President said the general feeling across the world was that whatever was happening in Afghanistan and Kashmir was originating from Pakistan. Pakistan is also being accused of nuclear proliferation, he said. Pakistanis are generally considered extremists.

"Wherever I go I am faced with these questions. I have been refuting the charges but they stick to their opinion," Musharraf said.

He cautioned that Pakistan had to face serious consequences if it failed to correct its image. "If the world is not satisfied with our explanation we could be subjected to bombardment. The European community could withdraw trade



Ifs and buts

●President Musharraf said Pakistan would not send its troops to Iraq. But, he added, he would reconsider it if India sent its troops to Iraq

●He expressed concern at Pakistan's image abroad but said the country will not roll back its nuclear policy

concessions on our textile industry from which the country earns Rs 60 billion in foreign exchange through exports.

"It would result in closure of 50 per cent textile mills in the country. Economic sanctions may also be imposed and no country would trade with us. Finally our nuclear capability could also come under attack. We have to dispel negative impressions about our country." Stressing that Pakistan's future should be given foremost priority, Musharraf said the country "comes first. Pak-

istan is our entity. We have to save ourselves, achieve economic development, enhance our defence capabilities and move ahead with the rest of the world."

About sending troops to Iraq, he said the country would not send its soldiers under prevailing conditions in that country, but would consider it when other countries, especially India send troops.

He said it would be unwise to close all doors, especially when Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi himself had requested him for sending troops. The decision may be changed if circumstances changed and conducive atmosphere created. "If ... India sends its troops to Iraq, it would not be wise for us to stay away," Musharraf said.

Pakistan would not roll back its nuclear capability, he said. During the past three to four years it has spent more money on improving these capabilities than in the past 30 years.

"Defence is the most important priority and all defence requirements would be met," he said, adding a strategy for the next 15 years had been chalked out to further augment the national defence. "Our tanks are far better than those of the enemy. We will increase our mobility, communication, air defence and surveillance needs. The two pillars of the country defence and economy are strong," he said.

J&K separatists call bilateral meet a failure

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 9 SEPTEMBER

THE 'failure' of India-Pakistan talks on Kashmir has highlighted the inevitability of a tripartite process for solving the mess, said Kashmir separatists. They believe the oft-beaten bilateral approach to the issue involving India and Pakistan on one side and Delhi and Srinagar on the other has letdown all the sides.

Says JKLF chairman Yasin Malik: "We being the basic party and the main sufferers of the post-partition situation, the two countries can not solve Kashmir without involving us directly in the talks." The party that stands for reunification of J&K and PoK and its acceptance of a sovereign nation has collected signatures of 14 lakh

people seeking a tripartite process. "Let the two countries respect the will of the people," he said.

Shabir Shah said the bilateral approach to the problem has failed. Had it worked then the agreements between India and Pakistan at Tashkent or Shimla or for that matter at Lahore should have worked.

"It is the same case between Delhi and Srinagar that reached agreements in 1953 and 1975 but could not do much," he said. "We welcome peace moves but the two countries should not ignore us on table," added Mr Shah.

The feeling among commoners in general and separatists in particular is that the two countries are talking under duress. Shia cleric Molvi Abbas Ansari who led the twin rounds of talks of centrist Hurriyat with NDA government terms the just concluded talks as a "great get together" between a good host and a good guest. "They talked, enjoyed good meals and said good bye to each other," he said. Mr Ansari regretted the Pakistan for-



MALIK: TRI STIR

eign minister Khursheed Kasuri's failure in raising the requirement of including Kashmiris in the talk's process.

Mr Kasuri, it is recalled here, had invited Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Sheikh Aziz, Yasin Malik, Shabir Shah and Mirwaiz Umer Farooq for consultations be-

fore the talks begun officially. Instead of seeking their suggestions for talks, they got yet another lecture on why should the rival Hurriyat's unite.

Terming the efforts for Hurriyat's reunification as "mere ritual", a senior moderate Hurriyat leader said, the split in itself "was consequence of an understanding between India and Pakistan with a view to deny Kashmiri people their right to be heard as a basic party to the dispute". He said inviting the Kashmiri leaders is just an exercise "to keep us (Kashmiris) in good humour.

India, Pak serious about peace in Valley

Neighbours To Focus On Siachen Troops Disengagement

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 SEPTEMBER

SETTING the tone for the maiden interaction between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf two weeks later in New York, India and Pakistan on Wednesday pledged to continue the "serious and sustained dialogue" to find a peaceful negotiated settlement of Jammu & Kashmir and other bilateral issues.

A joint statement released on Wednesday after the departure of Pakistani foreign minister



PAK-AGE DEAL: External affairs minister Natwar Singh (right) and his Pak counterpart Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, willingness on the part of both sides to continue discussions on an agreement on 13 proposals identifying the modalities for disengagement and re-deployment of troops in Siachen. The two sides also agreed to have a meet-

ing to discuss "all issues" on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, which has been stuck on the question of whether passports or "local permits" be used as travel documents by people wishing to move across the LoC. In plain terms, it indicated clearly that both sides were willing to talk to each other on the political implications of the move. So far, India has suggested use of passports while Pakistan has insisted on special documents.

The two sides decided to set up a mechanism to deal with the issue of civilian prisoners and fishermen "effectively and speedily." Giving details of the statement, foreign office spokesman Navtej Sarna said the two foreign ministers who met earlier this week expressed satisfaction at the "progress made so far" and "positively assessed" the developments in bilateral relations over the past year.

Among other decisions announced on Wednesday is the move to set up a mechanism to deal with the issue of civilian prisoners and fishermen "effectively and speedily."

Schedules of other meetings — Wular Barrage/Thibul Navigation Project, Sir Creek, terrorism and drug trafficking, economic and commercial cooperation and promotion of friendly exchanges in various fields are also to be taken up besides a meeting between railway authorities of the two countries to discuss the proposed rail link between Munnabao and Khokhrapar.

The two sides chose to re-state certain formulations agreed earlier. They reiterated their commitment to the principles and purposes of the UN Charter, and their determination to implement the Simla Agreement in "letter and spirit."

Kashmir the real issue: Shaukat Aziz

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, SEPT. 7. The Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, has asserted that the real issue between Pakistan and India was Jammu and Kashmir, and both should get into the next phase of "some timelines" in the dialogue.

In an interview to the Pakistan English daily *Dawn*, the new Prime Minister reiterated that Pakistan favoured a durable solution that reflected the aspirations and wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

The comments of Mr. Aziz more or less reflect the sentiments expressed by the Pakistani President, Pervez

Musharraf, during his meeting with the External Affairs Minister, K. Natwar Singh, in July on the need for a "reasonable time-frame" for the resolution of Kashmir problem.

Asked whether he was satisfied with the current pace of peace talks with India, Mr. Aziz said in a veiled reference to Kashmir: "Well, I think we need to get now into the next phase where we get into some timelines."

Expressing satisfaction with the symbolic gestures from both sides, particularly the increase in people-to-people contact, he said: "We also feel we need to have substantive talks on Jammu and Kashmir so that this

core issue heads towards resolution. I think other peripheral issues will take their own course."

Offer to Opposition

Mr. Aziz promised to offer an olive branch to Opposition parties which had boycotted his recent election to office, and vowed to make a "very serious effort" to seek a consensus on national issues. But he was non-committal whether he would reach out to the former Prime Ministers, Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. He said he wanted to carry the Opposition along or "at least have discussions with the Opposition" on all major issues. "I think what we need

is to change from point-scoring and ... disagreement for the sake of disagreement."

National consensus

The Prime Minister regretted that while many countries had a national consensus on some of their policies, "in our case we hardly have any policies where we have any consensus. I am not saying we will be able to achieve that, but certainly we will make a very sincere effort."

He defended the large size of his Cabinet, totalling more than 60, saying it was it was totally in line with what we require.

"You could have had a Cabinet half this size but then you would create bottlenecks." He

said a country like Malaysia with a population of only 25 million people had 32 full Ministers and as many Ministers of State while Pakistan has a population of 150 million.

On foreign policy priorities, Mr. Aziz said Pakistan always sought peace with all its neighbours, including India, while maintaining its integrity and sovereignty and a sense of equality. To a question on nuclear programme, Mr. Aziz said,

"Pakistan's nuclear programme is a guarantee for peace and we need to maintain it and develop it so as to ensure peace in the region." He maintained that Pakistan's nuclear programme was "strictly peaceful".

Kasuri stresses centrality of Kashmir

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, today stressed the "centrality" of the Kashmir issue and claimed this was not to suggest that Pakistan was only interested in discussing Kashmir. Calling upon India to recognise that there were differences on Kashmir, he said that this was the "only guarantee" to solve these problems.

At a joint press interaction with his counterpart, Natwar Singh, Mr. Kasuri said the "very concept" of the composite dialogue envisaged that there should be progress on all the eight items listed for discussion. Mr. Kasuri appeared pleased at the success achieved in having experts address both conventional and nuclear confidence-building measures.

In response to a question, Mr. Singh said the two countries did not have an agreement on some "difficult" and "old" issues — but the composite dialogue would go on. Calling for "progress" on the oil-gas pipeline, he also pointed out that there had been elections in Kashmir and a Government was in place there.

"Nevertheless, we are discussing the Jammu and Kashmir issue frankly, in candour and respecting each other's views on this. This will not hold up progress in all other areas as the Foreign Minister of Pakistan

has said ... this process will continue," Mr. Singh added.

'Support for reopening of consulates'

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 6. As India and Pakistan take small steps at a time, what happens to the areas in which agreement has already been reached, but implementation is yet to begin? That is precisely the question that was posed to Foreign Ministers Natwar Singh and Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri at their joint press conference today.

Asked about the absolute lack of progress in implementing the two-month-old decision to reopen the Mumbai and Karachi consulates, Mr. Singh said he had spoken to the Maharashtra Chief Minister, Sushilkumar Shinde. India had also asked Pakistani friends to visit Mumbai to look at some properties. Both countries, he said, were committed to the reopening of the consulates.

For his part, Mr. Kasuri said, "Yes, we support the consulates [reopening]. There is no flagging in our intention or desire. It's not hidden that we asked for Jinnah House — there was some problem as far as the Government of India was concerned and they offered alternative property — which would be suitable for our purposes."

Rift among Jammu & Kashmir militant outfits deepens

By M Saleem Pandit
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar: As India and Pakistan disagreed on the perceptions of the Kashmir problem on Monday, the rift between local militant groups in the Valley and terrorists from across the border has erupted into open warfare.

A simmering hostility between indigenous Kashmiri 'azadi' activists and those trained in camps in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and funded by Pakistani money could spiral into a new round of inter-group fighting in Jammu and Kashmir with four of the 12 militant organisations threatening to launch 'jihad' against pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen (HM).

Intelligence reports suggested the rivalry between local and Pakistani militants were existing for long over ill-treatment of the local Kashmiri people. Of late PoK or Pakistani militants had resorted to slitting of throats and chopping of ears, nose and tongue, they added.

The rift deepened with foreign groups like Al-Badr and Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) increasing extortions to meet their increasing requirements and refusing to share the spoils with local militants, a senior intelligence officer told TOI.

A little-known local news

agency, Current News Service, meanwhile, claimed that a joint statement issued by four pro-Pak outfits—Jaish-e-Mohammad, Harkatul Mujahideen, Al-Badr and Hizbi Islami—have blamed HM militants for killing three Al-Badr militants at Arwani in Bijbehara



Pakistan high commissioner to India Aziz Ahmed Khan greets Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik in New Delhi on Monday

of Anantnag district on September 1 following an altercation over money transactions.

In retaliation, HM operation chief Abdul Rashid Dar alias Tariq Aziz was gunned down on September 4 near the higher secondary school, Ratnipora in Pulwama district. These outfits have

threatened to lead a 'jihad' against HM if it failed to pay penalty as per "the Islamic law" for the killing of three Mujahideens.

Last year HM militants had killed two Jaish men at Wachi area of south Kashmir but in the interest of the movement, Jaish, Harkat, Al-Badr and Lashkar kept quiet. They alleged HM was responsible for the creation of Ikhwan (counter insurgents) and Task Force by the Kashmir police.

Lashkar militants are also blamed for blocking development work in the Valley, something which the local militant don't mind since it helps the poor residents in the area. One of the targets of the Lashkar terrorists has been the Qazigund-Baramullah railway link.

Pro-Pak Hurriyat chairman Syed Ali Shah Geelani's stance has also incidentally emerged similar to those of the PoK-based militants. During his meeting over the weekend with Pakistan's foreign minister Khursheed Mohammad Kasuri, he said he had opposed the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad highway because it would strengthen India's hold over the area. Local residents hope that the highway would increase people-to-people contacts and boost the local economy.

এ বার হরিয়তকেই চাপ পাকিস্তানের

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৫ সেপ্টেম্বর: ভারত সরকারের সঙ্গে দ্রুত আলোচনায় বসার জন্য হরিয়তকেই এ বার চাপ দিল পাকিস্তান। তবে পাকিস্তানের মতে, এই মুহূর্তে হরিয়তের মধ্যে যে রকম ভাঙন দেখা দিয়েছে তাতে ভারত সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসলেও বিশেষ ফায়দা তুলতে পারবে না তারা। অতএব নিজেদের ভাঙা ঘর গুছিয়ে নিয়েই হরিয়তের উচিত দ্রুত ভারতের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসা। সেপ্টেম্বরের মধ্যেই এই কাজ করা হোক, চাইছে পাকিস্তান। পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরি হরিয়তের কট্টরপন্থী নেতা মৌলানা আব্বাস জিলানিকে স্পষ্ট বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন, তাঁদের পক্ষে ভারতের সঙ্গে সরাসরি আলোচনা চালু করা সম্ভব নয়। ফলে হরিয়তকেই উদ্যোগী হতে হবে।

কাল রাতে জিলানির সঙ্গে নৈশভোজে মিলিত হয়েছিলেন কাসুরি। উপস্থিত ছিলেন পাক বিদেশ সচিব রিয়াজ খোন্ধরও। এই বৈঠকে

যোগ দিতেই দিল্লিতে এসেছিলেন হরিয়ত নেতা। বিমানবন্দর থেকে সরাসরি তিনি চলে যান পাক হাইকমিশনে। সেখানে দীর্ঘ আলোচনার সময়ে কাসুরি জিলানিকে বলেন, নিজেদের মধ্যে মতানৈক্য দূরে সরিয়ে রেখে অবিলম্বে হরিয়তের বিভিন্ন গোষ্ঠীকে একত্রিত করে নিতে। হরিয়ত নেতাদের কাসুরি পরামর্শ দেন, সেপ্টেম্বরে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ কাশ্মীর সফরে যাবেন। তার আগেই ঐক্য মজবুত করে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কাশ্মীরের মাটিতে বৈঠক করুক হরিয়ত।

পাকিস্তানের দিক থেকে এই চাপ দেখে জিলানি পাল্টা কাসুরিকে অভিযোগ করেন, পাকিস্তান অনেক বিষয়েই নিজেদের অবস্থান লঘু করে ফেলেছে। জিলানি বিশেষ ভাবে বলেন, কাশ্মীরে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগের কথা। তাঁর বক্তব্য, কাশ্মীরে প্রতি দিন মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের ভয়ঙ্কর সব ঘটনা ঘটছে, অথচ পাকিস্তান তা নিয়ে সাড়াশব্দ

করছে না। কাসুরি অবশ্য এই অভিযোগ মানতে চাননি। তাঁর বক্তব্য, পাকিস্তান মোটেই এ সব ঘটনাকে লঘু করে দেখছে না। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত হরিয়ত যদি নিজেদের একত্রিত করে দিল্লির উপরে চাপ বাড়াতে না পারলে পাকিস্তান কেবল হরিয়তের প্রতি সমবেদনাই জানাতে পারবে, তার বেশি কিছু নয়।

জিলানিও অবশ্য এই সমস্যার কথা মেনে নেন। হরিয়তের শীর্ষ পদ থেকে মৌলবি আব্বাস আনসারি সরে যাওয়ার পরে এখন মিরওয়াজ ওমর ফারুক কাজ সামলাচ্ছেন। জিলানি কাসুরিকে সাফ জানিয়ে দেন, ভারতপন্থী কোনও ব্যক্তিকে নেতা হিসাবে মেনে নেওয়া সম্ভব নয়। স্পষ্টতই জিলানি বোঝাতে চেয়েছেন যে মিরওয়াজের ভূমিকায় তিনি খুশি নন। গতকাল জিলানির সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতের পরে আজ কাসুরি দেখা করেছেন হরিয়তের অন্য দুই নেতা ইয়াসিন মালিক এবং সাবির শাহের সঙ্গে। তবে কাসুরির সঙ্গে একবারও দেখা করতে

আসেননি আনসারি।

এ দিকে, কাসুরির সঙ্গে বৈঠকের আগে বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গে দেখা করে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা করেন। সেখানে আডবাণী নটবরকে পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন, ঘনঘন হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে পাক নেতৃত্বের দেখা করার অনুমতি না দেওয়ার। আডবাণীর বক্তব্য, যখনই পাক নেতৃত্ব এ দেশে আসবেন, তখনই হরিয়ত নেতারা তাঁদের সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন, এটা ঠিক নয়। এক বার দু'বার দেখা করা যেতে পারে, কিন্তু বারবার এই কাজ চলতে পারে না।

অপহৃত চার মহিলা উদ্ধার। হিজবুল মুজাহিদিন জঙ্গিদের হাতে অপহৃত চার জন অল্পবয়সী মেয়েকে উদ্ধার করল পুলিশ। কয়েক দিন আগে ডোডা জেলায় পুলিশের গুপ্তচর বৃষ্টির অভিযোগে ওই চার মহিলাকে তুলে নিয়ে গিয়ে তাঁদের উপর প্রচণ্ড অত্যাচার করে জঙ্গিরা। তাঁদের মাথাও নেড়া করে দেয়। আপাতত তারা নিজেদের গ্রামেই রয়েছেন।- পিটিআই

KASHMIR TANGLE

Time To Take Logical Steps

By DIPAK BASU

The problem of Kashmir started in 1947 when the British divided India into two parts to distinguish Muslims who had demanded a separate homeland for themselves. The dispute is mainly in the Indian part of Kashmir, which is only 45 per cent of the old state of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan wants it on the ground that Muslims are the majority of the population in that part.

The UN Resolutions on Kashmir, calling for a plebiscite, have nothing to do with the "right of self-determination" for Muslim Kashmiris because there are only two options: join India or join Pakistan. There is no third option for "independence". The UN declaration did not say anything about the future of the minority non-Muslims in the state of the Jammu and Kashmir. Now there are three million non-Muslims, who cannot possibly stay in a Muslim country if Kashmir joins Pakistan given the record of Pakistan regarding its treatment of minorities.

Exchange of population

The most important issue is the question of accepting the theory that Muslims cannot stay with people of other religions as propagated by Jinnah in his "two-nation" theory. If the UN accepts the demand of Pakistan and of Muslims of Kashmir, it implies acceptance of the "two-nation" theory put forward by the founding fathers of Pakistan that Muslims and Hindus are two different nations and must live separately. In that case there would be no justification for the presence of another 110 millions of Muslims in the rest of India who, according to the principle of the partition in 1947, should have left long ago, but are allowed to stay in India only because India does not accept the "two-nation" theory.

India wants to convert the line of control in Kashmir into the international border and keep everything as it is. This is not acceptable to Pakistan. It has already gained that part and now it wants additional gains, which is the remaining part of the Kashmir valley. It is not acceptable to the Muslim population of Kashmir also because they do not want to stay in India because of religious reasons. India cannot agree with this as it destroys the fundamental basis of the

The author is Professor in International Economics, Nagasaki University, Japan

Constitution — secularism. Thus, Indian and Pakistani positions will never match and any future discussions within that framework will definitely fail.

The problem between India and Pakistan remains because what was natural after a partition of a country, exchange of population, never took place. Pakistan and Bangladesh drove out most of their non-Muslim

to begin by asking what are the possible difficulties that are likely to arise in the way of a person migrating from one area to another on account of political changes... The difficulties can be easily removed by the two states of Pakistan and Hindustan agreeing to a treaty...". It is the responsibility now for the two governments to think about such a treaty after wasting 60 years



population, but Muslims are still in India, even after their homeland was created. This is the most unnatural event in the world. In other cases of partition elsewhere in the world, there were always exchange of population. The cases of Greece-Turkey, Germany-Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria-Turkey, Poland-Germany, Bosnia-Serbia and Croatia-Serbia are recent examples where full-scale exchange of population was organised, sometimes by the UN itself.

Reality test

Exchange of population between the proposed state of Pakistan and India was mentioned in the plan of the partition of India made by Rajagopalachari in 1943 in collaboration with Mahatma Gandhi. BR Ambedkar mentioned in detail in 1945 the ways and means of that exchange in his book, *Pakistan or Partition of India*. He said, "Assuming it does become a problem, will it be a baffling problem? Experience shows that it is not a problem, which is impossible to solve. To devise a solution for such a problem it might be well

since 1945.

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf during his July 2001 visit to India spoke of Kashmir as an unfinished agenda of Partition. Exchange of population was the "unfinished agenda" of the Muslim League as envisaged by the father figures of Partition. At a press conference in Karachi on 25 November 1946, Jinnah had appealed to the central as well as provincial governments to take up the question of population exchange. Earlier that year, Sir Feroze Khan Noon who later became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, while addressing Muslim League legislators in Patna, had gone to the extent of threatening re-enactment of the murderous orgies of Chengez Khan and Halaqu Khan if non-Muslims did not agree to exchange of population. Pir Illahi Bux, the Sindh leader, observed that he welcomed an exchange of population for the safety of minorities, as it would put an end to all communal disturbances.

Ismail Chundrigar, who also became Prime Minister, said that the British had no right to hand over Muslims to a subject

people, namely Hindus, over whom they had ruled for 500 years. Thus, the exchange of population, as designed by Dr Ambedkar, had the general support of Muslim leaders in 1947.

A solution is valid if it can take into account the existing reality and offer something to all sides. The UN declaration has failed because it could not satisfy that criteria. The reality is that China cannot be dislodged from its position. Thus, 20 per cent of Kashmir has to be forfeited and does not come into the discussion.

Proposed solutions

The proposed solution should be packaged with the following items: (1) Pakistan and Bangladesh will take all Muslims living in India (including Kashmir) while India will accept all non-Muslim from Pakistan and Bangladesh; (2) India will give up the Kashmir valley excepting the link road to Ladakh and will keep only the Ladakh and Jammu valley. The Pakistan-occupied Skardhu Hunza, Baltistan, and Gilgit, where very few Muslims used to live in 1947, should come to India; (3) the Chittagong Hill District, which was 97 per cent Buddhist in 1947, will have a referendum, to join either Burma or India or to stay independent. Muslim population there will go back to Bangladesh; (4) Migrants will be allowed to take away their assets and destitutes should be compensated by the government of the country displacing them; (5) In order to avoid the holocaust that took place in 1947-48, the whole of the subcontinent should be under the jurisdiction of the UN, for about one year, during which this exchange of population would take place.

The purpose of the partition was to create a homeland for Muslims of undivided India. When it was done, the logical question is: why are Muslims still in India and if they really want to stay in India, why should Pakistan or Bangladesh exist at all?¹⁴

The problem of Kashmir remains because India today cannot see the reality. If Pakistan insists that it has the right to absorb the rest of the Kashmir because of religion and if India insists on secularism and as a result refuses to consider any alternative solution, there is no common ground. It is thus essential to change the mindset of the two countries. The time has come to take logical steps.

ST 8 31/8

Top Jaish, Lashkar commanders killed

Press Trust of India



The bodies of Lashkar e-Tajyaba militants, including their area commander Abu [Name], in [Location] district, on Sunday. — PTT

SRINAGAR, Aug. 29. — Two top commanders of Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Tajyaba were among the seven militants killed by security forces in the Poonch and Rajouri districts of Jammu and Kashmir, where militants shot dead two women since last evening, police said today.

A fierce gun-battle took place between Army troops and militants in

Lowakatha forests in Chingus area of Rajouri district late this afternoon, a spokesman said. In it, four LET militants, including a "sector commander" Abu Shahid were killed, police said, adding, that the troops had recovered seven IEDs, nine grenades, 4 rifles, one pika gun, one UBGL launcher, 14 magazines and 300 rounds of ammunition. The encounter was continuing when reports last came in.

The spokesman said

another LeT militant was nabbed from a local bus stand at Bandipora in Baramulla last evening. A pistol and some ammunition were recovered.

Militants gunned down a woman, Shahnaz Akhtar, in the house of her parents at Sanghot-Gursai in Poonch district last night, the spokesman said.

A JEM "tehsil commander", Zaffar Iqbal alias Abu Thunder was killed in an encounter at Kurla Simoon in Mendhar tehsil of Poonch district yesterday.

Jammu and Kashmir Houses adjourned *sine die*

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 28. Both Houses of the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature were adjourned *sine die* today after a brief but stormy session over the controversial Permanent Residents' (Disqualification) Bill that was defeated yesterday. However, the Opposition National Conference vowed to continue the struggle to bring back the Bill in its original form and announced to move a no confidence motion against the Speaker, Tara Chand.

The Assembly, which met here today again, witnessed uproarious scenes as the Opposition members accused Mr. Chand of playing a partisan role while dealing with the Bill. Proceedings were disrupted, in spite of repeated pleas from Mr. Chand, who adjourned the House *sine die*.

He expressed displeasure at the Opposition's attitude and said that given the importance of the Bill and the persistent demand from them (National

Conference members), he suspended the rules and allowed discussion on it. The Opposition did not allow the House to function, he said, adding that "the Bill was put to vote and since it did not get the required two-thirds support it fell."

The Legislative Council was also adjourned *sine die*.

'Illegal'

The National Conference, on its part, did not agree with Mr. Chand and said that whatever "he has done is illegal and unconstitutional."

"He has acted like a Congress Speaker and we did not expect that in spite of our cooperation," said Abdur Raheem Rather, party leader in the House. He also questioned Mr. Chand's decision to adjourn the House *sine die* saying "he has no powers to do so."

"The issue is still alive and we will continue the struggle as it concerns the identity of the State."

Seeking to clarify the misconceptions over the Bill, he said

that it was unfortunate as "it was wrongly projected as a Bill against women when it only deals with their domicile status."

His party would try to evolve a consensus over the Bill at the national level and not "let down our own people who feel humiliated with the illegal defeat of the Bill."

To consult experts

Mr. Rather said that his party would consult legal and constitutional experts to challenge the "illegal fall" of the Bill. "Democracy has been murdered in Kashmir and we will not be silent spectators."

'No threat'

The Deputy Chief Minister, Mangat Ram Sharma, said that there was no threat to the coalition Government following its differences over the Bill. "The bitterness we had yesterday died with its fall," he said. "We will continue to work towards the development of the State," Mr. Sharma said.

Women in Jammu celebrate fall of Bill

By Luv Puri

JAMMU, AUG. 28. Women in the old lanes of Jammu celebrated the defeat of the Permanent Resident Disqualification Bill, 2004. The Bill was defeated by a voice vote in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on Friday.

Women groups had been opposing this Bill, as it sought to deprive women of the right to remain a State subject, pursue education, take up employment and inherit property once they marry a non-permanent resident.

The president of the Jammu and Kashmir chapter of the Kasturba Gandhi Trust, Lalita Nagar, said: "The rejection of the 'archaic' Bill is a victory for all those who believe in democracy. The Bill, if passed, would have posed social problems for the State."

Sohail Kazmi, editor of the Urdu daily *Taskeen*, said: "In principle, no religion including Islam denies women their basic rights. It is wrong to bring in legislation that displays gender inequality. It is regressive to base the State's

identity by discriminating vis-à-vis its women."

Resident certificate

Besides Indian citizenship, a Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC) is an essential document for day-to-day affairs in the State and it is given to people whose ancestors lived in the State for at least 10 years before May 14, 1954. Only those with the PRS can buy property, get employment in the State and are entitled for other privileges.

The Bill was first introduced by the State Law Minister, Muzaffar Hussien Beig, on February 21 and it sought to amend Section 9 of the J&K Constitution. (The State has its own Constitution.) According to the Bill, a woman of the State on marriage outside will lose her PRC.

Even after 22 months of the historic ruling of the J&K High Court, the State Revenue Department continues to give the PRC to women with a clause, "valid till marriage."

Several women groups and political parties have termed this as a contempt of court.

Court ruling

On October 7, 2002, the Jammu and Kashmir High Court, by a majority opinion, held that a daughter of a permanent resident marrying a non-permanent resident would not lose the status of permanent resident of the State. The court underscored the need to maintain the spirit of the State Constitution under Section 10 which laid down that permanent residents had all the rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution of India which provided no room for gender inequality. So no woman of the State marrying outside could be legally denied her right to retain the PRC.

A senior State revenue official said: "We cannot deny anybody the right to retain the PRC but we have to get the necessary written direction from the State Law Ministry in this regard."

The Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party chief, Bhim Singh, has threatened that he would move the court if any woman is denied the PRC on the ground of her marriage outside the State.

Women's Bill defeated in J&K Assembly

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Aug. 27. — The controversial Women's Permanent Resident Disqualification Bill was today defeated in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly as its supporters failed to muster a two-thirds majority for its passage.

The combined strength of the Peoples Democratic Party, National Conference, CP-I-M and the PDF and several

Independents that supported the Bill, fell 12 short of the requisite 58 in the 87-member House.

The failure of the Bill has put the credibility and popularity of the ruling PDP on line in Kashmir where an overwhelming majority is in favour of the Bill. But in other regions like Jammu and Ladakh, the failure of the Bill is likely to improve the ratings of the Congress,

the main coalition partner, where the majority is against the Bill. The law minister, Mr Muzaffar Hussain Beigh, who moved the Bill, had an angry exchange with the deputy chief minister, Mr Mangat Ram Sharma of the Congress, before the Bill was put to vote.

Tension mounted in the House as heated arguments continued. Mr Beigh even threatened to resign and

accused Mr Sharma of casting doubts on the patriotism of Kashmiris. "Kashmiris do not need certificates from any party for being Indian as thousands of people have been killed in the Valley... This continues even now," Mr Beigh averred.

A visibly defensive Mr Sharma responded by saying that nobody doubts the patriotism of Kashmiris and accused the law minister of

creating a wrong impression. While the fracas was on, Speaker Mr Tara Chand asked for voting on the Bill where its supporters failed to manage the mandatory number.

Earlier, bending the rules, the Speaker allowed a discussion on the Bill — as demanded by the NC and the PDP, arguing that the passage of the Bill was imperative for preserving the special status of Jammu and Kashmir.

Clash in J&K House

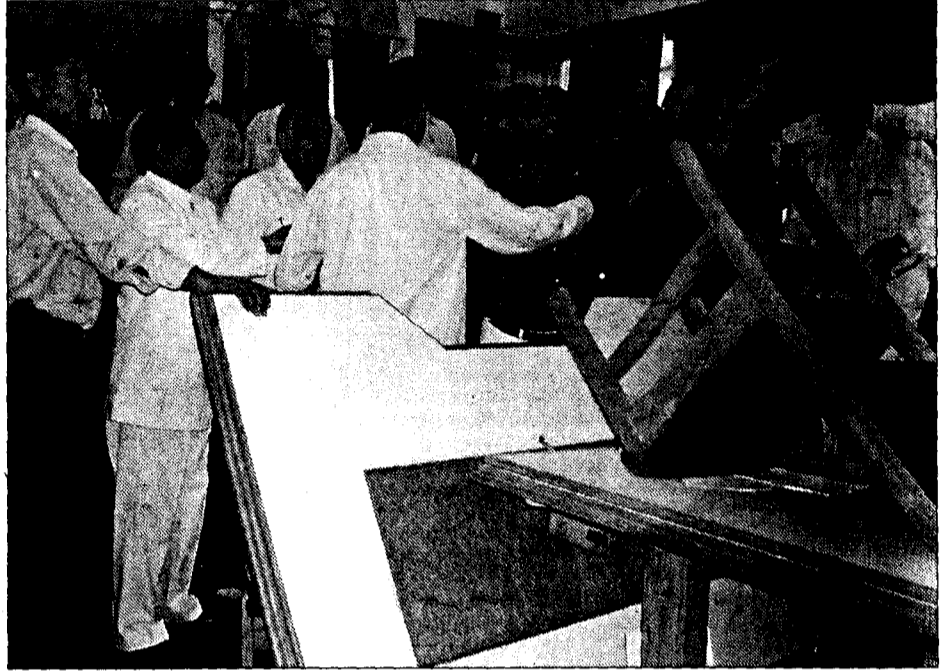
Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Aug. 23. — The Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council today witnessed clashes over the controversial women's Bill. The members of Treasury and Opposition benches threw chairs, tables, paper missiles and microphones on each other. In the lower house, the Opposition National Conference legislators did not allow chief minister Mr Mufti Mohammed Sayeed to make a statement on the Bill and forced the adjournment of the Assembly for the day.

The trouble erupted during question hour in the upper house when Panther's Party member Prof. Bhim Singh and ruling alliance minister Mr Guru Ram used unparliamentary language. NC legislators, who were already in the well of the House protesting against the coalition for what they called sabotaging the women's Bill, reacted angrily and disrupted the proceedings of the House by throwing the stationery. Some even threw tables and chairs. This triggered a clash between the ruling and Opposition benches. However, timely action by the watch and ward staff prevented the situation from taking an ugly turn.

The lower house too witnessed uproarious scenes.

The leader of the Oppo-



TURNING THE TABLE: Legislators throw chairs inside the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council. In Srinagar on Monday. — PTI

sition moved an adjournment motion demanding that all other business in the House be adjourned and the issue of the Bill be taken up first. Subsequently, the Speaker, Mr Tara Chand, asked the secretary of the lower house, Mohammed Iqbal Ganai to table the report on the Bill in the Assembly. The secretary said that the Permanent Residence (Disqualification) Bill passed by the Assembly on 5 March has not been passed by the Council. (The Bill lapsed as the Council failed to take a decision within the re-

quired three months).

After the secretary's report, Mr Sayeed wanted to make a statement on the Bill. But Opposition NC legislators did not allow him to do so. Amid the pandemonium, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day.

Seven killed in J&K

Two Hizbul Mujahideen militants and a special police officer were among seven persons killed and nine others injured in separate incidents in J&K, PTI adds from Srinagar.

Security forces also

averted a tragedy with the timely detection of a powerful IED on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway today.

Central Reserve Police Force personnel detected a powerful IED at lower Munda near Qazigund, 80 km from here on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, this morning, the sources said.

The IED was neutralised around 10.20 am, they said, adding the explosive was planted by militants apparently to target security vehicles, which ply in large numbers on the route.

সংবিধানের আওতায় কথা নয়, জানাল ছরিয়ত

রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

৯ আগস্ট: কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী

শিবরাজ পাটিলের শর্ত প্রত্যাখ্যান করল মির ওয়াইজ ওমর ফারুকের ছরিয়ত কনফারেন্স। কাল পাটিল বলেছিলেন, কাশ্মীরে শান্তি আলোচনা সংবিধানের কাঠামো মেনেই হবে। শিবরাজের এই শর্ত ফিরিয়ে দিয়ে নরমপন্থী ছরিয়তের মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, “আমরা আলোচনার মাধ্যমে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে আগ্রহী। কিন্তু সে আলোচনা শর্তহীন এবং অর্পবহু হওয়া চাই।”

স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর এই প্রস্তাব ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার পরে ছরিয়তের পক্ষ থেকে অভিযোগ করে, শান্তি আলোচনায় এন ডি এ সরকার যে উদ্দীপনা তৈরি করতে সক্ষম হয়েছিল, বর্তমান ইউ পি এ সরকার তা ধরে রাখতে ব্যর্থ হয়েছে। তাঁদের মতে, কোনও দেশের সংবিধানের শর্ত চাপিয়ে দিয়ে কাশ্মীরের মতো স্পর্শকাতর বিষয়ে সমাধানে পৌঁছানো সম্ভব নয়। বরঞ্চ, বাস্তবতার ভিত্তিতে বিশ্ব রাজনৈতিক মতামতকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে ভবিষ্যতের কথা ভেবে এই সমস্যা সমাধানের চেষ্টা করা উচিত বলে ছরিয়তের পক্ষ থেকে মত প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে।

তিনি বলেন, এক মাত্র এই কথা মাথায় রেখেই তাঁরা কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরু করেছিলেন। ছরিয়তের

মতে, নির্বাচনের পরে দেশে নতুন রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতি তৈরি হয়েছে।

তবে আগের সরকারের সময়ে তাদের যা অভিজ্ঞতা তাতে খোলামেলা আলোচনার মাধ্যমেই একটি নির্দিষ্ট সমাধানে পৌঁছানো সম্ভব।

প্রসঙ্গত, এ বছরের জানুয়ারি এবং মার্চে এন ডি এ সরকারের উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গে মৌলবি আব্বাস আনসারির নেতৃত্বে ছরিয়তের দু’দফায় আলোচনা হয়। কিন্তু তার পরে ইউ পি এ জোট সরকারে আসার পরে এই আলোচনা আর এগোয়নি। ছরিয়তের এক নেতার মতে, নতুন সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার পর থেকে শুধুই বিবৃতি দিয়ে যাচ্ছেন। কাজের কাজ কিছু হচ্ছে না। তাঁর মতে, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রীর এই বিবৃতি আলোচনায় ইতি টানারই সামিল।

সিলেটে বিস্ফোরণ। ঢাকা থেকে নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা জানাচ্ছেন, বাংলাদেশের বিরোধী দল আওয়ামী লিগের এক শীর্ষ নেতা আজ প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন। গত শনিবার সিলেটের গুলশন সেন্টারে হওয়া বিস্ফোরণে আহত হয়ে হাসপাতালে ভর্তি ছিলেন আওয়ামী লিগের প্রচারসচিব মহম্মদ ইব্রাহিম। আজ তাঁর মৃত্যু হয়। বিস্ফোরণে আরও ২৫ জন আহত হন। হামলার সত্তব্য লক্ষ্য ছিলেন শহরের মেয়র বদরুদ্দিন আহমেদ কামরান।

Govt official backs US role in solving J&K issue

Bureaucrat's Stand Major Embarrassment For Centre

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 8 AUGUST

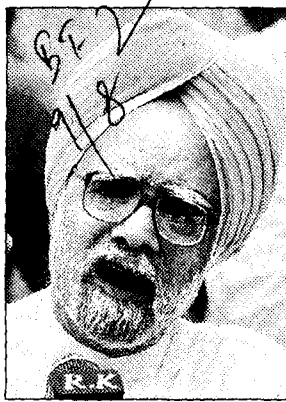
In a major embarrassment for the Manmohan Singh government, a serving bureaucrat and Union textile secretary-designate, Mr Wajahat Habibullah, has said the US could play the facilitator in solving the Jammu and Kashmir issue.

This stand of the bureaucrat is in conflict with New Delhi's position that J&K issue is a bilateral issue and that there is no scope for third party mediation.

Mr Habibullah, a J&K cadre IAS officer, who will shortly complete his scholarship with the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), has said in a special report that most Kashmiris regard the US as an honest broker, an opinion rarely held in Muslim countries in the aftermath of 9/11.

"This view has also been expressed repeatedly in private by several members of the separatist leadership. In fact, Kashmiris credit all positive developments in the region over the past five years to efforts made by the US ... given the deep mistrust that Kashmiris have of India and

their growing mistrust of Pakistan, the United States might find it advantageous to cultivate its positive image (especially now that this image is beginning



to fray because of Iraq," Habibullah said in his report.

Mr Habibullah told a news agency that his views on the report were not those of the Government of India or of the USIP but his own as a research fellow in the USIP. The controversial report coincided with a directive from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to joint secretary-level officials, not to take up consultancy jobs abroad.

In his 18-page report titled *The Political Economy of the Kashmir Conflict: Opportunities For Economic Peace-building and the US Policy*, Mr Habibullah has suggested wide-ranging measures for solving the Kashmir issue, which includes modernisation of Pakistani armed forces to securing foreign investment for the economic revitalisation of the militancy-torn state.

"To date, all attempts by either India or Pakistan to use means to assert their authority throughout Jammu and Kashmir have only reinforced Kashmiris' sense of separateness, by nurturing the idea among Kashmiris that they are not in control of their own livelihoods and that their government seeks only to exploit them," he said in the report.

"As most of India moves toward greater openness in the world arena, Jammu and Kashmir remains closed. There have been calls, including some from within the US, for India to accelerate the opening of its economy. However, no one thus far has asked specifically for the state's economy to be opened.

Geelani floats new party

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, AUG. 7. Syed Ali Shah Geelani, head of the hardline faction of the Hurriyat Conference, today launched his own party and named it Tehreek-e-Hurriyat-e-Kashmir (Movement for Freedom of Kashmir).

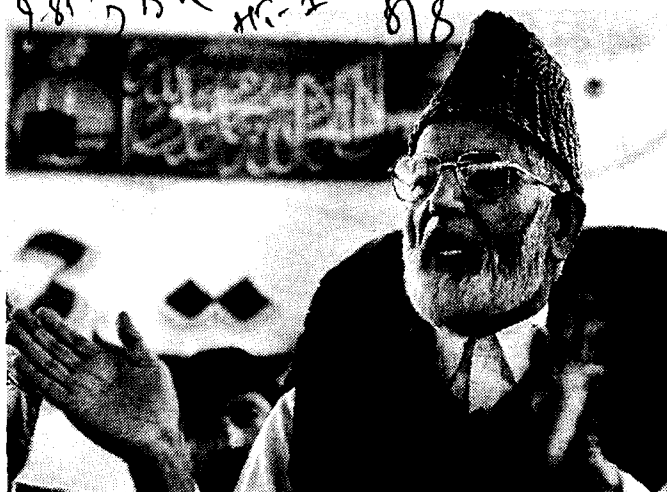
He vowed to continue the ongoing struggle for implementing the United Nations resolutions on Kashmir and said he would draw inspiration from Islam rather than secularism, socialism or communism.

At a news conference here, Mr. Geelani who had the support of his parent organisation, Jamat-e-Islami, to float his party, said: "We will continue our struggle gracefully, peacefully and without brick-battling or even raising provocative slogans."

Reiterating that the Hurriyat faction he was leading was the "real one," he said: "We are not going anywhere but yes, our doors are open for others."

He indicated that he was ready to mend fences with the moderate Hurriyat if they chose to join him.

"Tehreek's constitution mandates us to struggle for the right to self-determination. In case of a plebiscite, we will accept the majority decision. But we do believe that trilateral talks could



Senior separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani addressing a press conference at his residence in Srinagar, on Saturday. — AP

be a second alternative but for that, India must accept the disputed status of the Kashmir issue," he said.

'No change in stand'

Commenting on the dialogue process, Mr. Geelani expressed dissatisfaction over the two rounds of talks between New Delhi and the Kashmiri groups and said: "My position is that India has not changed her position on Kashmir. Had that been a reality, they would have withdrawn the 1995 resolution that termed J&K an integral part of

India. India must send troops to barracks, roll back all the legislations that offer them impunity and accept Kashmir as a disputed state," he said, adding that while India and Pakistan were apparently talking, "we in J&K do not observe any kind of relief."

The ad-hoc body of the new party has Mr. Geelani as the chairman and Mohammad Ashraf Sehrai as the deputy chairman.

They were elected by a 12-member group, mostly the basic members of the Jamat.

Ansari exits, Mirwaiz enters

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi/ Srinagar, July 7: The Hurriyat Conference chairman today stepped down and appointed Mirwaiz Umer Farooq the separatist conglomerate's interim head.

Maulana Abbas Ansari quit the post at a meeting of the Hurriyat's executive council in Srinagar and requested the Mirwaiz, its founder chairman, to take over.

Ansari also urged him to establish contact with all executive council members to restore the conglomerate that split in September when hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani walked out soon after Ansari's election.

Geelani had accused the Hurriyat leadership of not running an effective anti-poll campaign in 2002.

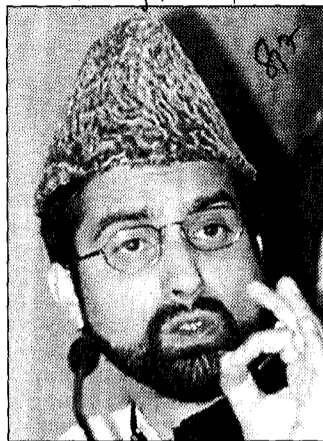
The Hurriyat announced today's decision in a statement after an hourlong executive meeting. Elections for a new chairman would be held once the unity process was completed, it said.

There was, however, no mention of the third round of talks with the Centre, which was supposed to be the main agenda of today's meeting. The statement simply said the Hurriyat would continue the process of talks with the governments of India and Pakistan to find an amicable solution to the Kashmir issue.

As the man who led the Hurriyat to the negotiating table this January stepped down, there were indications that the change in guard could help build credibility into its talks with the Centre.

Delhi is not losing sleep over the development, which a senior government official suggested had gone along expected lines. "That Maulana Abbas Ansari was going to step down was clear early in May when he offered to quit if it helped unite the Hurriyat," the official said. "It is not surprising he actually did."

Ansari had been under some



Mirwaiz: New man in

pressure from within to make way for the Mirwaiz. "Unlike Ansari, Farooq is a more acceptable face in Kashmir as he is also the Valley's spiritual leader," a home ministry official said.

Besides, it was felt that the Mirwaiz — the only leader in the Hurriyat with a mass following — had greater credibility both in Kashmir and abroad as a leader of Kashmiris.

Also playing a crucial role was the Mirwaiz's greater acceptability in Pakistan as a Hurriyat leader. An official hinted that Islamabad had suggested to him to take on the responsibility when he met Pakistan foreign secretary Riaz Khokar on his recent visit to Delhi.

Sources suggest there were concerns in the Ansari-led Hurriyat that its recognition as the representative body of Kashmiris was on the wane internationally. An indication was the decision of the Organisation of Islamic Conference's secretariat to send an invitation to the Geelani-led Hurriyat faction to attend a two-day meeting of foreign ministers in Istanbul recently.

Home ministry officials suggest that Ansari's stepping down could be the precursor to a reorganisation within Kashmiri separatist organisations.

8 JUL 2004

India, Pakistan Sign Joint Agreement On Crucial Issue Of Nuclear CBMs

Talks fail to resolve J&K issue

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 28 JUNE

THE foreign secretary-level deliberations between India and Pakistan on Monday concluded with no progress on the vexed Kashmir issue. The joint agreement signed at the end of the deliberations covered the same ground set out during the previous engagement but with the significant addition of nuclear CBM. India can, however, draw consolation from the fact that it got the Pakistani side to recall its counter-terror commitment.

The two-day discussions between delegations led by foreign secretary Shashank and his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Khokar,

which was held after a gap of six years, produced the joint statement which, besides endorsing a few of the decisions that were being expected, agreed to continue with a sustained engagement to "find a negotiated settlement" to the J&K issue.

The joint statement, however, avoided specifics on confidence building measures, an indication that differences persisted and much ground was to be covered when the individual issues were discussed at the micro level. There was no reference of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus link or the Munabao-Khokrapar link. Both sides admitted that several ideas and proposals had been laid on the table but the issues had

been left for the technical experts to deal with in future meetings.

Among the decisions agreed upon on Monday were the immediate restoration of the strengths of respective high commissions to original level of 110 and release of all apprehended fishermen in each other's custody at the earliest.

It was also agreed in principle to re-establish consulates in Mumbai and Karachi besides taking steps for early release of civilian prisoners. The two sides proposed a comprehensive framework for conventional CBMs. Both sides also agreed to conclude an agreement aimed at institutionalising a mechanism to notify each other before con-

ducting missile test flights.

That the road ahead was strewn with unpredictables was evident when the Pakistani spokesperson Masood Khan maintained that a mechanism would have to be found, at some stage, to involve the people of Kashmir in the dialogue process. "But as of now there is no such mechanism. But as you go down the slope of dialogue and confidence building, you can come up with a mechanism if there is the requisite goodwill, understanding and momentum," he said.

On finding a solution to the Jammu & Kashmir issue, he said: "What satisfies Pakistan will ultimately satisfy the Kashmiris. That's the simple answer."

The Economic Times

12 killed in Kashmir bloodbath

Masood Hussain
SRINAGAR 26 JUNE

FOR the first time after the Hill Kakka operations, suspected militants attacked families of Village Defence Committee (VDC) up in the mountain and killed 12 persons. They included 6 VDC members, five minors and a woman. Of the eight left wounded, one with serious injuries, was airlifted to Jammu.

P.L. Gupta, IGP Jammu said though the VDCs were well-equipped, the absence of massive security presence might have helped militants to resort to the massacre. Late last year, security forces operating in the area were relocated and VDCs were constituted. The relocation became inevitable in view of intelligence reports about militant movement in neighbouring belts, he added.

According to Gupta, the targeted VDC was constituted seven months ago. Based at Mardhar village, which falls under the jurisdiction of Poonch's Surankote police station, this all-Mulsim VDC would operate in and around the village. "Though they had no major encounter with militants, their presence did keep them far away", one police officer from Poonch said. Almost all the members are herdsmen.

Recently, the families decided to take their herds to the mountain pastures. "They were barely four to five kilometres from their base in Helikatha pastures when their dhoka's (summer shelters) were attacked in the middle of the night", Gupta said. Of the 11 slain persons, one was woman. Eight women were also wounded.

Gupta said he is not in a position to tell why the VDCs did not

react immediately especially when they were "fairly well-equipped". "My officers have gone to the spot though I personally could not fly because of the inclement weather", he said. The wounded admitted to the hospitals are not in a position to reveal the details.

This is the first major militant attack in the area after the Romeo Fore, a division of the Rashtriya Rifles, launched the Operation Sarp Vinash in the Hill Kakka area on April 21, 2003. Covering an area of over 150 square kilometers in the Pir Panchal range of mountains, a total of 65 militants were killed so far.

After destroying over 92 bunkers, 79 major war-like weapons were recovered. Prior to the launching of the operation, the troops set up three helipads and laid 20 kms of mule-track.

Jawan dies in mosque clash

Srinagar
26 JUNE

TWO militants and an Army jawan were killed and an officer injured in the ongoing operation inside a mosque in Litter village of the Pulwama district, about 70 km from Srinagar, where an unspecified number of militants have taken shelter, official sources said.

They said 60 civilians including 40 women trapped inside the mosque were rescued by the security forces. Militants took shelter in the mosque as security forces launched massive house-to-house searches to nab the gunmen. — PTI

MEANWHILE

Two militants killed

■ **JAMMU:** Security forces gunned down two militants in an encounter in Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir in which an Army jawan and a Special Police Officer were also injured. Police and security forces launched a joint operation in Kandi area on Wednesday killing the militants. The injured jawan and the SPO were rushed to hospital, official sources said on Thursday. Meanwhile, the Army took into custody seven more Bangladesh nationals in R.S. Pura sector on Wednesday when they were trying to cross the border, the sources said.

No trace of kidnapped persons

■ **SRINAGAR:** The fate of the four kidnapped persons, including an engineer working on the rail link to Kashmir, was not known amid unconfirmed reports on Thursday that the abductors had let off one of them. Local contractor Farooq Ahmad Kuchay was released late on Wednesday night at Barsoo in Awantipora area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district, according to unconfirmed reports. However, Kuchay was still untraceable and a police team had been rushed to Barsoo to verify the reports, official sources said here today.

4 killed, 38 hurt in road mishaps

■ **JAMMU:** An Army major was among four persons killed and 38 injured in separate road mishaps in J-K since Wednesday night, sources said on Thursday. One person was killed and 34 injured when a vehicle carrying a marriage party fell into a gorge in Kishtwar tehsil of Doda on Thursday. In a separate accident, Army Major Rajiv Sharma was killed and three injured when their vehicle collided with a truck in Jammu on Wednesday night. In another collision between two vehicles in Jammu on Wednesday night, one person was killed and another wounded.

Bombs recovered in Doda

■ **JAMMU:** Security forces on Thursday foiled militants' plan to trigger blasts along the Jammu-Srinagar national highway by recovering explosive material, including six high power bombs, in Doda district, sources said. —PTI

4 Cong ministers quit J-K govt

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAMMU/NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

THE ruling PDP-Congress coalition in Jammu and Kashmir appeared to be set on a collision course over the Amarnath Yatra's tenure, with four Congress Ministers resigning today and Deputy CM Mangat Ram Sharma questioning the "attitude" of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

As the four ministers sent in their resignations to state Congress chief and Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, Sharma arrived in Delhi to meet the party high command to discuss the development.

The Congress leaders who resigned today are Minister of State for Consumer Affairs Raman Bhalla, Minister of State for Youth



Sadhus and Bajrang Dal activists stage a demonstration against J-K Chief Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed, in Bhopal on Thursday demanding the extension of the Amarnath yatra duration. PTI

and Sports Yogesh Sawhney, Minister of State for Tourism Jugal Kishore and Minister of State for Revenue Ramesh Sharma.

All hailing from Jammu region,

the ministers submitted their papers in protest against Sayeed's decision to restrict the annual pilgrimage to one month without taking the Congress into confidence.

The Deputy Chief Minister, who also belongs to the Congress and hails from Jammu region, said in New Delhi that the decision to limit the yatra duration to one month was that of the CM "individually" and not of the government.

He said the sensitive matter should have been discussed in the Cabinet before any decision was taken. On the Amarnath Yatra, the government did not care to take the Congress into confidence and ignored the sentiments of a number of Hindu organisations demanding extension of yatra from one month to two months, the ministers said.

They also alleged that though the party has a majority of MLAs in the present dispensation in the state, yet important portfolios had been allotted by the Chief Minister to the People's Democratic Party.



J-K separatists excited over EU view on talks

MUFTI ISLAH
SRINAGAR, JUNE 24

THE European Union parliamentary delegation, which ended its three-day tour of Jammu and Kashmir today, has given the separatist camp reasons to cheer by endorsing, for the first time by any influential group, their stand for tripartite talks.

John Cushman, head of the EU team, described Kashmir as an "issue" whose solution could be found by engaging governments of India, Pakistan and representatives of the people of Kashmir. He termed Kashmir a social "conflict" and said any delay to find a solution would further worsen the miseries of the people.

These remarks have come as a pleasant surprise for separatist leaders like hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mohammad Yasin Malik and Shabir Ahmad Shah, as no foreign delegation has gone so far as to challenge India's argument on Kashmir. The moderate group headed by Maulana Abbas Ansari is also jubilant over EU's position.

A strong votary of tripartite talks, Geelani has always demanded that India should withdraw all resolutions on Kashmir in Parliament before any talks can begin with New Delhi. "It is a win-win situation for us. They (EU) have endorsed our stand," said Geelani. JKLF chairman Mohammed Yasin Malik said the EU endorsement was a vindication of his party's stand. Hurriyat Conference leader Abdul Gani Bhat also told mediapersons that Kashmir has been recognised as problem of the world.

John Cushman, head of the EU team, talks to Abdul Gani Bhat of the Hurriyat Conference on Thursday. Reuters

Pak invites moderate Hurriyat for talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 24

IN AN attempt to break the ice with the moderate Hurriyat Conference, Pakistan High Commissioner Aziz Ahmed Khan along with his deputy met senior amalgam leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and invited him for talks with visiting Foreign Secretary Riaz Khokar this weekend.

The move comes as a rebuff for hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who had been claiming all along that Pakistani officials had only invited him for talks with Khokar.



Aziz and his deputy Munawar Bhatti drove to the Mirwaiz's residence in South Delhi and held discussions about the present situation in Kashmir besides requesting him to meet Khokar during his two-day stay in Delhi beginning from Saturday.

Mirwaiz would talk to chairman Ansari and senior leader Abdul Gani Bhat before taking any decision



The two diplomats had sought a meeting with the Mirwaiz for offering condolences for the death of his uncle Maulvi Mushtaq, who was killed by militants last month.

Aziz and Bhatti, who had faced hard times with the moderate Hurriyat Conference led by Maulana

Abbas Ansari for Pakistan's decision to side with the Geelani faction, have also appreciated their moves for finding a lasting solution through talks to the Kashmir issue.

It was not immediately clear whether Mirwaiz, who is here to mourn the death of the 29-year-old son of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Front chairman Bushan Bazaz, had accepted Pakistan's invitation.

Hurriyat Conference sources said the Mirwaiz would talk to senior leaders including Abdul Gani Bhat and chairman Ansari before taking a decision.

Towards CBMs on Kashmir

By C. Raja Mohan

770-12
29/6

WASHINGTON, JUNE 23. As India and Pakistan prepare to sound each other out on the sensitive subject of Jammu and Kashmir, a series of confidence-building measures relating to the divided state could help raise the political comfort level in both the capitals.

The sustainability of the dialogue between India and Pakistan hinges on their ability to address what they consider the core issues — cross-border violence for India and the Kashmir question for Pakistan.

A series of reciprocal actions, in the form of CBMs, could generate the right conditions for a substantive negotiation on Kashmir and the normalisation of bilateral relations.

A unilateral ceasefire by India against the militancy inside Kashmir might provide the much-needed shot in the arm for the discussions on the subject next week.

India had initiated such a ceasefire in November 2000, but called it off in May 2001. It was then somewhat inelegantly called the “non-initiation of combat operations” against the insurgents in Kashmir.

Sections of the establishment would not want to stop the anti-militancy operations, now in top gear. But India cannot see the problem of terrorism in Kashmir in military terms alone. It needs a political approach as well.

A renewal of the internal ceasefire in Kashmir would nicely complement an external one now in place along the international border and the Line of Control in the State since late last year.

The framework for the current peace process unveiled at Islamabad in January rests on a tripod. Its three legs are the Pakistani commitment to end cross-border violence, the Indian willingness to negotiate on Kashmir, and the normalisation of rela-

tions across a broad front. Both sides understand that lack of progress on what they see as the core issue will lead to a rapid diminution of political support for the peace process on the other side.

At these talks Pakistan will be looking for signals from India on a seriousness of intent to discuss the Kashmir question. India, on the other hand, will want credible assurances that levels of violence in Kashmir will remain low.

The ability of both sides to sustain the productive engagement on Kashmir and cross-border terrorism lies not only in what they do at the talks but also outside them.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The power of unilateral actions in India-Pakistan diplomacy was demonstrated on the question of a ceasefire along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir. Over the last few years, whenever one side proposed it, the other side rejected it. A recommendation from the Anglo-American powers some time ago, was also dismissed because it came from outside. But when Pakistan, last November, announced that it was unilaterally implementing the ceasefire, it met with a similar response from India.

In order to create the conditions for a dialogue, Pakistan had promised to curb cross-border infiltration in recent months. India has acknowledged that Pakistan has kept its word. India must now reciprocate with its own political gestures on Kashmir.

Besides a renewed ceasefire, India could also examine a reduction in the level of troop deployment in Kashmir. At a recent conference in Islamabad, senior officials suggested that an Indian move to confine the security forces to their barracks in Kashmir would be seen as a welcome confidence-building measure.

New Delhi has always said the level of forces in Kashmir was determined by the scale and scope of terrorism in Kashmir. If there was no violence in Kashmir, in fact, there was no need to keep so many troops in the State.

With Pakistan reducing the cross-border infiltration and a fence almost complete in the State, India is in a good position to consider a change in the disposition of troops inside Kashmir.

Both are reversible actions. Therefore, the risk inherent in a troop reduction is not one that India cannot afford at this juncture.

India could also consider the question of releasing a larger number of political prisoners in Jammu and Kashmir. Some have already been released earlier this year as part of creating a positive political atmosphere for the talks with the leaders of the Hurriyat.

While acting on its own to improve the political conditions in Kashmir, India would naturally expect similar unilateral gestures from the Pakistani side.

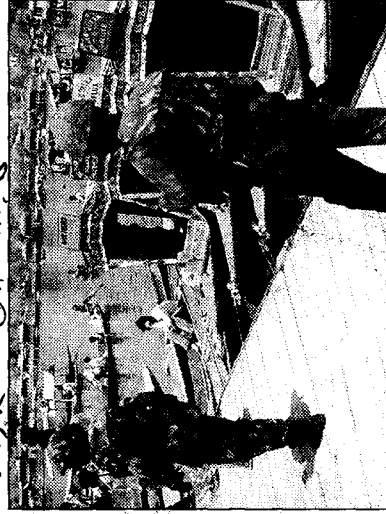
These relate to dismantling of the infrastructure of terrorism across the border and a withdrawal of the militants already inside Kashmir. India would also like to see a more positive attitude in Islamabad towards promoting greater people-to-people contact in the divided State.

India has been keen on getting the proposed bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad going. But negotiations with Pakistan are yet to begin.

A readiness on both sides to experiment with unilateral measures on Kashmir could launch the two nations into a virtuous circle of reciprocal actions — one good step begets another from across the border. Without such a string of actions in Kashmir, the current fragile peace process could begin to unravel sooner than later.

কাশ্মীরে কড়া হাতে জঙ্গি মোকাবিলা করতে চায় কেন্দ্র

নয়াদিল্লি ও শ্রীনগর, ১৩ জুন: কাশ্মীরে শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার লক্ষ্যে আলোচনা চালাতে রাজি থাকলেও কড়া হাতে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপের মোকাবিলা করবে কেন্দ্রীয় সরকার। শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া বানচাল করার কোনও চেষ্টাকে মেনে নেওয়া হবে না বলে আজ মন্তব্য করেছেন কেন্দ্রীয় সরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শ্রীপ্রকাশ জয়সওয়াল। এ দিকে, পহেলগাঁওয়ে পর্যটকদের উপরে গত কালের জঙ্গি হামলার পরে আজ উপত্যকার বিভিন্ন এলাকায় মুর্শে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ পর্যটকদের আশ্বাস দিয়েছেন, তাঁদের নিরাপত্তার যাবতীয় বন্দেবস্তি করবে রাজ্য সরকার। গত কালের ওই হামলায় নিহতের সংখ্যা বেড়ে দাঁড়িয়েছে পাঁচ। গ্রেনেড হামলায় আহত দশ বছরের এক বালক আজ হাসপাতালে মারা গিয়েছে।



দিতে চাই যে, বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদীদের সঙ্গে কথা বলাটা আমাদের দুর্বলতা হিসাবে যেন না ধরা হয়।" কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রীর মতে, কংগ্রেসের নীতি অনুসরণ করেই এন ডি এ সরকার বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদীদের সঙ্গে আলোচনার পথে হেঁটেছিল এবং এখনকার সরকারও ছরিয়তের সঙ্গে ঠেঠকে রাজি।

জঙ্গি হামলার পরে শ্রীনগরে আজ পর্যটকদের আস্থা পুনরুদ্ধারে আসনে নেমেছিলেন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ। পহেলগাঁওয়ের ঘটনার পূর্ণ তদন্ত হবে বলে ঘোষণা করে তিনি উপত্যকার অতিথিদের কাছে আবেদন করেছেন, এই হামলাকে বিচ্ছিন্ন ঘটনা হিসাবেই দেখতে।

পাঁচ। গ্রেনেড হামলায় আহত দশ বছরের এক বালক আজ হাসপাতালে মারা গিয়েছে।

পহেলগাঁওয়ের একটি বিখ্যাত 'হেলথ রিসর্ট'-এ গত কাল হামলা চালায় আল-নাসিরিন নামে একটি স্বল্পখ্যাত জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী। রিসর্টের ভিতরের চায়ের স্টলে পর্যটকদের ভিড় লক্ষ করে জঙ্গিদের ছোড়া গ্রেনেডে ঘটনাস্থলেই মারা যান চার জন, আহত হন ৩০ জন। নিহতদের মধ্যে দু'জন মুম্বইয়ের ও দু'জন উত্তরপ্রদেশের। মুম্বইয়ের পর্যটকের আট বছরের

মায়েও কাল গ্রাণ হারায়, আজ হাসপাতালে মারা গিয়েছে তাঁর দশ বছরের ছেলেও। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে সম্প্রতি পর্যটকদের স্রোত বেড়েছিল। জুলাই মাসের শেষ দিকে অমরনাথ যাত্রাও শুরু হওয়ার কথা। এই পরিস্থিতিতে নিরীহ পর্যটকদের উপরে জঙ্গি আক্রমণের ঘটনায় স্বভাবতই আতঙ্ক সৃষ্টি হয়েছে।

শিকারায় উঠে এবং একাধিক হোটেলে গিয়ে মুফতি পর্যটকদের আশ্বস্ত করেছেন যে, তাঁদের নিরাপত্তার পর্যাপ্ত ব্যবস্থা করবে রাজ্য সরকার। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মনে করছেন, কাশ্মীরের বদনাম করতাই যড়যন্ত্র করে ওই ঘটনা ঘটানো হয়েছে। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের পর্যটনমন্ত্রী গুলাম হাসান মিরও বলেছেন, 'সম্মানীয় অতিথি' পর্যটকদের উপরে হামলা কাশ্মীরের ঐতিহ্য-বিরোধী।

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মায়েও কাল গ্রাণ হারায়, আজ হাসপাতালে মারা গিয়েছে তাঁর দশ বছরের ছেলেও। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে সম্প্রতি পর্যটকদের স্রোত বেড়েছিল। জুলাই মাসের শেষ দিকে অমরনাথ যাত্রাও শুরু হওয়ার কথা। এই পরিস্থিতিতে নিরীহ পর্যটকদের উপরে জঙ্গি আক্রমণের ঘটনায় স্বভাবতই আতঙ্ক সৃষ্টি হয়েছে।

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Geelani, Shabir Shah put under house arrest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
SRINAGAR, JUNE 8

POLICE on Tuesday placed under house arrest leader of the break-away faction of the Hurriyat, Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabir Ahmad Shah.

Police took position outside the house of Geelani at Hyderpora, informing him that he was placed under house arrest and wouldn't be allowed to move out, police sources said, adding, his telephone connection was also snapped.

Police was also deployed at Shah's Rawalpora residence and he, too, was not allowed to move out, sources said.

Criticising the police action, Shah said he was planning to visit Jama Masjid to participate in the *Namaz-e-Jinazah* of Maulvi Mushtaq Ahmed, the Awami Action Committee leader and Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's uncle, who died on Monday.

"I was also planning to visit Lar Sharief to interact with the Gujjars during the annual Urs

and Budgam to participate in the funeral procession of two militants there," Shah added.

"It is the duty of every Muslim to participate in funeral prayers, and restricting them from doing their religious duty is a direct interference in one's religious matters," he said.

Coming down heavily on Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Shah said, "On one hand, he is propagating a dialogue with all for resolution of the Kashmir issue, while on the other, he is placing restrictions on the movement of political leaders to prevent them from performing their religious duties and meeting the public".

Meanwhile, a former commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, Abdul Aaziz Dar alias general Mousa, heading Tehreek-e-Kashmir (TeK), was arrested by the police from Khanyar in downtown Srinagar on Monday, police said on Tuesday.

Dar, released two years ago after nearly 12 years in detention, was intercepted by the police, arresting him in connection with a pending warrant under the Public Safety Act.

HURRIYAT MODERATES TO BOYCOTT GOVT INTERLOCUTOR

Centre reappoints Vohra

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jun 2. — Signalling its intention to continue the peace process in J&K, the UPA government today retained Mr NN Vohra as the Centre's interlocutor. The government is, meanwhile, likely to finalise the dates for the crucial third round of talks with Hurriyat Conference on Friday.

Sources said the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, has called a meeting of his officials on Friday to decide the dates for the next round of talks with Hurriyat. Mr Vohra, who is also to attend the meeting, will call on Mr Patil tomorrow and discuss the modalities of the next meeting with the Hurriyat.

Mr Vohra is also expected to visit Srinagar for three days from 17 June during which time he will attend the European Union-India Round Table Conference and hold meetings with several Hurriyat and other separatist and political leaders. He is also likely to meet Hurriyat chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari and senior amalgam leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and work out the modalities for the third round of talks, likely to be held in June-end or first week of July.

Mr Vohra today called on J&K chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed here and held discussions on the peace talks with Hurriyat. Mr Sayeed arrived here this morning on a two-day visit to the Capital and called on the Prime Minister and Mr Patil later.

Earlier today, the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference decided not to enter into any negotiations with the Centre's interlocutor, Mr NN Vohra, who is to visit Kashmir from



BETWEEN THE SOFT AND THE HARD LINES:
Hurriyat leaders Abbas Ansari and Umar Farooq

17 June. Maulana Mohammed Abbas Ansari, chairman, Hurriyat Conference, said they were not interested in talking to Mr Vohra as they had never interacted with him. "If he visits Kashmir, we will not have any sort of negotiations with him. We cannot stop people from coming to Kashmir. And if Vohra is coming over he can do so. As far as our stand is concerned it stands unchanged," he said adding that Mr Vohra is not coming to meet them.

Mr Vohra had been coming to Kashmir for the last few months and holding meetings with some leaders of the mainstream camp and other political and social activists. This time too, Mr Ansari said, he will do the same exercise. Saying that they were currently keeping a close watch on the developments at the national level as the new government has taken over the reigns of power recently, Maulvi Abbas Ansari said they were just keeping an eye on the developments. "Let us first see which way the ball is rolling. If the new government is going to talk on the same terms which the previous government had accepted then we shall

Pak on N-doctrine

ISLAMABAD, June 2. — Pakistan today reacted cautiously to New Delhi's surprise call for a "common" nuclear doctrine for India, China and Pakistan saying the suggestion required "careful consideration" and could be discussed in detail at the expert-level talks on nuclear CBMs later this month.

The "suggestion by the Indian external affairs minister, Mr K Natwar Singh, needs careful consideration," Pakistan foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said when asked to comment on Mr Singh's suggestion that New Delhi, Beijing and Islamabad evolve a common nuclear doctrine to bring peace and stability in the region and the world. Mr Kasuri said that nuclear Confidence Building Measures, as a specialised subject, required technical evaluation and the proposal could be discussed by experts of both countries during the talks to be held in New Delhi on 19 and 20 June. — PTI

talk. But if there is any change then we have to rethink," he said. Commenting on the proposal, India-Pakistan foreign secretary level talks, Mr Ansari said the Hurriyat has nothing to do with it. "It is a good sign that both countries are talking. As far as our view is concerned, we are more serious about our dialogue. We want the Kashmiris should be involved and their view accepted on the issue because Kashmir is not border dispute... it is an issue confronting 1 million people of the state," he said.

ADB grant for Kupwara: The border district of Kupwara has been allocated Rs 12 crore by the Asian Development Bank and Rs 15 crore under a Centre-sponsored scheme, adds PTI

HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN OWNS RESPONSIBILITY

Attack on BSF bus kills 33

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, May 23. — Militants blew up a BSF bus by detonating a powerful IED, killing 33 people at Lower Munda, Qazigund, in Anantnag district on Srinagar-Jammu National Highway today. Among the dead were 15 jawans, six women and three children. Two were critically injured.

Police said the incident took place at 10 a.m. when the BSF bus with 33 passengers, including 15 jawans and their family members, was on its way to Jammu. The jawans and their family were returning home on leave. As the bus passed through a small culvert near Lower Munda, the ultras detonated the IED under the bridge.

As a big explosion took place, the fuel tank of the bus exploded and the vehicle caught fire. All the passengers got burnt. Twenty-eight people were confirmed dead, while three were critically injured. Three civilians were also injured.

Most of the casualties occurred not

because of the blast but due to the fire that engulfed the bus, a security official said.

Fire tenders rushed to the spot to douse the flames. Troops from nearby Army camps and policemen started rescue operations. But by this time most of the people had died. Choppers were used to airlift bodies and the injured.

Army, paramilitary forces and police have cordoned off the area. Traffic on the 300-km Srinagar-Jammu highway has been suspended as the blast created a two-metre deep crater on the road.

The Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen has claimed the responsibility for the attack. A spokesman of the outfit called up news agencies and staked claim for the attack. He also threatened to intensify the attacks in the state. The National Conference has condemned the attack and asked both Hizb-ul-Mujahadeen and the Centre to announce a ceasefire.

Cabinet condemns killings: The Union Cabinet passed a resolution condemning the attack, adds PTI.

SCA
2A
India postpones talks with Pakistan

Nilova Roy Chaudhury in New Delhi

May 23. — India today informed Pakistan that it wanted the official-level talks on nuclear confidence-building measures postponed. According to senior officials, the terrorist attack in J&K was not the reason India sought the postponement of the talks. The new government "needed more time to get acquainted" with the status of the bilateral composite dialogue, a senior official said.

The senior officials will meet shortly before the foreign secretary-level talks scheduled for the end of June, to speak of the nuclear CBMs, officials indicated. The talks are aimed at both countries being better acquainted with each others' nuclear arsenals, thereby reducing the risk of any future nuclear conflict.

Pakistan was due to send two foreign office mandarins, additional secretary Mr Tariq Osman Haider, and director-India, Mr Tariq Zameer, on Monday for the talks, earlier scheduled for 25 and 26 June, on nuclear CBMs. Mr Sheel Kant Sharma, additional secretary in the MEA, was due to lead the Indian team.

Ansari quits as Hurriyat chairman

Srinagar: In a sudden move, Hurriyat chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari on Friday stepped down from the post and proposed that moderate separatist leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq be his successor.



Ansari, who had taken over the Hurriyat reins last year and had held two rounds of talks with outgoing deputy Prime Minister L K Advani, made the announcement at a function to mark the 14th death anniversary of Maulvi Farooq, Umer's father. After Ansari, a Shia, took over the Hurriyat chairmanship, hardline separatist leaders like Jamaat-e-Islami's Syed Ali Shah Geelani had walked out of the amalgam and formed a parallel outfit.

"I have been the bone of contention and I have decided to step down from the chairmanship so that there is unity," Ansari said, adding that he

would give a month's time to the breakaway group to consider the fresh proposal and join the parent body.

Surprised by the announcement, Umer told the gathering that the group would meet on Sunday to discuss the developments. "The chairmanship is not an issue for us. What we want is unity and appropriate steps to find an everlasting solution to the Kashmir problem," the founder chairman of the amalgam said.

Highlighting the Hurriyat agenda, Umer said the outfit would continue to tread the path of peace despite the government change in the Centre.

"The Congress is committed to resolving the issue as former prime minister Jawharlal Nehru had promised Kashmiris the right of self-determination. India and Pakistan have talked in Tashkent, Shimla and Agra. The two sides must hold the next round of talks in Srinagar to resolve the differences on Kashmir," he said. Agencies

Top Hizbul ultra killed

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, May 6. — The Jammu and Kashmir police today killed the chief operations commander of the largest militant outfit in the state, Hizbul Mujahideen, in an encounter in downtown Srinagar. Gazi Shahabuddin alias Abdul Rashid Pir alias Peer Shardar, was not only the brain behind all the terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir but also the number two man in Hizbul Mujahideen.

The success of the operation is being considered a major achievement by the J&K Police. Addressing a hurriedly convened press conference at the police headquarters here this evening, Mr Gopal Sharma, Director General of Police in the state, said the police acted on specific information about the presence of the Hizbul chief operations commander. They subsequently laid a cordon around the house in Gurgadi Mohalla of Maharajgunj. The police party came under heavy fire during the search and Gazi Shaha-

buddin was killed in the exchange of fire.

A resident of Khumoh, in Panthachowk police station, Gazi Shahabuddin was active for the past eight years in the troubled state. He had crossed over to Pakistan and stayed there for quite a long time. He returned to Kashmir in October 2001, along with Ghulam Hassan Khan alias Saiful Islam, and took over as the central divisional commander. He later became the chief commander of operations for the entire state after Ghulam Rasool Dar alias Reyaz Rasool died in another encounter with security forces in January early this year.

Gazi Shahabuddin became number two in the hierarchy after Syed Salahuddin, supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen. He was involved in several incidents of violence in Srinagar and Budgam, including the Srinagar fruit mandi blast in September 2003 in which seven civilians were killed. He also had a hand in the Lawaypora Bazar blast in December 2003 and the Rambagh Srinagar grenade attack last month.

THE STATESMAN

MAY 7 2003

EC orders filing of case against Mehbooba

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 4. The Election Commission today asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to register a criminal case against Mehbooba Mufti, leader of the People's Democratic Party and daughter of the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, for allegedly intimidating voters in Srinagar during the second phase of polling on April 26.

The decision to file an FIR was taken at a meeting of the full Commission, said A.N. Jha, Deputy Election Commissioner and Commission spokesman.

Briefing reporters, Mr. Jha said the authorities concerned had been directed to file a case under Section 171 (c) of the Indian Penal Code and the relevant provisions of the Representation of the People Act. He said that according to complaints received by the Commission, Ms. Mehbooba intimidated voters that day at a booth in the Srinagar parliamentary constituency, where she is contesting the election against the National Conference leader, Omar Abdullah. The Commission had also received a report from the State authorities.

The National Conference had filed a complaint with the Commission that Ms. Mehbooba had gone into a polling booth at Burn Hall School and lifted the veil of a woman. It was alleged that Ms. Mehbooba had abused her power by storming

the polling booth along with her security guards and threatening the voters.

After lodging the complaint with the chief electoral officer in the State, the National Con-

ference threatened to boycott the subsequent phases of polling if the Commission did not take any action.

The election officers in the State conducted an inquiry and

their report found that Ms. Mehbooba "did intimidate" the voters on the polling day. Hence the Commission had recommended the registration of a case against her.

'I will prove my innocence'

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MAY 4. The ruling People's Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti, says she will prove her innocence in the case of "intimidation" of voters at a polling booth here on April 26.

Reacting to the Election Commission's directive to register an FIR against her for "intimidating voters," Ms. Mehbooba said: "I am confident that I will prove my innocence ... I will defend myself and the law will take its own course if the Election Commission feels that if any action should be taken against me for exposing a bogus voter. As a responsible citizen, I challenged a woman who had come to cast the vote as a bogus voter," she told *The Hindu* adding that "I am happy that the Election Commission has not given an escape route to the National Conference, which had threatened to pull out from the polls making this issue an excuse."



Stating that she had full confidence in the fairness of the Election Commission, Ms. Mehbooba said: "It is good the issue will be investigated."

The Commission's directive would have no impact on my prospects as a candidate for the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituency, she said. Accusing the National Conference of running out of issues to fight the elections, she said: "They wanted to run away from

the elections as they know about their fate but the Commission has not obliged them." The National Conference had a record of banking on the mobile voters and rigging elections, she said adding that "it is because of the National Conference's record irregularities in 1987 elections we are facing such a situation in Kashmir."

NC welcomes directive

The National Conference, which had agitated against Ms. Mehbooba's action, has welcomed the decision. "The party welcomes the Election Commission's decision and is hopeful that it will take steps to protect the democratic rights of the people in the third phase of the elections in Kashmir," a party statement said.

The National Conference leader, Farooq Abdullah, who is in Haryana said: "This is a step in the right direction and that is what I call the flowering of a democracy and not that preached by the PDP."

5 MAY 2004

Another bid on Mehbooba

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 25. A day before Srinagar goes to the polls, militants today made another attempt on the life of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti. One person was killed and seven were injured in the attack, the third targeting Ms. Mehbooba.

A grenade hurled by militants at a public meeting being addressed by Ms. Mehbooba in the remote Akhal village in south Kashmir missed its target and exploded near the vehicle of a private television network. Ms. Mehbooba's motorcade had left the area and the crowd was dispersing when the explosion took place.

Fayaz Bukhari, a reporter with New Delhi Television, and his cameraman, Sheikh Tariq, were in the car near which the grenade burst. "At 2.45 p.m., the grenade exploded near the vehicle, damaging it and injuring Tariq and the driver, Mo-

hammad Ismail," Mr. Bukhari told *The Hindu*. Their vehicle was at the tailend of the motorcade.

Ms. Mehbooba, who was inside her bulletproof vehicle, escaped unhurt even as the people ran in panic. Eight persons were injured and were admitted to hospitals in Anantnag and Srinagar. One of them died later.

Ms. Mehbooba is seeking election from the Anantnag Lok Sabha constituency.

In another incident, militants fired at the vehicle of the PDP MLA from Pampore, Zahoor Ahmed Mir, in the Konibal area. The IGP (Kashmir zone), K. Rajindra Kumar, said that nobody was hurt. Mr. Mir's father, Abdul Aziz Mir, also an MLA, was gunned down by militants in 2002.

Even as tight security arrangements are in place in view of elections in the Srinagar-Budgam constituency tomorrow, militants fired rifle grenades at a police station in the Lal Bazar area. The explosions caused injuries to 13 persons.

THE HINDU

26 APR 2004

Militants attack Congress office in Srinagar

● 20 injured ● NC vehicle too targeted

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 23. With just two days left for polling for the Srinagar constituency, militants today attacked the office of the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) and a campaign vehicle of the National Conference. Top-level officers of the Special Service Bureau (SSB) battalion were among the 20 persons injured in the attack.

The militants lobbed a grenade towards the PCC office at around 1 p.m. It exploded near a bunker of the SSB personnel. As the senior officers and a battery of media persons rushed to the spot, the militants hurled two more grenades.

N.S. Bhandari, Commandant, R.S. Negi, Deputy Commandant, Rajindra Kumar, Assistant Commandant, C.C. Pathak, Deputy SP, (all belonging to the SSB) and two jawans of the SSB and the Border Security Force were injured and shifted to hospital. The condition of Mr. Pathak was said to be critical. "Even as we were taking stock of the situation a second

grenade exploded," the Assistant Commandant, Kumar, told *The Hindu*. Two photo journalists, Farooq Javed (*Hindustan Times*) and Fayaz Ahmed (*Asia News International*), were also injured. As the security forces opened fire, the militants ran away.

Soon after the attack, the area was cordoned off by the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the BSF and the Jammu and Kashmir Police. Fearing that some fidayeen had sneaked into the building the forces evacuated some civilians, including students, from the neighbouring College of Education. However, the

operation was called off after three hours. A handful of Congress workers managed to escape soon after the first grenade was thrown towards the office.

Some people from Maisuma area assembled near the site of operation and raised pro-freedom slogans but were chased away by the people. Shopkeepers too downed their shutters in panic.

Later, the militants hurled a grenade towards a vehicle campaigning for the National Conference in Rambagh locality. Seven persons, including a policeman, were injured. This was the second attack on the NC activists in

less than 24 hours. Militants had attacked an NC vehicle yesterday, injuring five persons.

The Inspector-General of Police, K. Rajindra Kumar, said that such incidents "are expected as militants are frustrated with the response of people in taking part in a democratic exercise. But adequate security arrangements are in place to foil their attempts and we will ensure that those coming to polling booths are safe."

The Al-Mansureen and the Kashmir Freedom Forum owned responsibility for the blast. They said that the attacks would continue.

Photograph on Page 11

H10-16

Shabir Shah arrested

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 15. The Democratic Freedom Party chief, Shabir Shah, was arrested here today soon after he embarked on a State-wide campaign to make people aware of the political situation with regard to the coming parliamentary elections.

Mr. Shah and his supporters were heading for the border district of Kupwara in a few vehicles, raising slogans in favour of "azadi" (freedom) and against the elections, when police stopped them near Iqbal Park here and asked Mr. Shah to accompany them. A heated exchange of words followed when Mr.

Shah refused to oblige. Later, police resorted to a lathicharge and arrested Mr. Shah and his supporters for violation of the prohibitory orders under Section 144.

Earlier, at a press conference, Mr. Shah said that he would lead a yatra 'Qafla-e-shaheen' from Srinagar to Kupwara and Kupwara to Nobra in the Ladakh region. This would tell the people why the "elections are irrelevant."

Criticising mainstream parties such as the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the National Conference in Jammu and Kashmir, he said they were "blackmailing the people." The elections were just for forming

J & K

governments whether at the Centre or the State. "Elections will not solve our problem and we have seen it in the past." The vote had its own importance but a solution to the Kashmir issue could come only through a dialogue between India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris. Opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road was only a confidence-building measure and not the solution as being portrayed by the PDP.

Tarigami files papers

The CPI(M) State secretary, Mohammad Yusuf Tarigami, today filed his nomination papers for the Anantnag parliamentary constituency. He later addressed a public meeting.

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THE HINDU

16 APR 2004

Lashkar commander killed, plot to kill leaders unearthed

By Shujaat Bukhari

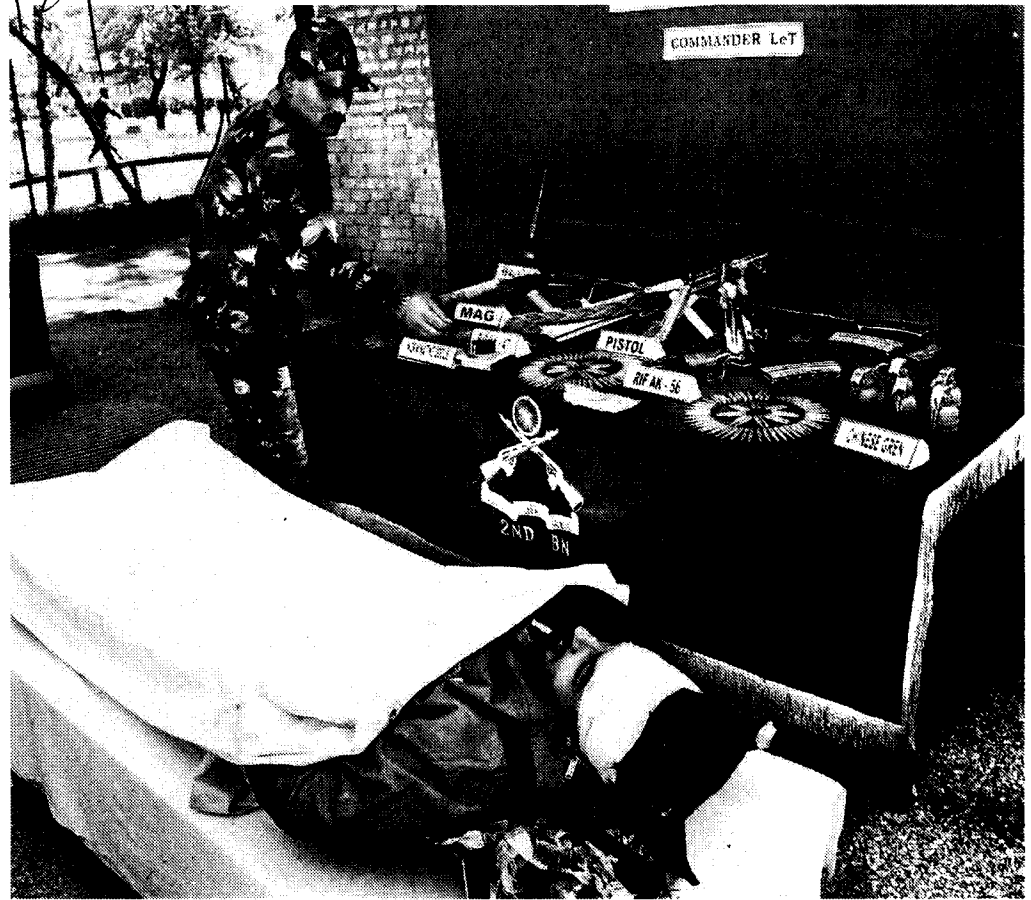
SRINAGAR, APRIL 14. The Army today claimed to have scuttled a plot of the Lashkar-e-Taiba to target senior politicians in and outside the Jammu and Kashmir, ahead of elections when a top commander of the outfit was killed in Shalteng on the outskirts of Srinagar.

Brigadier A.K. Chowdary, sector commander of the Rashtriya Rifles, told reporters that the killed militant, Bashir Ahmed Khan alias Abu Kashan hailing from Sargoda, Pakistan, had entered the Kashmir Valley a month ago, along with four other militants. He was specially sent from Jammu to Srinagar to target the politicians and election rallies, Brig. Chowdary said.

The divisional commander of the outfit, and the mastermind behind several attacks, was gunned down early this morning.

He said a diary was recovered and according to it Kashan was heading a three-member suicide squad. The names of the People's Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti, the National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, the Shiv Sena leader, Bal Thackeray, the Jammu and Kashmir Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Beig, and some police officers figure in the diary.

Ms. Mehbooba was referred to as "Mohtarma (esteemed) Mufti" and Mr. Omar as "Chota Abdullah." The Hurriyat Conference chairman, Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari, who has held two rounds of talks with the Deputy Prime



The body of the Lashkar-e-Taiba commander, Abu-Qashi, at the Army camp in Srinagar on Wednesday. — Photo Nissar Ahmad

Minister, L.K. Advani, on the Kashmir issue is also on the hit list of the squad, Brig. Chowdary said.

According to the diary, the militant commander visited Baramulla on April 2 to hold a meeting for carrying out the attack on the PDP rally in Uri on April 8, in which Ms. Mehbooba and Mr. Beig survived but 11 persons were killed.

The slain militant had also

mentioned that he visited the Jammu Railway station on December 26 and attacked it on January 3.

He held a meeting on February 26 in Bijbehara, the hometown of the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

The diary said that on April 8, a "successful attack on two Ministers" was carried out in Uri.

Besides the diary, the

troops recovered two AK assault rifles, nine magazines, 150 rounds, a pistol and two grenades.

As per the diary, the militant had visited Race Course, Pragati Maidan, Gargoan and Noida in Delhi for surveillance of the areas in which sensitive installations are located as also the residence of the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Roadmap in hand, Hurriyat goes to people

MIR-EMSAN
SRINAGAR, APRIL 11

THE Hurriyat Conference is likely to discuss the proposed roadmap on Kashmir and the outcome of the two rounds of talks with Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani with the public on May 21. The day coincides with the death anniversary of the two Hurriyat leaders Maulvi Mohammad Farooq and Abdul Gani Lone.

Senior Executive Council member and Hurriyat spokesman Prof. Abdul Gani Bhat said the Hurriyat has already prepared a roadmap to resolve the Kashmir problem. "We have decided to

disclose the outcome of the two rounds of talks with the common people at a grand function on May 21. If necessary, we will also share our roadmap with the people," he said.

Disclosing this at the Hurriyat headquarters today, Prof Bhat said they had already informed India, Pakistan and world leaders that the Hurriyat has prepared a roadmap for the resolution of the Kashmir problem.

"The Hurriyat leadership is going to lead not to be led. The people of Kashmir are a basic party in the dispute and the problem will never be resolved unless some bold initiatives are taken by all the sides. All the par-



The Hurriyat is going to lead, not be led. If necessary, we will seek the common people's mandate to continue dialogue with Centre

ties have to show flexibility if they want to resolve the Kashmir dispute," he said.

"In our meetings with Deputy Prime Minister Advani and the Pakistan High Commissioner Aziz Ahmad Khan, we

told them of the roadmap but have not yet discussed it in detail. To keep the Kashmiri people aware of the developments vis-a-vis Kashmir, the Hurriyat leadership is going to share all the details with the common

masses. If necessary we will again seek a mandate from the common people to continue our dialogue process with the Centre" he said.

He said the Hurriyat has maintained transparency from the day it decided to hold talks with the Centre. "Before going to Delhi, we sought a mandate from the people of Kashmir at a big congregation at the Jamia mosque," he said, adding that the Hurriyat entered into talks with the Centre not to seek power or any personal benefits but to resolve the Kashmir problem.

Showing optimism for the next round of Centre-Hurriyat talks — scheduled to be held in

June — Bhat said that he is hopeful that the Hurriyat would achieve a major breakthrough before the third round of talks.

"The statement of the DPM asking for a substantive dialogue has raised our hopes. I am sure the talks now will focus on Kashmir," he said.

The former Hurriyat chairman said the Kashmir problem is a long-pending dispute and India and Pakistan have fought wars on the Kashmir. "India and Pakistan are atomic powers. Now they have to resolve the Kashmir problem. America and other countries are also pressing both the nations to solve the problem," he said.

Two J&K ministers seriously hurt in ultra attack

Pr-1
9/4

10 Killed, 100 Wounded, Mehbooba Escapes Unhurt

By Saleem Pandit/TNN

Srinagar: Militants threw a grenade and sprayed machine-gun fire at an election rally at Uri in Baramullah district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday, seriously injuring state finance minister Muzaffar Hussain Baig and tourism minister Ghulam Hasan Mir even as ruling PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti escaped unhurt. Nine civilians and one policeman were killed and 100 wounded in the attack.

The attack was clearly aimed at scaring voters and it came as electioneering in the state was picking up and many ordinary Kashmiris were beginning to attend rallies. Thursday's rally, being attended by about 500 people, was organised by the PDP. Voting in J&K begins on April 20.

"The explosion was followed by firing. We could not see who was firing, but I could see many people lying in a pool of blood," said Fayaz

Ahmed, a cameraman. Eyewitnesses said the attack occurred soon after Mehbooba and Baig's arrival near the rally site and as they lead a procession. Mehbooba had survived an assassination attempt last week.

Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Mehbooba's father, said the attack was "an attempt to derail the peace process and elections". He said his government would not be cowed down into pulling out of the peace process.

Baig, 59, suffered serious shrapnel wounds on his legs and abdomen. He was shifted by helicopter to Srinagar's Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences. His injuries are serious but not supposed to be life-threatening. Thirteen seriously injured people were also transferred to Srinagar.

A little known group identified as 'Save Kashmir Movement' claimed responsibility for the attack in a call to a local news agency. However, police suspect the Lashkar-e-Toiba, as

it had openly threatened to use violence to disrupt voting.

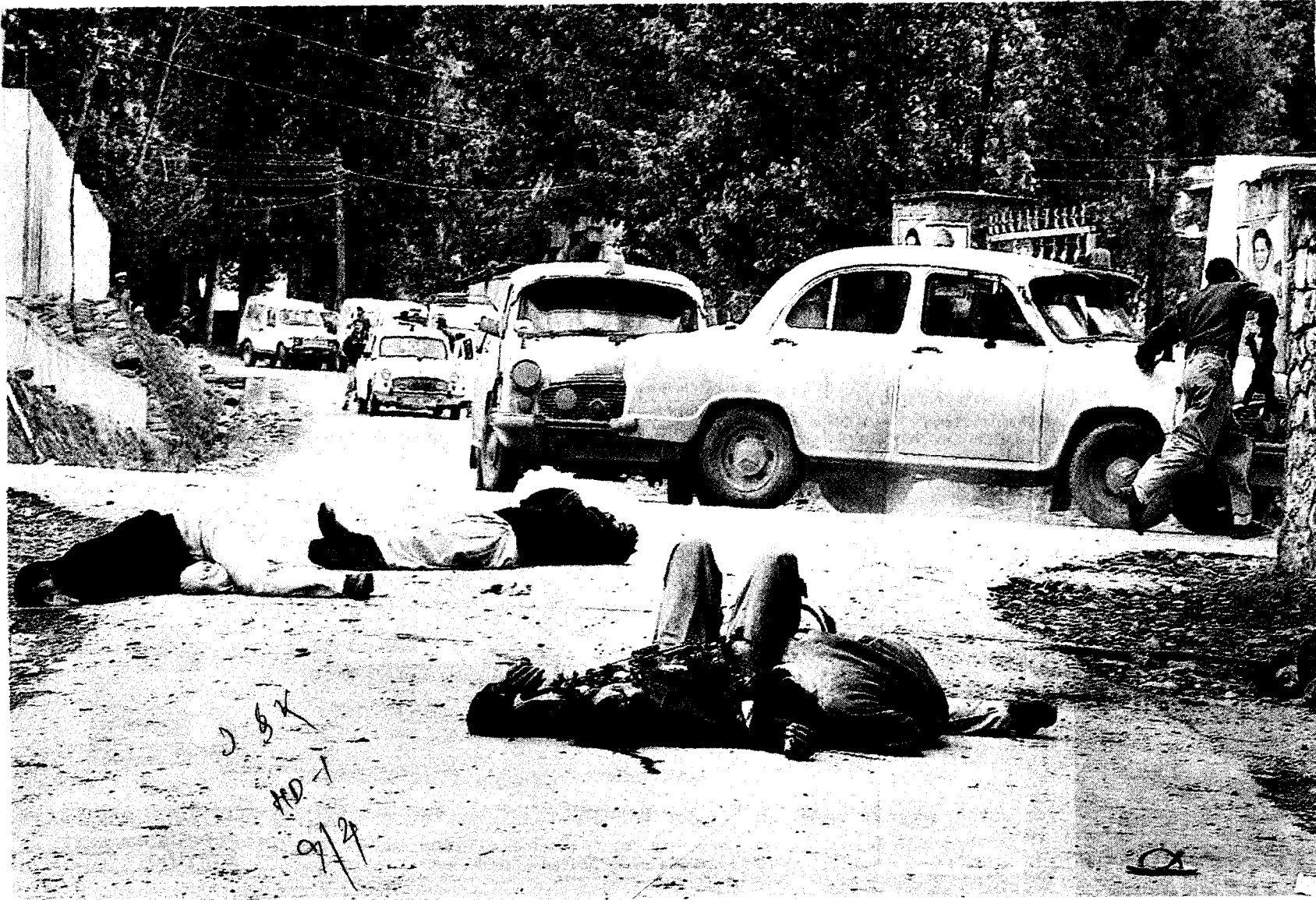
In a separate incident, the army shot dead the chief of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, Sahrai Baba, and four other top militants of the outfit in an encounter in Kupwara district. Baba, who took over the reins of JeM after the killing of Gazi Baba, the brain behind Parliament attack, was shot dead along with his deputy Irfan, district commander Zubair and close associates Mawai and Ali Sheikh.

In another incident in Kupwara district's Gachee town, an LeT suicide bomb attack left four soldiers dead and 16 others injured. The military said troops had gone for a search operation when militants fired at them. The troops retaliated, killing the top commander of the Pakistan-based LeT, Mohammad Shakeel alias Abu Qasim. Just as troops neared the slain militant's body, explosives strapped to the corpse exploded, killing four soldiers.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 APR 2004

Nine killed, 80 injured as militants attack PDP rally; Mehbooba escapes



Bodies lie scattered as bullet-proof cars speed away moments after militants attacked a PDP election rally in Uri, 100 km north of Srinagar, on Thursday. — AP (More photographs on Page 14)

By Shujaat Bukhari

URI, APRIL 8. In the first-ever attack by militants in this border town, nine persons, two of them assistants of Jammu and Kashmir Ministers, were killed and 80, including two senior Ministers, were injured when grenades were hurled at a People's Democratic Party election rally today.

The PDP president, Mehbooba Mufti, and the party candidate, Nizamuddin Bhat, escaped unhurt.

Ms. Mehbooba and the Finance Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Baig, were walking to the podium, just 100 metres away, when the militants struck. Four persons were killed on the spot. Police later confirmed the death of five others and the condition of at least 10 is said to be crit-

ical. Ms. Mehbooba and Mr. Bhat were immediately whisked away to safety by their guards.

Abid Manhas, assistant to Mr. Baig, and Abdur Rashid, personal security officer of the Tou-

rism Minister, Ghulam Hassan Mir, died of injuries in hospital, sources said.

PDP supporters raised slogans against the police for the security lapse and had heated

arguments with them. "No senior police officer was present here," a PDP worker said. Among the injured who were immediately rushed to hospital were Mr. Baig and Mr. Mir.

While Mr. Mir was discharged from the hospital after first aid, Mr. Baig was rushed to Srinagar for treatment. "He is out of danger but has received multiple injuries," Sheikh Zahoor, his press officer, told *The Hindu*.

The rest of the injured were shifted to Baramulla and Srinagar.

'Ready to face threat'

Immediately after the attack, Ms. Mehbooba addressed the people at the venue. She reiterated her party's stand to strive for peace and for uniting the people on both sides of the border.

She said her supporters blamed the Congress and police for sabotaging the peace moves. "Both the BJP and the Congress do not want peace to be restored," she said.

"Some goondas have challenged us but we are ready to face it. I would have been lucky to get killed with my party activists for the noble cause of peace." She said she had not come for the votes but for the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road.

Mr. Mir said that such attacks would not dampen his party's spirit to continue the efforts for restoring peace and order in the State.

"The reaction of the people after the incident was visible," he said.

PM, Mufti condemn attack: Page 14

Jaish military chief, 4 militants killed

SRINAGAR, APRIL 8. The Army today shot dead the head of the military operations of the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad, Qari Mohammed Asif, codenamed Sehrai Baba, and four other top militants of the outfit in an encounter in Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir. Baba, who took over the reins of the Jaish after the killing of Gazi Baba, the brain behind the Parliament House attack, was shot dead along with his deputy Irfan, district commander Zubair, and close associates, Mawai and Ali Sheikh, at Sheikhnear-Surigam village of Sogam, 101 km from here, sources said. — PTI

A blow to Jaish: Page 14

Kashmiri Pandits promised quotas

By M Saleem Pandit/TNN

Srinagar: The Jammu and Kashmir government has decided to provide reservations for the Kashmiri Hindus who have stayed back in government jobs.

Minister of revenue, relief and rehabilitation, Hakeem Mohammed Yasin, said, "The biggest problem for them is unemployment. The government has decided to reserve seats in government jobs for the Pandits staying back home. After the polls are over, a formal announcement would be made," Hakeem said.

On the community's security, the minister said the government was ready to accommodate the Pandits in safe houses in district headquarters. "We are constructing flats at Sheikhpora for the mi-



Democratic Freedom Party president Shabir Ahmad Shah (right) interacts with Kashmiri Pandits on Ram Navami in Srinagar on Tuesday

grant Pandits who intend to come back. If the Pandits living here have some security-related problems, they too can be accommodated. We have an open policy," he said.

The decision comes after the Hindu Welfare Society, an apex organization of Pandits who have not migrated, accused the government of breach of trust. "We were promised the moon by the state government, but it remained on papers only. We suspended our hunger strike in October last year, just because the government promised to provide us all sort of relief so that we can live safely in Kashmir. But after a few months, the government became apathetic," said Chuni Lal Bhat, counsellor and chief spokesman of the HWS.

Bhat said if the situation persists, they would have no other way but to migrate from the vale. "Pandit refugees won't return if the state government is unwilling to mitigate the suffering of the members of the community currently living in the valley. The signs are ominous that the population will dwindle in the years to come," he added.

Security with a human face, Advani promises Hurriyat

● 'Review of cases of detenus will be expedited'

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, MARCH 27. In a bid to consolidate the ongoing process of dialogue with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, the Centre today assured the Hurriyat leaders that the review of the cases of detenus would be expedited and the mechanism for ensuring "zero level" human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir strictly monitored. The Centre's prescription to the security forces deployed in the State is — "security with a human face."

"Recognising that a new government will be in place in the latter half of May 2004, it was agreed that discussions on substantive issues would start at

the next meeting to be held in June, 2004," a statement issued by the Union Home Ministry said at the end of the second round of the Centre-Hurriyat talks. It said that today's talks took place "in a cordial atmosphere and in a free and frank manner," and that the "progress on issues raised in the first meeting held on January 22, 2004 was reviewed."

Addressing a press conference after the two-hour talks with the four-member Hurriyat Conference delegation, led by its chairman, Moulana Abbas Ansari, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, said the Hurriyat leaders were concerned about two issues — release of political detenus and violation

of human rights by the security forces in the State. The other members of the Hurriyat delegation were Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Abdul Ghani Bhat and Bilal Ghani Lone.

Mr. Advani said the Government recognised that the Hurriyat leaders had come to talks despite "pressure from several quarters and directions." In his view, the general climate for talks became conducive after the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Islamabad, his talks with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the joint India-Pakistan statement.

He admitted that better India-Pakistan relations did have an impact on the talks with the

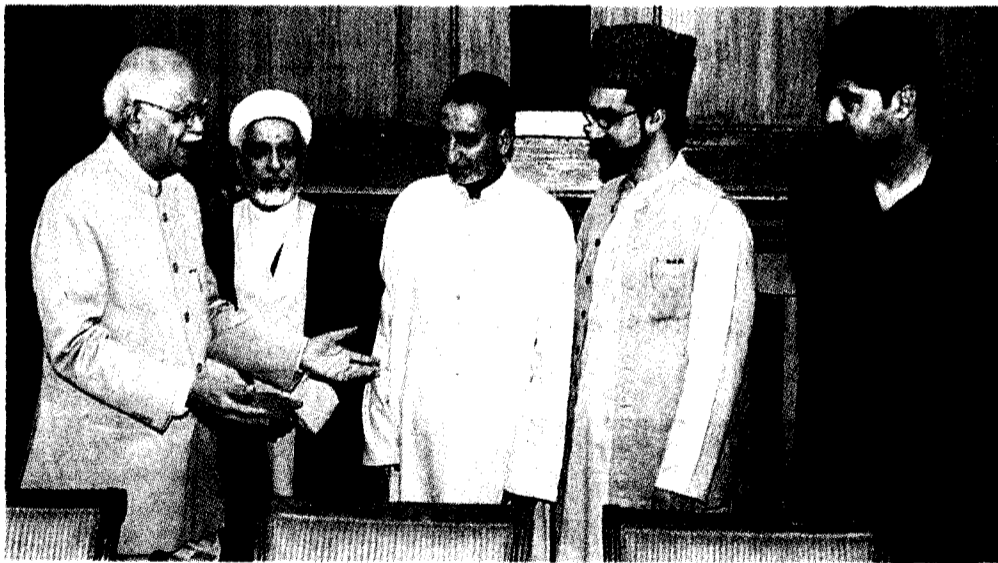
Hurriyat which was, "by and large, a cohesive and representative group" though the Geelani faction was still separated.

"We are ensuring that human rights violations do not take place and even while discharging their duties in relation to maintaining security and law and order, [the] security forces must have a human face and they should see to it that ordinary citizens are not subjected to any harassment," Mr. Advani said.

He said the Hurriyat leaders were apprised of the progress made in respect of release of detenus and human rights violations since the first round of talks in January. "Already, 69 detenus have been released and [the] cases of some more are being reviewed. It is an ongoing process. Since the new government is expected to be in place by mid-May, I told them that tentatively the next meeting can be held in June and it will be the first meeting where substantive issues may be discussed."

Asked about the nature of the substantive issues, he said these "issues are in their (Hurriyat leaders') minds" and added that "we have not imposed any constraints on them."

Earlier, addressing reporters Prof. Bhat said there was a "discernible change" in attitude and the situation on the ground had improved. To a question if the Hurriyat would give a call for boycotting the Lok Sabha elections, he said: "Leave that to our discretion. We are too pre-occupied with the peace process and it is a huge process, we have no time to think in terms of other issues...."



The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, welcomes the leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference for talks in New Delhi on Saturday. The Hurriyat leaders (from left) are its chairman, Moulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari, Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Bilal Ghani Lone. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

28 MAR 2004

Yasin Malik, Shabir Shah arrested

By Shujaat Bukhari
SRINAGAR, MARCH 26. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman, Mohammad Yasin Malik, and the Democratic Freedom Party chief, Shabir Shah, were arrested today at two separate places along with scores of their supporters. They were on way to address anti-election campaign rallies in Bandipora and Kupwara.

Mr. Malik and his deputy, Javed Mir, were detained near Sumbal in Baramulla district.

Mr. Malik was going to Bandipora to address a Friday congregation in connection with his party's signature campaign asking people to stay away from the elections. When police asked Mr. Malik to return to Srinagar, he insisted on visiting Bandipora. Apprehending trouble, police took Mr. Malik and Mr. Mir into custody, sources said. Mr. Shah was detained near Mirgund on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway. He was on his way to Kupwara to address a meeting. Talking to

The Hindu over phone from the police station, Mr. Shah said he had planned to address a rally to create an awareness among people on the ongoing political situation.

Meanwhile, both Mr. Shah and Mr. Malik told the visiting British High Commissioner in India, Sir Michael Arthur, that they would not participate in the coming elections.

'A bilateral issue'

Sir Michael later told The Hindu that he had wide-

ranging discussions with the Governor, the Chief Minister, the top brass of the Army and separatist leaders to assess the situation for himself. "Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and we cannot mediate unless asked for it," he said. Sir Michael said that the situation in Kashmir had changed a lot and interaction with the people also reflected a change in the people's mood, particularly in the backdrop of improving relations between the two countries.

J&K: legalised discrimination

By Arvind P. Datar

THE JAMMU and Kashmir Permanent Residents (Disqualification) Bill 2004 that sought to disqualify permanent resident women who marry non-"permanent resident" men rightly created a furore throughout the country. There is no doubt that the Bill will seriously prejudice the property rights of permanent resident women who marry men who do not enjoy identical status.

Persons who are not permanent residents are second-class citizens in the State. Despite being citizens of India, they do not have equal rights in several matters. In 1947, a large number of refugees from West Pakistan migrated to Jammu and Kashmir in the wake of Partition. Most of the refugees were Hindus and today they constitute about eight per cent of the population of the State.

As Jammu and Kashmir enjoys a special status under Article 370 of our Constitution, it also has the privilege of having its own Constitution, which came into effect on January 26, 1957. Section 3 of its Constitution emphatically declares that Jammu and Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of India. Section 6 creates a special privileged class of persons who are called "permanent residents."

Who are permanent residents? Permanent residents should be "State Subjects" of Class-I or Class-II category. The definition of Class-I or Class-II subjects depends on two notifications issued in 1927 and 1932. Persons who have been ordinarily

residents in Jammu and Kashmir from May 14, 1944, and have lawfully acquired immovable property are also permanent residents. The definition of a "permanent resident," read with these two notifications, is rather lengthy and complex. The fact remains that most refugees who came into Jammu and Kashmir from West Pakistan after 1947 do not fall within this category.

There is no legal or moral justification for granting special rights to "permanent residents" and denying them to others.

Such persons suffer serious discrimination. For example, they are disqualified from registering on the electoral rolls under Section 12 (b) of the Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act. Section 4 of the Land Alienation Act prohibits transfer of lands to any person who is not a State subject. Rule 17(a) of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Service Rules provides for appointment by direct recruitment only to those who are permanent residents.

Not content with this, the Resettlement Act, 1982, permitted those who migrated to Pakistan as refugees to return to India under a permit for resettlement. Thus persons who left India 30 years ago could come back and become permanent residents, whereas people who had come to India in 1947 were disqualified.

The Resettlement Bill was present-

ed to the then Jammu and Kashmir Governor, B.K. Nehru. He consulted Nami Palkhivala who took the view that the Bill would not stand scrutiny in any court. However, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly passed the Act in 1982 and it was referred to the Supreme Court as Presidential Reference No.1 of 1982.

While the reference was pending, a person who migrated from West Pa-

Court observed that they had a "justifiable grievance." The Supreme Court expressed the hope that the claims of persons such as Kalgoitra would receive due consideration from the Government of India and the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The Supreme Court did not decide the reference and the Resettlement Act was challenged once again. The net result is that persons like Kalgoitra continued to be denied the basic rights under our Constitution despite being citizens of India.

How is this discrimination permissible? In any other State, such laws would be struck down as unconstitutional almost automatically. Indeed, such laws would be void under our Constitution but Article 35A states that "notwithstanding anything contained in the Constitution of India," existing or future laws in Jammu and Kashmir cannot be challenged on the ground that they are inconsistent with, or abridge, any fundamental rights conferred on other citizens of India. Migrants from West Pakistan, who came to India in 1947, are Indian citizens and are entitled to the basic fundamental right to equality under our Constitution.

There is no legal or moral justification for granting such special rights or privileges to "permanent residents" and denying them to others. It is vitally necessary that Article 35A of the Constitution is struck down as unconstitutional at the earliest.

(The author is a Senior Advocate of the Madras High Court.)

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23/4

Melting snow

Re-opens J&K concerns

That the level of violence during the first round of polling in Jammu and Kashmir was not significantly higher than what has come to be accepted as normal, and that — significantly — there was little of customary accusations of forced voting, would suggest a continuance of the positive trend created by a thaw in Indo-Pak relations. Yet what must not go unnoticed was a fallout of a physical thaw — the first infiltration bid since the onset of summer and the re-opening of passes. Three militants armed with AK-47s were killed and Rs 1,00,000 recovered, but it is not clear if more mischief-makers turned back when security forces detected cross-border movement in the Poonch sector. This, indeed, was a wake up call, a grim reminder that with or without direct support of the Pakistan army there are well-trained, well-equipped jihadis waiting to resume their ill-conceived operations in a troubled state.

Recognising the reality will not be difficult for security forces, for while they have conceded that conditions on the Line of Control have improved over the last several months they have also been alive to continuing militant activity. They are fully aware of the infrastructure for militancy not being dismantled. Hence for them, a rise in the mercury entails an increase in the counter-insurgency mission. A full blown security operation in unavoidable, effective detection and neutralisation of infiltrators/militants will create the pressure to negotiate seriously. Of critical importance is whether the major "local" political forces recognise that the security concerns remain grave and must abandon their competitive condemnation of the Army, BSF, CRPF — and indeed those units of the J&K police that join battle with *jihadis*. Portraying the security forces in the worst possible light does pay off at the ballot box, sorry EVM. Yet in the longer run that proves counter-productive. Until the gunman is silenced, to talk peace is often purposeless.

Hurriyat gets talks invite

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OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 17: The cloud of uncertainty over the Kashmir peace talks has lifted, with the Centre "cordially" inviting the All Parties Hurriyat Conference for a second round of dialogue with deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani on March 27.

Last month, the chairman of the separatist conglomerate, Maulana Abbas Ansari, had threatened to pull out of the peace talks, accusing the government of not being serious on checking human rights violations by security forces in Kashmir.

The killing of five civilians in Bandipore had sparked a hue and cry in the Valley, with the army being accused of killing innocent Kashmiris.

Ansari had earlier expressed his willingness to participate in the talks, provided the Centre invited him.

Sources said a government officer personally handed over a letter — which said "You are cordially invited for second round of talks to be held in New Delhi on March 27" — to Ansari.

The sources, however, said though Ansari and other Hurriyat leaders such as Abdul Gani Bhat and Mirwaiz Farooq would attend the talks, Fazal-ul-Haq Qureshi of the People's Political Front is unlikely to

come down to Delhi.

Qureshi, who had attended the first round, had dissociated himself from the talks after the Bandipore encounter because of militant threats. It is not known whether the Hurriyat would look for a replacement for him to participate in the dialogue.

The Hurriyat executive and general council will be meeting soon in Srinagar to decide its next course of action.

"I look forward to the second round of discussions with the leadership of the Hurriyat Conference in Delhi on March 27. These discussions are an important step in bringing peace and development to Jammu and Kashmir," Advani told reporters today in Hyderabad before hitting the road again for his Bharat Uday yatra, which started on March 10.

The Centre's interlocutor, N.N. Vohra, and Union home secretary Anil Bajjal have held meetings to prepare the agenda for the talks.

The home ministry had to take a slew of measures to assuage the feelings of the Hurriyat, with Advani convening a high-level meeting last month and directing the army and paramilitary forces to give a human touch to anti-insurgency operations in the state. The security forces were warned of stringent action if they violated human rights.

Dehi calls Gen's bluff on Kashmir

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The election sea-



son is finally beginning to have its impact on diplomacy with India on Sunday revisiting the Kashmir as 'core issue' controversy by disputing Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf's contention—made Saturday night at the India Today conclave—that the January 6 joint India-Pakistan statement gave primacy to the Kashmir question.

"We have carefully examined the comments" made by Musharraf, the external affairs ministry said in a statement. "The language of the January 6 Islamabad joint press statement is clear and unambiguous. There is no reference to any so-called central or core issue, but to address all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir."

The MEA added that "any unilateral interpretation of the joint press statement is not conducive to building trust, or taking the process forward; nor is public rhetoric, which is also contrary to the understandings and restraints observed since January".

Musharraf's remarks, and India's reactions to them, underline the dangers inherent in diplomacy being conducted through television before a live audience. Aware that his remarks—and the question and answer session with a gathering of elite Indians—were being seen live in his own country, the Pakistani President doggedly stuck to his guns on the Kashmir issue and said it was India which had made all the concessions. But precisely because his performance was seen live on Indian TV, the Vajpayee government feels compelled to try and set the record straight.

This minor spat couldn't have been better timed for US secretary of state Colin Powell's South Asia visit on Monday to push along, besides other things, the India-Pakistan peace process.

Fidayeen target Army camp

Narrow escape for 200 schoolgirls

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, March 11

TWO SOLDIERS, two militants and a woman were killed and four civilians injured during a fierce gunfight at Khrew, 22 km south of Srinagar, on Thursday.

Army authorities said around 9.15 am militants fired rifle grenades from a built-up area at 15 Corps Battle School, Khrew when soldiers of an Army unit were carrying out pre-induction training course.

Two jawans were hit; one of them died instantaneously. The other succumbed to his injuries later.

A defence spokesman said that the troops cordoned the area from where the militants had targeted the school and launched an operation to flush them out.

A government school where about 200 girl students were present also came under the besieged area, causing panic among the villagers. The spokesman said that before tracking down the



AFPT

Troops take up position during a gunbattle with militants in the Khrew area of Pulwama, Jammu and Kashmir, on Thursday.

militants, the Army evacuated the students and staff. "We feared that the militants may take shelter in the school or the students may get caught in the crossfire," the spokesman said.

The troops zeroed in on the spot from where the militants had targeted them but met with stiff resistance. Sources said that the militants attempted to break the cordon and escape

but fell into the troops dragnet outside the village.

This followed a fierce gun-battle, which lasted for about five hours. Both the militants were later killed.

The Jaish-e-Mohammad has claimed responsibility and said that the slain militants were cadres of its *fidayeen* squad. A woman was also killed in the firing between the two sides, sources said. At least four other

civilians sustained injuries.

Meanwhile, the Tral quarter of Pulwama was up in revolt as residents alleged the random killing of a civilian, Javaid Ahmad Dar, by the Army at Panner Jagir. Massive demonstrations were held against the civilian killing.

Unknown militants also shot dead Abdul Khaliq Wani, a ruling PDP activist, at Khandah.

NC whip on J&K women's Bill

HT-3 11/3

HT Correspondent
Jammu, March 10

NATIONAL CONFERENCE president Omar Abdullah has issued a whip to all party MLAs to vote for the Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Resident (disqualification) Bill in the Upper House on Thursday.

He has also asked arch rival PDP to vote along with his party to ensure its smooth passage and "desist from its usual habit of succumbing to pressures to stay in power as demonstrated innumerable times by Mufti in the past one and a half years".

Addressing a meeting of NC's legislative council members, Omar said his party has consistently demonstrated its resolve to uphold, protect and preserve the sanctity of Article 370 of the Constitution and shall continue to do so no matter what the consequences. Omar said "PDP president Mehbooba

Five killed in grenade attack

FIVE PERSONS were killed and about 50 wounded when a pro-government militant (commonly called *Ikhuani*) exploded two grenades to scare away residents at Wudwan village in Central district on Tuesday night. The *Ikhuani* cadre was also killed in the blast.

Sources said the *Ikhuani* activist, Bilal Ahmad Shaikh, barged into the

house of contractor Ghulam Hassan Dar and demanded money from him. Bilal was armed with two grenades. The contractor raised an alarm after which the villagers gheraoed the house.

Bilal was trying to hurl another grenade which exploded in his hands, killing him and three others.

HTC, Srinagar

state, PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said her party stood committed to the legislation and would soon launch a campaign to educate the masses of its importance.

PTI adds that Mehbooba, instead, charged the NC of joining hands with known enemies of Kashmir and *Kashmiriyat* to create political instability in the state.



A woman holds a banner reading 'We will preserve Article 370 at all costs' during a march in Srinagar on Wednesday. AFP

LASHKAR AFFILIATE CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY FOR SRINAGAR ATTACK

Ultras storm media hub

SBK SCA 10/3

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR, March 9. — Two militants stormed a building housing the offices of the Press Information Bureau and the state government's information department in the city this evening, triggering a gun-battle that claimed the life of one of the attackers. Two securitymen were injured.

Fire broke out in the three-storeyed building on Residency Road in the heart of the city after police and paramilitary forces lobbed smoke shells into it to flush out the attackers. The fire spread to some adjacent houses too. Some Special Services Bureau personnel who were holed up in the building were evacuated.

Al Mansurian, believed to be a shadow group of the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, called a local news agency and claimed responsibility for the attack. An outfit spokesman said the attack was "an answer" to Governor Lt-Gen. (retd) SK Sinha's claim yesterday that Srinagar was free of militancy.

SSB head constable Mr Mohan Singh said the militants in Army fatigues appeared in front of the building at 6.25 p.m., when change of guard was taking place. (Since



Securitymen help one of their injured colleagues after militants attacked the PIB office in Srinagar on Tuesday. — AFP

the Darbar is now functioning from Jammu, the offices close down by 5 p.m.) Mr Singh said the ultras "detonated a grenade and fired indiscriminately before hurling another grenade to force their way into the building". The security forces soon surrounded the

entire area has been cut off. **Protest:** Police today chased away a group of people protesting against the death of a teenager who was allegedly raped by a 'counter-insurgent' attached to a Rashtriya Rifles unit in Baramulla.

J&K govt split over controversial bill

9/3

Jammu/Srinagar: The nationwide outcry over a controversial piece of legislation that erodes the property and job rights of a large chunk of Kashmiri women, has forced a rethink on some constituents of the ruling coalition in J&K. The bill, which was unanimously passed in the legislative assembly on Friday, has to be passed by the legislative council to become law and the latter is scheduled to consider it on Thursday.

The stage is now set for a political drama with the two main parties in the governing coalition—the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)—now split on the issue and the main opposition party, the National Conference sticking to its support for the bill. Chief minister Mufti Mohammed's PDP sees nothing wrong in Friday's passage of the bill, which removes state citizenship rights of women who marry men from outside the state.

However, the state Congress party has since been denounced by its own national president Sonia Gand-

hi, and deputy chief minister Man- ghat Ram Sharma now says the bill was passed too hastily and needs to be referred for scrutiny to a legisla- tive council panel. A similar embarrased reversal has been made by CPI(M) leader M Y Tarigami.

The Panthers Party, whose all four MLAs voted for the bill on Friday, now threatens to quit the coalition if the bill is not frozen. Panthers chief Bhim Singh excused his party's Friday stand by saying his MLAs had not been told what they were voting for. "A day before the bill was to be passed, the PDP and Congress ministers had a meeting with National Conference legislators to finalise the bill. Our party's minister, Harsh Dev Singh, was not even informed. Besides, the bill was not even listed in the business of the house that day."

As for the BJP, it has staged rallies demanding that the Union government instruct the state governor to refuse assent to any such legislation. If he does, it will be a first; the state Constitution gives the governor little discretion in such matters. However, in Srinagar and the Kashmir valley, there is wide support for the bill. Mehbooba Mufti, daughter of the chief minister and president of his party, the PDP, says the bill is justified and state interests need it.



Women Power Battles Police Power On The Streets

Allies, PM force Mufti rethink on women's Bill

Arun Joshi
Jammu, March 8

78x HF-1 9/13

PRESSURE FROM his allies and a talk with the Prime Minister has forced Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to reconsider the controversial Jammu and Kashmir Permanent Resident (Disqualification) Bill.

The Bill, which proposes revoking the permanent resident status of women who marry outside the state, has provoked criticism from ruling coalition partners and women's groups. The Panthers Party has threatened to withdraw from the government if it persists with the Bill.

The Congress, which had supported the Bill when it was introduced in the House, now wants it referred to a select committee, which Sayeed has agreed to do. The CPI(M), another ally of Sayeed's PDP, has also changed its stance, saying the Bill should be debated in a special Assembly session to remove misgivings.

Vajpayee stepped into the controversy on Monday, asking the Mufti to reconsider the Bill. "I spoke to Mufti Sayeed on the phone," the Prime Minister said. "I told him this Bill has evoked a lot of opposition, and you should keep this sentiment in mind and explain (this) to your legislators."

Sonia Gandhi, too, recently wrote to Sayeed and Deputy CM Mangat Ram Sharma (Congress) expressing her



PTI
Women BJP members protest against the Bill in Jammu.

Lie of the land

Bill of rights Bill takes away J&K women's right to property if they marry an outsider

Opponents Congress, BJP, CPI(M), Panthers Party

Supporters Kashmiri parties like Mufti's PDP and NC

D-Day On March 11, Bill faces vote in state Upper House, where NC has majority

disapproval of the Bill. Sharma released a statement soon after, opposing the Bill and asking for a debate.

The Bill has been deeply divisive. The PDP and the National Conference, as well as other state-centric parties, support the legislation.

Jammu strike

No jailhouse rock

Attempting to create confusion that might facilitate some hard core militants breaking loose was the overt objective of the strike at the Central Jail in Jammu, the other signals that were sent out could be of greater strategic significance. The most important being that the measures taken on both sides of the LoC to curb infiltration are no guarantor of a de-escalation of militant activity in Jammu and Kashmir. With so much being made of the changed bilateral equation, and the army now appearing to back up the political assessment of Pakistan playing ball, there is every danger of the security forces relaxing a little, and that could prove disastrous. The distinction between what takes place on the LoC and what obtains in the interiors is not to be blurred even though they are related. The CRPF units must not be misled into believing that the "feel good factor" has a trickle-down effect. Not for the present anyway.

The strike at the jail on the eve of the meeting of the key members of the Unified Command was a high-profile one, and its profile might have been elevated further had it succeeded in its overt objective. As it is it has proved that the militants retain the capacity to launch forays at the time and place of their choosing. Despite the sustained pressure, and the neutralisation of quite a number of them, the proverbial back has not been broken. Though reports that "recruitment" is on the decline augur well. Those who continue to suspect the role being played by at least some sections of the Pakistani military establishment would contend that so well entrenched to the east of the LoC are a large number of militants that there is no immediate need to boost their numbers. A high profile assault every now and then boosts the morale of those lying low, it also lets the local populace know that they cannot afford to ignore the militants' demands for food, shelter and more. Conducting forays in populated, and busy if not congested areas, ensures a high possibility of the "collateral damage" that causes so much hardship to the local people. The more the locals are upset by what the security forces are doing the greater the militants' gain. The public protests at Bandipora and Tral would confirm that the specific ugly incidents were really only the flashpoint for the latent disgust, or worse. While there would be a feeling of some satisfaction that the militant who mounted the Jammu strike was "accounted for" before his mission was accomplished, the manner in which he was neutralised is rather disturbing. Reports suggest that though injured and floored the militant kept firing till he ran out of ammunition. When trying to fix another magazine to his weapon an unarmed constable of the J&K prison's department bolted forth, snatched away the weapon, loaded it, and sprayed bullets. "I shot him with his own weapon" constable Jarnail Singh declared. While he must be commended for rushing the militant, he must be condemned for the killing. Not because it had become an unequal fight after he had wrenched the weapon, but because a dead militant "tells no tales." Information and intelligence are critical to any anti-terrorist campaign.

Militant mayhem on jail threshold

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Jammu, March 3: A militant got off a mini-bus in front of the main gate of the high-security district jail here and opened fire on a police bus taking undertrials to court, killing six persons before he was shot dead in an audacious attempt to free a colleague.

Four policemen, including an assistant sub-inspector, Harbans Lal Sharma, were killed by the spray of bullets from an automatic assault rifle around 10.10 am today.

A civilian and Pakistani militant Showkat Ali, who was one of the undertrials on the bus, were the others killed. Twelve people were wounded in the indiscriminate firing.

The militant, identified as Bilal Ahmad of the Lashkar-e-Toiba after initial investiga-



Policemen star body of a militant after the shooting.

tions, had come to free Shamshud-Din of the same group who was also on the bus heading to court, police said.

But before he could succeed, he was overpowered and killed, 10 minutes after he had arrived at the jail by public transport. An unarmed jail warden, Jarnail Singh, pounced on the militant, snatched his rifle and shot him dead with it, police sources said.

Had the policemen not acted on time, the casualties could have been higher, inspector general of police P.L. Gupta said. "They are martyrs," he added.

Of the 500 inmates in the jail located in the heart of Jammu, one-fourth are militants — both local and of Pakistani origin.

The prison, built over 100 years ago, is guarded by over 100 policemen. Its walls measure 12 feet in thickness and are further fortified by barbed wire.

Gupta said the militant had explosives strapped to his abdomen, indicating he was on a suicide mission.

A Kalashnikov rifle, four grenades and some magazines were seized. Some papers seized to attract attention, police said. A red alert has been sounded in the town and all entry and exit points are being guarded as the police suspect that more *fidayeen* (suicide attackers) might be present.

Union home secretary Anil Bajjal reviewed the security situation with the police and paramilitary force officers here this afternoon.

This is the second major attack in Jammu after the January 2 strike on the railway station that killed seven security personnel.



A police officer stands guard outside the Jammu district jail after the militant attack on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Hurriyat's threat

5/8 More for the Centre to mull over 11/2 28/4

There would be no need for a flutter in New Delhi over the threat of the Hurriyat to suspend its talks with the Centre in the wake of the controversial killings in Bandipore and Tral. For even if the next round is delayed by a month or so — till after the next government is formed perhaps — not a great deal would have been lost, for time is certainly not running out. There remains an awful long way to go before prospects of a genuine and lasting peace might appear on the horizon.

The stance taken by the Hurriyat was mere self-protection. Having been painted in cowardly light by the Geelani group, the Ansari faction had to re-assert itself in the public eye and dispel the impression of being a push-over. If its threat succeeds in bringing about greater restraint among the security forces it will have something to show to the people for its labours.

What the Centre must understand, and be concerned about, is that there is no change in one critical factor to politics in the State, most emphatically in the Valley: that to be seen as "close" to New Delhi is to create a distance from the masses. This is an historic ground reality.

The National Conference enjoyed popular support for so many years essentially because it was perceived as not just a local/regional political party but as one that was opposed to those occupying the commanding heights of Raisina Hill. When Farooq Abdullah joined hands with Rajiv Gandhi it was deemed treason, and the treachery theory confirmed as he linked up with whoever was in power at the Centre.

Mufti Mohd. Sayeed runs a similar risk, his main source of protection being the ranting of his daughter which might irk ears in the Capital but proves pure symphony in the Valley. The warning from the Ansari-led Hurriyat has to be seen and understood against that backdrop.

That is the genuine dilemma for Jammu and Kashmir's political leaders. They are so dependent on New Delhi's bounty, their people expect them to extract concessions from the Centre but despise them for seeking them with anything other than the mailed fist. It is imperative that all those who matter in New Delhi appreciate that apparent paradox, and learn to "play ball." They must display adequate maturity and not react to provocative or discordant noises, particularly from the section of the Hurriyat that has opted to talk, it took a bit of courage to do that.

It should not be too difficult for those in authority in the Centre to acquire the capacity to ignore the unique brand of pinpricks that emanate from the Valley. More difficult will be ensuring that the security forces strike a balance between maintaining maximum pressure on the militants and keeping public inconvenience to the minimum. For even if the hand of trouble-makers is detected in every public protest against alleged atrocities and violations of human rights, it can be nobody's case that life for the average Kashmiri is paradise on earth.

THE STATESMAN

1 MAR 2004

Mufti escapes militant attack on rally

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, February 27

JAMMU AND Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed escaped a bid on his life when militants fired grenades at a rally he was addressing at Beerwah, Budgam, on Friday afternoon. A 17-year-old girl was killed and four persons were injured in the attack, for which the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen has claimed responsibility.

Sources said that militants fired two rifle grenades towards the rally, which fell 200 yards away from the site. Some gunshot were also heard after the explosions.

Five persons, including a CRPF man, suffered splinter injuries. One of them, Shameema,



lam lasted over 20 minutes, after which the chief minister came back on the stage.

Sayeed, who spoke for about 10 minutes after the attack, appeared quite calm. He used the occasion to impress upon militants the "futility of the gun". Pointing out that "even General Musharraf speaks against terrorism", he asked the militants what justification they had to wield the gun.

Revenue minister Hakim Mohammad Yasin also spoke for a few minutes.

This was the first attempt on the Mufti's life after he took over as chief minister of the state. It came amid allegations of human rights violations by the security forces, voiced by separatist politicians and militants.

PTI

A jawan tries to break up a protest in Srinagar against rights violations.

died instantly. She was a passenger by the sources said.

The attack took place while the chief minister was addressing the rally. The explosions disrupted the rally with people running helter-skelter in their panic. The chief minister was escorted by the police and his security guards to safety. The bed-

Hyped-up Hurriyat

Talks Will Not Yield Any Solution

By Anshul Chaturvedi

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Much was made of the first round of talks between the Hurriyat leadership and the Union government. This was to be expected, despite deputy prime minister L K Advani's reasonably accurate statement a day before they commenced that "media hype does not help".

The talks may well have been unprecedented but the ability of those talking to the Centre in terms of delivering results on the ground is rather limited, and has been further on the decline in the interval between rounds one and two. An obvious fact in this context is that whatever base the All-Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leaders, of either faction, have is confined to the Kashmir region. The BJP, that is providing the APHC a wider profile, has nothing to lose there.

However, the bulk of the National Conference (NC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) MLAs are from Kashmir. The Hurriyat's long-term political survival and growth can only be at the expense of the NC and the PDP. This may well push mainstream parties to compete for the separatist or Islamic right wing vote, or to ally with the politically active wings of the Hurriyat itself as the process moves on, if it does.

A key danger here is that the NC, still the party with the largest cadre in Kashmir, appears to be moving towards a more hardline position. The grapevine says that Farooq Abdullah stayed away from his daughter Sara's wedding to Sachin Pilot, the son of the late Congress leader Rajesh Pilot, because party cadres had attributed Omar Abdullah's Ganderbal loss to the fact that his wife is a Hindu.

Prior to the last assembly polls in J&K, the NC was keen to keep those wielding the gun out of any talks. After January, we find Omar Abdullah talking about the need to include outfits like the Hizbul Mujahideen in the process. Omar also accused chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed of sabotaging the Kashmiri cause by splitting the Hurriyat, and asserted that thousands of Kashmiris had not sacrificed their lives just to see Abbas Ansari shake hands with L K Advani.

Even if inadvertently, the current process has already begun to push the pro-integration ideology to the margin, just as the pro-India militants (Ikhwanis) have largely faded into irrelevance. There should be no dialogue with New Delhi, says Omar, till its sincerity is proved. While it is futile to ask whether Delhi had passed the sincerity test when he was occupying a berth in the Vajpayee government, his change in political posture is getting clearer by the day. The ultimate benchmark for normalcy will be

whether the guns fall silent. The Hurriyat leaders' ability to ensure this has been grossly exaggerated. The Geelani faction is the alter ego of the fundamentalists and also enjoys Pakistani and OIC recognition. Geelani is unlikely to ask the boys to lay down their arms in his lifetime.

The first generation of militants was led by 'local boys' but today highly committed 'guest militants' from Afghanistan, Pakistan and elsewhere exercise control. They have no stakes in the restoration of peace in Kashmir. There is no way Ansari's faction can control them. Outfits such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed have already trashed the talks in strong terms. Pakistan's reported advice to the Hizbul Mujahideen to keep *jehad* on the back burner, even if accepted, will make little difference. Mufti's PDP itself is now being made to pay back with party cadres being killed with increasing frequency. It is reasonably clear that the Hurriyat does not represent the interests of a majority of the people of the Jammu and Ladakh regions; it, in fact, represents no Hindu or Buddhist interests anywhere in the state, including those of the Pandits.

In Kashmir itself, it does not represent that part of the population that already believes in the political process and has gone out defying boycott calls to vote for the NC, PDP or Congress. That leaves us with the Kashmiris not participating in the political process like Shabir Shah and Yasin Malik. The ultra-right sympathisers, in any case, would be with Geelani's

faction while the hardcore militants have already indicated that dialogue is of no consequence to them. So what is this team's USP?

Further, credibility begins at home and the team's standing in Kashmir itself is questionable. The letter recently circulated by People's Conference leader and the slain Abdul Gani Lone's younger son Sajjad Lone following Mirwaiz Farooq's description of Al-Umar commander Rafeeq Lidri as a martyr has put three members of the negotiating panel — the Mirwaiz, Abdul Ghani Bhat and Bilal Lone — firmly on the back foot despite their pretending otherwise. Sajjad's question as to how his father and his supposed killer can both be seen as martyrs has not been answered.

The historic talks have now to be taken ahead with a group that represents one region, one religion and a part of one ideology at that; a splinter group which is further splintering. To expect that a solution will somehow emerge out of even the most cordial of interactions with them is hoping for far too much. Perhaps we should, as Mr Advani says, keep the hype down the next time the two sides meet.



27 FEB 2004

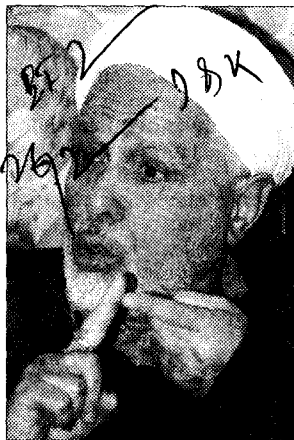
Govt speaks to Army after Hurriyat threat

Bharti Jain

NEW DELHI 25 FEBRUARY

ANXIOUS to keep the Hurriyat Conference engaged, the Centre on Wednesday moved swiftly and issued fresh instructions to the Army and para-military forces to strictly guard against human rights violations while carrying out search and cordon operations in Jammu and Kashmir.

The instructions went out soon after Hurriyat chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari threatened to pull out of the one-round-old talks, if the human rights situation on the ground did not undergo any discernible change. The Centre, which obviously took Mr Ansari's warning with all seriousness, did not waste any time in getting its intermediaries to convey to the Hurriyat its latest directions ask-



ABBAS: HAWK EYE

ing the security forces, particularly its lower level personnel, to fall in line or face strict action. Intelligence sources disclosed that the Hurriyat has agreed to watch out for some positive change on

the ground before okaying the dates for its second round of talks with deputy prime minister L.K. Advani. The talks are tentatively scheduled for the third or fourth week of March.

"The fact that the Hurriyat has only warned the Centre and not opted out of the negotiations altogether, indicates that the amalgam is still on board," a senior intelligence official told the ET.

According to intelligence agencies, the Hurriyat may have been forced to warn of its withdrawal from the talks due to growing pressure from other hardliner separatist groups, particularly its Syed Ali Shah Geelani faction. With the latter accusing the Ansari faction of having compromised on the Kashmir cause in agreeing to negotiate with the Centre, the recent incidents of security forces killing five unarmed civilians in Bandipore.

Future talks depend on situation in J&K: Bhat

Masood Hussain

SRINAGAR 16 FEBRUARY

THE moderates faction of Hurriyat Conference which had a round of talks with Central leaders last month, has threatened pullout from dialogue process, if the human rights situation in the state does not improve. The group insisted that most of the promises made with them by the Centre stand unfulfilled as the schedule for next round is approaching.

"We did not exhibit the show-off politics when five innocent civilians were killed in Chat-tibandi in Bandipora. Rather we told the Government of India to stop human rights violations. Its result was that deputy prime minister L.K. Advani chaired a meeting of all security agencies asking them to stop the human



ALL'S NOT WELL

rights violations," Prof Abdul Gani Bhat told media persons after the executive meeting concluded on Monday.

Prof Bhat said they would like to see the change on ground and that alone will determine the future course of action with regard to the second round of negotiations. "There is still enough time

for the second round of talks. We will monitor the situation on ground and accordingly the decision would be taken. We consider discretion a better part of valour," he said.

Prof Bhat was unhappy that the Centre did not release any of the political detainees. "We have a list of 32 persons released on Eid. But most of the people released are either timber smugglers or surrendered militants. And none of the persons whose list we had given to the Centre has been released."

"This is a serious flaw. And the Centre should realize it and show sincerity which only can take the process forward," he said. After the Bandipore massacre, National Conference president Omar Abdullah had suggested that the Hurriyat leaders pull out.

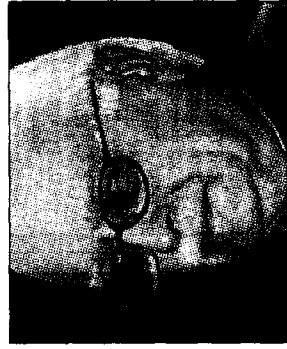
Hurriyat-Delhi dialogue in jeopardy.

Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, February 13

THE DIALOGUE initiated between the Centre and the Hurriyat Conference appears to be headed for a deadlock.

Two influential members of the team that met Deputy PM L.K. Advani on January 22 — Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Fazlul Haque Quraishi — have accused the government of “renewing” on its assurances and threatened to pull out of the talks.

Mirwaiz and Quraishi say Advani had assured them that human rights violations would be stopped and detainees released in the state. “But we don’t see



L.K. Advani

“I don’t think there is any point in going ahead with the dialogue if common people continue to suffer at the hands of security forces,” Quraishi said. Mirwaiz expressed similar views.



Mirwaiz Umer Farooq

any change on the ground,” Quraishi said. Though he believed dialogue was the only way to resolve the Kashmir issue, its impact had to be felt on ground, he added.

The Hurriyat appeared to be embarrassed by recent civilian deaths allegedly at the hands of army personnel at Bandipora in north Kashmir and the Centre’s rejection of the plea to release some of the detainees the Hurriyat had sought. Hurriyat leaders had reportedly submitted a list of 10 jailed persons involved in hawala racket, seeking their release.

The Hurriyat has called a meeting of its executive council on Monday to decide about future talks. Observers say it won’t be easy to backtrack on talks. “It is a pressure tactic,” says engineer Bilal Ahmad. “Hurriyat leaders want to silence their critics.”

শুভ কর্মপথে

গান্ধী-৪
২৩/১/০৪

সর্বদলীয় হরিয়ত সম্মেলনের সহিত সরকারের বহু প্রতীক্ষিত বৈঠক সফল হইয়াছে। সফল, কারণ কোনও পক্ষই মাঝপথে বৈঠক ছাড়িয়া চলিয়া যায় নাই। উপরন্তু উভয় পক্ষই বৈঠকের পর পরস্পরের প্রশংসা করিয়াছে। উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ জাদবানী কিংবা হরিয়ত নেতা মিরওয়াইজ ফারুক, কেহই নরমপন্থী বলিয়া পরিচিত নন। কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত দেখা গেল, কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রী এবং হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব যেন পরস্পরের কিছুটা গুণমুগ্ধই। এই পারস্পরিক মুগ্ধতা প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সহিত হরিয়ত নেতাদের সৌজন্য সাক্ষাৎকারকেও সম্ভাবিত করিয়া তোলে। তাহার আগেই হরিয়তের তরফে বন্দুক ছাড়িয়া আলোচনার ভাষা বরণ করার তাগিদ জানানো হইয়াছে এবং যৌথ ঘোষণায় তাহা উল্লেখিতও হইয়াছে। বস্তুত, কট্টরপন্থীদের দ্বারা 'বিশীর্ষণ' রূপে শনাক্ত হওয়ার ঝুঁকি লইয়াও এই তাগিদের বশেই হরিয়ত নয়াদিল্লিতে শান্তি বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে আসিয়াছিল। এই তাগিদই রাজ্য বিধানসভার গত নির্বাচনে একাধিক হরিয়ত-সমর্থিত রাজনীতিককে নির্দল রূপে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা করিতে প্ররোচিত করিয়াছিল, যদিও সরকারি ভাবে হরিয়ত সে নির্বাচন বয়কট করে।

তাগিদটি রচিত হইবার নেপথ্যে ভারত-পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের স্বল্প গলার ক্রিয়া স্পষ্ট। প্রকৃত নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখা বরাবর যুদ্ধবিরতি, কাশ্মীরে জৈহাদি সন্ত্রাস রফতানি না-করিতে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের দৃঢ় অঙ্গীকার, দুই দেশের মধ্যে উল্লেখ্যনা প্রশমন ও পারস্পরিক আস্থা স্থাপনে বেশ কিছু মদর্দক বন্দোবস্ত, জল-স্থল-আকাশ পথে অবাধ যাতায়াতের সুবিধা, ইত্যাদির ফলে প্রতিবেশী দুই দেশের সম্পর্কে সহসা এমন একটা গুণগত পরিবর্তন সূচিত হইয়াছে যে, কোনও বিরোধই এখন আর অমীমাংসেয় মনে হইতেছে না। উপমহাদেশের সর্বাপেক্ষা বিতর্কিত ও রক্তাক্ত দ্বন্দ্বের উপলক্ষ কাশ্মীর সমস্যা মিটাইয়া ফেলিতেও যে উভয় দেশ ব্যাকুল, পাকিস্তানের তরফে গণভোটের দাবি ছাড়িবার মধ্যে তাহাই স্পষ্ট। কিছু কাল আগেও হরিয়তের যে সব দাবি অন্যায্য আবদার বলিয়া মনে হইত, যেমন অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বা পাকিস্তানের শাসকদের সহিত সাক্ষাৎ, এখন নয়াদিল্লি সেগুলি সহানুভূতির সঙ্গে বিবেচনায় প্রস্তুত। কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানে ভারত ও পাকিস্তান ছাড়া কাশ্মীরের জনতা (ভারতীয় কাশ্মীর

এবং পাকিস্তানি কাশ্মীর, উভয় অঞ্চলেরই) বা তাহাদের প্রতিনিধিস্থানীয় সংগঠনকে বাদ দিয়া যে আপস-প্রয়াস অর্থহীন, ইহা সকলেই বুঝিয়াছে। সেই প্রক্রিয়া দ্রুত চালু করিতে সকলেই ব্যগ্র। সত্য যে হরিয়ত ইতিমধ্যেই দ্বিখণ্ডিত। অপেক্ষাকৃত চরমপন্থী অংশটি সৈয়দ আহমদ শাহ গিলানির নেতৃত্বে শান্তি-বৈঠক হইতে দূরে। পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের রাজনীতিকরা কী ভাবিতেছেন, হরিয়তের ভাবনার সহিত তা মেলে কিনা, এ সবই এখন অজানা। তবে এখানে যেমন স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রীর সহিত হরিয়ত বৈঠক করিল, পাকিস্তানেও তেমনই প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফের তরফে কাশ্মীরি নেতাদের বাজাইয়া দেখার প্রক্রিয়া চলিয়াছে। সুতরাং শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়াটি যথাযথভাবেই শুরু হইয়াছে এবং সঠিক পথেই অগ্রসরও হইতেছে।

এখন প্রয়োজন ইহার সফলগুলিকে নষ্ট হইতে না দেওয়া, অকারণ কালক্ষেপে প্রক্রিয়াটিকে ঝুলাইয়া না দেওয়া। হরিয়ত নেতারা যেমন বন্দি জঙ্গিদের রাজনৈতিক বন্দি হিসাবে গণ্য করার এবং তাহাদের মুক্তি দিয়া উপত্যকায় সংঘর্ষ-বিরতি ঘোষণার প্রস্তাব দিয়াছেন। এ প্রস্তাব না মানার কারণ নাই। অতীতে অপহৃত মন্ত্রী-কন্যার মুক্তি কিংবা ছিনতাই বিমানের আটক যাত্রীদের মুক্তির বিনিময়ে অনেক খুনি জঙ্গি নেতাদের সরকার মুক্তি দিয়াছে। এখন যখন সর্ব স্তরেই আপস, সংঘর্ষবিরতি, শান্তি ও রফার আবহ, জঙ্গিদের অভিভাবক ও পৃষ্ঠপোষকরাও বন্দুক ছাড়িয়া পায়রা উড়াইতে ব্যাকুল, তখন হরিয়তের দাবি মানিতে বাধা কোথায়? লক্ষণীয় হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের মতো সন্ত্রাসবাদী সংগঠনকে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ায় शामिल করার প্রস্তাব দিয়াছে। এই সুযোগ হাতছাড়া করা উচিত নয়। উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী আডবানীও বৈঠকের ঠিক পরেই কাশ্মীরে গিয়া আলোচনায় প্রস্তুত যে কোনও জঙ্গি সংগঠনের সঙ্গে কথা বলিতে চাহিয়াছেন। তাহার লক্ষ্য যে হরিয়তের চরমপন্থী অংশটি সহ হিজবুল মুজাহিদিন, এমনকী লস্কর-ই-তৈবার মতো জঙ্গিরাও, তাহা বুঝিতে অসুবিধা নাই। এমন কিছুই সরকার করিতে চাহে না, যাহাতে মনে হয় সরকার মীমাংসায় আন্তরিক নহে। হরিয়তকে ব্যর্থ ও অকার্যকর প্রতিপন্ন করিতে অনেকেই উদ্গ্রীব, অপেক্ষা করিতেছেন সুযোগের। শেষ পর্যন্ত তাহারা সেই সুযোগটি পাইলে হরিয়তের সেই সীমাবদ্ধতার দায় কিন্তু নয়াদিল্লির উপরেও বর্তাইবে।

কাশ্মীরে গণভোটের দাবি ছাড়ছে হরিয়ত, আডবাণী যাচ্ছেন পরশু

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪
জানুয়ারি— কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে হরিয়ত
নেতৃত্বের বৈঠকের পরপরই এ বার দু'পক্ষ
কিছু ইতিবাচক সিদ্ধান্ত নিতে শুরু করল।
প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর সঙ্গে
দেখা করে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী
মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ আজ ১৮ জন কাশ্মীরি
রাজনৈতিক বন্দিকে মুক্তি দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত
ঘোষণা করেছেন। শুধু তা-ই নয়, ঈদের
আগে ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি আরও ৩০ জন বন্দিকে
জম্মু ও শ্রীনগরের জেল থেকে মুক্তি
দেওয়ার প্রস্তাব বিবেচনা করা হচ্ছে। অন্য
দিকে, প্রজাতন্ত্র দিবসের ঠিক পরের দিন
২৭ জানুয়ারি উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ
আডবাণী যাচ্ছেন জম্মুর নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা
পরিদর্শনে। আজই জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের
উন্নয়নের জন্য অতিরিক্ত ১০৮ কোটি টাকা
বরাদ্দ করার কথা ঘোষণা করেছে
বাজপেয়ী সরকার। দিল্লির সঙ্গে হরিয়তের
বৈঠকের পরেই উভয় তরফের এই
সিদ্ধান্তগুলি যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ বলে মনে
করা হচ্ছে।

এ দিকে, পি টি আই-এর খবর,
আনসারি বলেছেন, হরিয়ত কাশ্মীরে
গণভোটের দাবি ছেড়ে দেবে। একটি টি ভি
চ্যানেলের অনুষ্ঠানে হরিয়ত চেয়ারম্যান
বলেন, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধানের জন্য
তারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সব পক্ষের সঙ্গে আলোচনায়
বসতে রাজি। সে জন্যই গণভোটের দাবি
থেকে তারা সরে আসছেন।

হরিয়তের পাঁচ সদস্যের প্রতিনিধিদল
আজ মার্কিন দূতাবাসে গিয়ে কূটনীতিকদের
সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন। মার্কিন দূতাবাসের
পক্ষে হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনা
করেন কূটনীতিক রবার্ট-ও-ব্র্যাক। কেন্দ্রীয়
সরকারের সঙ্গে হরিয়তের শান্তি
আলোচনাকে স্বাগত জানিয়েছে
আমেরিকা। হরিয়ত নেতারা এখন চাইছেন,
সীমান্তের ও'পারে পাক নেতৃত্ব যাতে আর
সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানির কট্টরপন্থী
গোষ্ঠীকে সমর্থন না-করে এই মধ্যপন্থী
গোষ্ঠীকেই সমর্থন করেন।

এই একই উদ্দেশ্যে হরিয়তের পাঁচ
নেতা ইরানের ভারতীয় রাষ্ট্রদূত ওয়াজে

বির সঙ্গেও গত কাল এক দীর্ঘ বৈঠক
করেছেন। ইরানকে হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব কাজে
লাগাতে চাইছেন পাকিস্তানকে বোঝানোর
জন্য। পাকিস্তান এত দিন সৈয়দ আলি শাহ
গিলানি, ইয়াসিন মালিক ও শাবির শাহকে
সমর্থন করে এসেছে। এ বার এই কট্টরপন্থী
নেতারা আলোচনায় সামিল হননি। তবে
মিরওয়াউজ উমরও পাকিস্তানের ঘনিষ্ঠ
হলেও হরিয়তের মধ্যপন্থী চেয়ারম্যান
আব্বাস আনসারি তাঁকে কট্টরপন্থী শিবির
থেকে বার করে আনতে সক্ষম হয়েছেন।

হরিয়ত নেতারা প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং উপ-
প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানিয়েছেন যে, তারা চান এ
বার নির্বাচনে জিতে বাজপেয়ীই ক্ষমতায়
আসুন। কেননা, হরিয়ত নেতারা মনে
করেন, বাজপেয়ী ক্ষমতায় থাকলেই
কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান হতে পারে। এই
সব বৈঠক সেরে এ বার হরিয়ত চেয়ারম্যান
আনসারি ও মিরওয়াউজ উমর আগামী
কাল কাশ্মীর ফিরে যাচ্ছেন। তবে অধ্যাপক
আব্দুল গনি বাট ও বিলাল লোন, ফজল
এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

গণভোটের দাবি

প্রথম পাঁচের পর
হক কুরেশি থেকে যাচ্ছেন মূলত ইরানের
দূতাবাসের সঙ্গে ফের একটি বৈঠক করার
জন্য। ইরান দূতাবাসের সঙ্গে আগামী
মঙ্গলবার এই বৈঠক হওয়ার কথা। ইরান
চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছে, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে কথা
বলে আনসারির ব্যাপারে বরফ গলাতে।
মুফতি আজ অবশ্য প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে
দেখা করেন হজযাত্রীদের সরকারি
প্রতিনিধিদলের প্রধান হিসাবে। এই
প্রতিনিধিদলটি সৌদি আরব যাওয়ার
আগে আজ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে দেখা করে
গেলেন। দলের নেতা হিসাবে মুফতি
শুভেচ্ছা সফরে সৌদি আরব যাচ্ছেন।
প্রধানমন্ত্রীও এ বার কাশ্মীরের
মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে পাঠিয়ে একটি রাজনৈতিক
বার্তা দিতে চেয়েছেন। আজ বাজপেয়ী-
মুফতি পৃথক বৈঠকও হয়েছে। হরিয়ত
নেতারা অবশ্য এ বার দিল্লি এসে এখনও
পর্যন্ত পাক দূতাবাসে কোনও বৈঠক
করতে যাননি। আপাতত কাশ্মীরে সংঘর্ষ-
বিরতির দাবিতে তারা অটল, যদিও কেন্দ্র
এখনই এই আর্জি মানতে রাজি নয়।

HELLO HURRIYAT

5.8 More than a courtesy call 291

EVEN if the first round yielded little more than good atmospherics and a promise to meet again, there should be no underplaying the importance of the Deputy Prime Minister's maiden official interaction with representatives of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference. Hopefully both sides have risen above the misgivings generated by the comment that with an Indo-Pak dialogue on the cards there was only marginal significance to the talks with the Kashmiri group, hopefully too there will be satisfaction out there on the ground when an "announcement" is made, expected around Id. The release of some political prisoners, perhaps the security forces reverting to the "non-initiation of combat operations" (a step short of a unilateral cease-fire) against militants that was tried out a couple of years ago are being mentioned — the experiment would be worth it. Anything that would help isolate the militants would contribute to the path blazed in North Block: to let political talk replace the sound of gunfire.

While the Hurriyat leaders have indeed shown some courage in accepting the invitation to talk, New Delhi has also modified its stance in extending that invitation. For quite some time the government appeared confused over the kind of status to be accorded to the multi-party conglomerate, now it has recognised that it does have true representative value. If the suggestion that the AHPC reach out to people beyond the Valley was intended to cut it down to size, truly tongue-in-cheek was the Hurriyat's interpretation — it should be permitted to reach out across the LoC to the folk in POK. All those involved in the talks should be prepared for more of the same in the next round at the conference table.

New Delhi will now have to learn to deal with the Kashmir issue at several levels simultaneously. While obviously a genuine solution lies in the realm of Indo-Pak accord, a "happy valley" would be a vantage point from which to approach the bilateral dialogue. That's where backing the various efforts of Mufti Mohd. Sayeed's government and securing a positive response from the Ansari-faction of the APHC enter the picture. The former must not be ignored now that the latter seems to be coming on board. Both will, no doubt, play only supporting roles but without which the main plot will be hard to unravel.

Essential to any forward movement will be the building up of a certain trust between the Centre and the Hurriyat. That will not be simple, given the baggage of the past. There will be patience required, particularly since the powers-that-be at the Centre will soon be deeply involved in electioneering.

At all cost what must be avoided is the creation of an impression that talking to the Hurriyat, and indeed a publicised round of negotiations with the NSCN-IM, are part of the presentation of a particular face of the government aimed at garnering votes. For if it does transpire that the Advani-Hurriyat meet was a mere courtesy call, there is every danger of the wires getting terribly crossed once more.

Widen scope of talks, NC tells Centre

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE S. S. JAMMU, Jan. 24. — The National Conference today said the dialogue process started by Mr LK Advani would be inconclusive. Rather, it would turn out to be a "gimmick" if it was not "widened to other elements in the troubled state". He also ruled out a tie-up with the BJP.

"The Centre needs to initiate talks with militants and other groups who are outside the ambit of this dialogue," NC chief Mr Omar Abdullah said at a press conference here, demanding that the Centre grant general amnesty to detainees languishing in jails in the state immediately. The Centre should announce ceasefire in the state to create a conducive atmosphere for talks, he demanded.

Asked if he supported dialogue with militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, Mr Abdullah said talks should be initiated with anybody willing to lay down arms, no matter how rigid the group is. Accusing the Centre and the Mufti Sayeed government of engineering a break up of the Hurriyat, he said the Centre was adamant on not talking to the Hurriyat as there were leaders such as Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Yasin Malik in it.

"With the break up... both these leaders were out and suddenly the Centre said it would talk to the Ansari faction

of the Hurriyat," Mr Abdullah said, adding that the dialogue process should be taken up sincerely. He said that instead of taking credit for the dialogue, the Mufti should tender an apology to the people of Kashmir for getting the Hurriyat spilt at the behest of the Centre. To save face, the Mufti sabotaged the cause of the Kashmiris.

Asking the Centre to lay down its agenda before the public, Mr Abdullah said they would like to know what the government of India was up to. "Now that the first round of talks with the Hurriyat Conference is over, the people have to be taken into confidence and they should know what the Centre has to offer the separatists."

Mr Abdullah said the NC had not yet decided on alliances for the Lok Sabha elections. He, however, informed that his party could tie up with like-minded parties which are more secular than others. He said they there would be no tie-up with the BJP.

On the issues his party would rake up during the campaign, Mr Abdullah said the agenda would be three-fold. "There will be focus on the need for greater autonomy. There will be emphasis on dialogue... The governance in the last one-and-a-half years will be an issue as nothing has changed."

Editorial: Hello Hurriyat, page 8



A police officer inspects a rehearsal for the Republic Day parade in Srinagar on Saturday. — PTT

Freedom for 18 J&K detainees

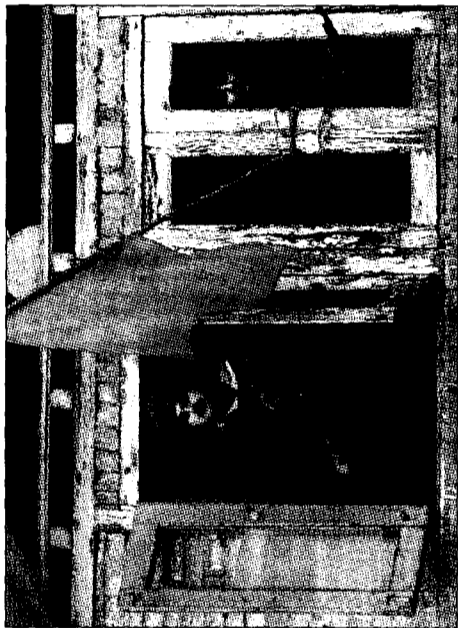
HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 24

IN WHAT is being perceived as a move to strengthen the Centre-Hurriyat dialogue process, the Mufti Sayeed government in J&K on Saturday released 18 detainees before Republic Day and has promised to free more on February 2, on the occasion of Id.

Announcing this after his meeting with the Prime Minister, Mufti said his government had so far released many detainees after satisfactory screening.

Mufti Sayeed, during his 40-minute meeting with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, reportedly discussed the Kashmir situation in the light of the Hurriyat leaders' talks with the Centre. He informed the PM about steps that had already been taken by his government on certain issues raised by the APHC.

Referring to the release of



HIGH ALERT: With two days to go for Republic Day, BSF jawans keep strict vigil in Srinagar on Saturday.

on. We are planning to send an all-party MLA delegation to PoK."

Answering a query on the Hurriyat demand, he said, "All such things should happen at an appropriate time. Any step, which helps to bring lasting peace in the region, is welcome."

The J&K chief minister, who is leaving for Haj on January 26 as head of the Indian delegation, also discussed with Vajpayee issues related to the pilgrimage. E. Ahmed, MP, and UP minister Azam Khan are among others in the Haj delegation.

Violence kills six

Six people, including four Lashkar-e-Tayyeba cadres, were killed as militants triggered two grenade blasts. Security forces also recovered a huge cache of weapons in J&K since Friday night.

Two Lashkar militants, Mohammad Sarwar and

Abu Bahadur, were killed in an encounter with security forces in the Surankote area of Poonch district on Friday night. Two AK assault rifles, six magazines, 40 rounds, two wireless sets, four hand grenades, an IED and some incriminating documents were recovered from them.

Security forces killed another Lashkar militant in a gunfight during search operations in Doda district on Saturday. The body of a Lashkar militant was recovered by the police from Pulwama district in south Kashmir on Saturday morning.

A resident of Zainapora village was killed by Hizbul Mujahideen militants late on Friday night. Militants shot dead a teenager in Pulwama district.

They also gunned down a woman inside her house at Gonthal-Surankote in Poonch district. Her son-in-law who was injured in the shooting has been hospitalised.

হরিয়তকে ভোটে যোগ দিতে আহ্বান জানাল কেন্দ্র

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৩ জানুয়ারি: হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকে আসন্ন নির্বাচনের প্রক্রিয়ায় সামিল হওয়ার আহ্বান জানাল বাজপেয়ী সরকার। প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী এবং উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাবী হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকে এই প্রস্তাব দিয়েছেন। হরিয়ত নেতারা অবশ্য এই প্রসঙ্গে আরও একটু সময় চেয়েছেন। কাল আডবাবী বিষয়টি তোলেন। আজ সন্ধ্যায় হরিয়তের পাঁচ নেতার সঙ্গে সৌজন্যমূলক সাক্ষাৎকারের সময় প্রধানমন্ত্রীও তাদের হিংসা ছেড়ে রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়ায় সামিল হওয়ার আহ্বান জানিয়েছেন। এই প্রথম হরিয়ত নেতারা প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে শৈঠকে বসলেন। ভবিষ্যতে আলোচনাকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে হরিয়তের প্রতিনিধিদলকে তিন সদস্যের কমিটি গঠনের প্রস্তাবও দিয়েছে কেন্দ্র। তাদের প্রস্তাব, এই কমিটিতে কেন্দ্র, হরিয়ত এবং জম্মু-কাশ্মীর সরকারের প্রতিনিধি থাকবেন। কেন্দ্রের তরফে থাকবেন প্রধান মধ্যস্থতাকারী এন ভোরা।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে শৈঠকের পরে হরিয়ত প্রতিনিধিদলের অন্যতম সদস্য মিরওয়াজি ওমর খান জানিয়েছেন, বাজপেয়ীর নেতৃত্বাধীন সরকারের উপরে তাদের পূর্ণ আস্থা আছে। কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে যে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে, তা ফলপ্রসূ হবে বলেও তিনি আশা প্রকাশ করেছেন।

গত কাল হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় সবচেয়ে বেশি গুরুত্ব পেয়েছিল বন্দুক ছেড়ে রাজনীতিতে আসার বিষয়টি। জোটের প্রাক্তন চেয়ানম্যান আব্দুল গনি ভাট শৈঠকে বলেন, “বন্দুকের গর্জন বন্ধ করে রাজনীতির কেলোহলে আমরাও ফিরে আসতে চাই।” সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আডবাবী তাঁকে বলেন, যৌথ বিবৃতিতে এই বাক্যটিকে রাখা যেতে পারে। হরিয়ত নেতারাও সেটা মেনে নেন। এই ভাবেই বাজপেয়ী সরকার হরিয়তকে নির্বাচনী প্রক্রিয়ায় নিয়ে আসতে চাইছে।

মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদও চাইছেন, হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বেন আসন্ন লোকসভা নির্বাচন বয়কট না-করেন। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের লোকসভার আসনসংখ্যা ছয়। কেন্দ্রের প্রস্তাব অনুযায়ী এ বার হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব নির্বাচনী প্রক্রিয়ায় সামিল হতে রাজি হলে হরিয়ত অন্তত একটি আসন পেতে পারে। হরিয়ত নেতারা জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা বিষয়টি নিয়ে নিজেদের মধ্যে আলোচনা করবেন শ্রীলগরে গিয়ে। নিঃসন্দেহে তাঁদের পক্ষেও কাজটি সহজ নয়।

কাশ্মীরের বিগত বিধানসভা নির্বাচন বয়কট করেছিল হরিয়ত। তবে, মধ্যপন্থী গোষ্ঠীর সাহায্যে বেশ কিছু হরিয়ত নেতা সে বার ভোটে দাঁড়ান নির্দল প্রার্থী হিসাবে। অর্থাৎ, সরাসরি হরিয়তের পতাকার তলায় না-গিয়ে। কাল আডবাবীও সাংবাদিক শৈঠকে জানান, গত বিধানসভা ভোটে নাম না-নিয়ে

হরিয়তের অনেকে নেতাই অংশ নিয়েছিলেন। এই মন্তব্যে কটকটপন্থী হরিয়ত নেতারা ক্ষুব্ধ। তাঁরা হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকে আক্রমণ করতে শুরু করেছেন। তাঁদের অভিযোগ, কেন্দ্রের মূল শ্রোতে নিয়ে আসার ফাঁদে পড়ছেন এই পাঁচ নেতা।

সংঘর্ষবিরাতির প্রস্তাব: কাল আডবাবীর সঙ্গে আড়াই ঘণ্টার শৈঠকে হরিয়ত নেতারা ১ ফেব্রুয়ারি (বকরি ঈদ) থেকে কাশ্মীরে সংঘর্ষবিরাতি কার্যকর করার প্রস্তাব দেন। এ ব্যাপারে মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটি আলোচনা করে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে। সংঘর্ষবিরাতির প্রস্তাবে পাকিস্তানের প্রশাসনও সক্রিয়।

পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ নিজে জঙ্গি নেতাদের সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষবিরাতির বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা করেছেন। কিন্তু, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী জর্জ ফার্নান্দেজ এখনই সংঘর্ষবিরাতি কার্যকর করতে খুব উৎসাহী নন। সেনাবাহিনীরও মত, ফেব্রুয়ারিতেই সংঘর্ষবিরাতি না-করে সীমান্তে বরফ গলা পর্যন্ত অপেক্ষা করা উচিত। বরফ থাকার সময় সীমান্তে অনুপ্রবেশ ও সন্ত্রাস অনেকটাই বন্ধ থাকে। বরফ গলার পরে অর্থাৎ, সে মাসের পরে পরিস্থিতি কী দাঁড়াচ্ছে, সেটা দেখে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া উচিত। এক বার যদি সংঘর্ষবিরাতি কার্যকর হয়ে যায়, সে ক্ষেত্রে অনুপ্রবেশ বেড়ে গেলেও কেন্দ্রের পক্ষে সংঘর্ষবিরাতি প্রত্যাহার করান হয়ে যাবে। সরকার স্বভাবতই মুশকিলে পড়বে যাবে। এই ব্যাপারে হরিয়ত নেতাদের চাপের কাছে বাজপেয়ী সরকার নতিস্বীকার করবে কী, না সেটাই দেখার।

হরিয়তের বক্তব্য, সংঘর্ষ বিরাতি কখনই এক তরফা হতে পারে না। জঙ্গিরা সংঘর্ষবিরাতিতে রাজি হলে, সেনা ও নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীকেও এই প্রস্তাব মেনে নিতে হবে। তাদের অভিযোগ, উপত্যকায় এখনও সেনাবাহিনীর তাণ্ডব চলছে। সম্প্রতি হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের এক কোর কম্যান্ডারকে সেনাবাহিনী যেভাবে হত্যা করেছে তাতেও ক্ষুব্ধ হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব।

হরিয়তের এই পাঁচ নেতা তাই এখন দেখতে চান এই শৈঠকের প্রতিক্রিয়া কী হয়। কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি এখনও চূপ করে রয়েছে। এমনকী, কটকটপন্থী নেতা শৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানিও কোনও মন্তব্য করেননি। বাজপেয়ী সরকারও দেখতে চায়, পাক প্রশাসন এই বৈঠক নিয়ে কী মনোভাব ব্যক্ত করে। পাকিস্তান কি এই আলোচনাকে আরও এগিয়ে নিয়ে গিয়ে কাশ্মীরে সংঘর্ষবিরাতির প্রস্তাবে রাজি হয়ে যাবে? নাকি গিলানি, ইয়াসিন মালিকদের আবার দম দিয়ে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপকে বাড়িয়ে দেবে যাতে কেন্দ্র এই কাশ্মীরি নেতাদের রাজনৈতিক প্রক্রিয়ায় সামিল না-করতে পারে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় মনে করে, পাকিস্তানের পক্ষে এখনই এই শান্তি প্রক্রিয়াকে উপেক্ষা করে পুরনো সংঘাতের পথে যাওয়া কঠিন। কারণ, ইসলামাবাদে দু’পক্ষের যে আলোচনা হয়েছে, তার ভিত্তিতেই তৈরি এক পথনির্দেশিকা অনুসরণ করে চলছে দু’পক্ষ।

Goodwill season on, Hurriyat leaders meet Vajpayee

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Continuing the feel-good season on Kashmir, the Hurriyat leaders met Prime Minister Vajpayee on Friday and thanked him for sparing time and his leadership for carving out a vision to solve the 56-year-old problem. They also praised Pakistani president General Pervez Musharraf for showing the guts to shake hands with India.

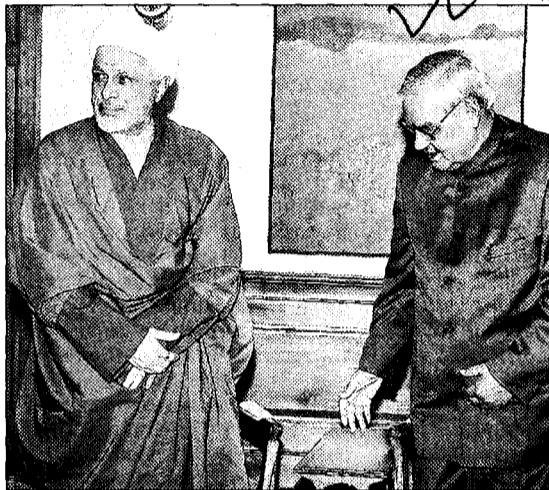
Though senior Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq kept repeating that the visit was merely a courtesy call, he hinted that many issues came up for discussion during the 45-minute meeting and that the PM gave them a patient hearing.

The issue of a ceasefire in J&K and the Hurriyat leaders' visit to Pakistan, he said, would be discussed later. "There has to be consensus".

He added that more organisations, inside and outside the Hurriyat like the people of Jammu and Ladakh, were welcome to join the talks. Later, even the militants could be included, he said. "But Thursday's discussion between Deputy PM L K Advani and the Hurriyat leaders was the official meeting," he said firmly.

Asked which groups he would meet in Pakistan if the government allows them to visit that country, the Mirwaiz said he would be meeting the leadership of Pakistan, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Mujahideen.

According to him, the Hurriyat would



Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee with the chairman of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, Moulana Abbas Ansari, at the former's residence in New Delhi on Friday

adopt a two-tier approach. The first was to solve the problem step-by-step. "We have some proposals and ideas which we did not discuss on Thursday. We will put them before the governments of India and Pakistan," he said.

The second was that while the peace process is on, Kashmiris should be given respite from violence. "The issue of human rights violation and the state of detainees should be addressed," he said.

Reiterating that the Kashmir issue was not restricted to individuals, organisations or political parties, the Mirwaiz said the Hurriyat and people of J&K were in favour of a lasting solution and shared Mr Vajpayee's vision for peace.

The Hurriyat team would be back in the Capital after Id to meet officials of the Pakistan High Commission and other foreign missions.

সন্ত্রাস বন্ধে ঐকমত্য

আজ অটলের সঙ্গে বৈঠক হরিয়তের

২৩/১/৫৪ ✓

২৪x
৫/১/৫৪

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২২ জানুয়ারি— কটরপন্থী কাশ্মীর নেতাদের সঙ্গে কটরপন্থী হিন্দুত্ববাদী বলে পরিচিত উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর বৈঠকে পারস্পরিক বিরোধের বরফ আজ অনেকটাই গলল।

হরিয়ত নেতারা বৈঠকের পর জানিয়েছেন, তাঁরা খুশি। এই বৈঠক ঐতিহাসিক। আবার আডবাণী সাংবাদিক বৈঠক করে এই আলোচনাকে ইতিবাচক ও সন্তোষজনক বলেছেন। আরও একধাপ এগিয়ে ঠিক হয়েছে, কাল বিকেল পাঁচটায় প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে একই ভাবে আলোচনায় বসবেন। মার্চ মাসে লোকসভা নির্বাচনের আগেই ফের আডবাণী হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করবেন। আজকের বৈঠকে স্থির হয়েছে, কাশ্মীর-সহ দেশের বিভিন্ন জেলে থাকা রাজনৈতিক বন্দিদের মুক্তি দেওয়ার বিষয়টি কেন্দ্র বিবেচনা করবে। কিছু হরিয়ত নেতাকে পাকিস্তানে যেতে দেওয়া হবে যাতে তাঁরা সেখানকার হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে পারেন। তবে এটা এখনই করা হবে না। মার্চ মাসে বৈঠকের ফলাফল দেখে কেন্দ্র সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে। সরকারি ভাবে জানানো হয়েছে, আজকের বৈঠকে দু'পক্ষই এই বিষয়ে একমত হয়েছে যে, সমস্ত রকম সন্ত্রাস শেষ হওয়া উচিত।

দিল্লিতে এই বৈঠক হলেও কাশ্মীর কিন্তু আজও ছিল অশান্ত। উধমপুরে জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীর প্রবল সংঘর্ষ হয়েছে। নিশ্চিহ্ন করে দেওয়া হয়েছে দু'টি জঙ্গি ঘাটি। হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের দুই নেতা আত্মসমর্পণও করেছেন।

নর্থ ব্লকে বিকেল তিনটায় ছিল এই বৈঠক। বৈঠককে কেন্দ্র করে দিল্লিতে আলোড়ন সৃষ্টি হয়। দেশি বিদেশি সাংবাদিকদের নজিরবিহীন ভিড় নর্থ ব্লকে। সাংবাদিকদের এড়ানোর জন্য কড়া নিরাপত্তার মধ্যে হরিয়ত নেতাদের নর্থ ব্লকের পিছনের গেট দিয়ে আনা হয় আডবাণীর দফতরে। ক্যাবিনেট ও স্বরাষ্ট্র সচিব, গোয়েন্দা প্রধান, সরকারি মধ্যস্থতাকারী এন এন ভোরা ছিলেন প্রথম বৈঠকে। তারপর আডবাণীর সঙ্গে তাঁদের বেঁ কিস্কৃষ্ণ একান্ত কথা হয়।

বৈঠকের পর আডবাণী সাংবাদিকদের বলেছেন, রাজনৈতিক বন্দিদের মুক্তির বিষয়টি কেন্দ্র বিবেচনা করছে। তবে যাদের বিরুদ্ধে মারাত্মক অভিযোগ রয়েছে তাদের ক্ষেত্রে সরকার আপস করতে রাজি নয়। কাশ্মীরি উদ্বাস্ত পশ্চিমতদের পুনর্বাসনের বিষয়টি নিয়েও হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আডবাণী আলোচনা করেন। তিনি হরিয়ত নেতাদের পশ্চিমতদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসে বিষয়টি মীমাংসা করার অনুরোধ জানান। এই প্রথম কাশ্মীরি পশ্চিমতদের সমস্যা মেটানোর জন্য হরিয়ত নেতাদের কাছে কেন্দ্র আবেদন জানালো।

তবে আডবাণীর একটি মন্তব্যকে কেন্দ্র করে হরিয়ত নেতাদের মধ্যে প্রতিক্রিয়া সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। আডবাণী সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে বলেছেন, এ বার কাশ্মীর নির্বাচনে হরিয়ত সংগঠনের কিছু শরিক সংগঠনের নাম না নিয়ে সামিল হয়েছিল। এই আশাব্যঞ্জক পদক্ষেপকে তিনি স্বাগত জানিয়েছেন। এই মন্তব্যটি হরিয়ত নেতাদের অস্থিতিতে ফেলেছে এবং হরিয়তের অভ্যন্তরীণ গোলমালকে উস্কে দিয়েছে। হরিয়তের এই নেতারা আজকের বৈঠকে সামিল হননি: জে কে এল এফের ইয়াসিন মালিক, সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানি ও সাবির শাহ। এই নেতারা আজ আডবাণীর মন্তব্যকে মূলধন করে সংগঠনের চেয়ারম্যান আব্বাস আনসারির বিরোধিতা শুরু করেছেন।

আজকের বৈঠকে হরিয়তের পাঁচ প্রতিনিধি বক্তব্য পেশ করেছেন। আডবাণী ছিলেন মূলত শ্রোতার ভূমিকায়। আড়াই ঘণ্টার আলোচনা ছিল সৌহার্দ্যপূর্ণ। এই সম্পর্কের পারস্পরিক রসায়ন কিছুদিন আগেও ছিল না। তখন এই নেতাদের সঙ্গে দেখা করতেই আডবাণী রাজি ছিলেন না। আর হরিয়ত নেতারা তখন উঠতে বসতে আডবাণীকে আক্রমণ করতেন। সামগ্রিক ভাবে দৃশ্যপট বদলে গিয়েছে। এক দিকে, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে ভারতের মৈত্রী প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে। অন্য দিকে, অযোধ্যা নিয়ে হিন্দু-মুসলিম সম্প্রীতি রচনার কাজেও ব্যস্ত আডবাণী।

ফেব্রুয়ারির প্রথম দু'সপ্তাহের মধ্যে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে বেশ কিছু আত্মবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। এর মধ্যে শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস রাস্তা গড়ে তোলা হবে। কাজেই হরিয়ত-কেন্দ্রের আলোচনার যে প্রক্রিয়া আজ শুরু হয়েছে তা নির্দিষ্ট পথনির্দেশ অনুসারেই এগোচ্ছে। আডবাণী কাশ্মীরি পশ্চিমতদের বিষয়টি নির্বাচনের আগে সচেতন ভাবে তুলেছেন বলে মনে করছে পর্যবেক্ষক মহল। আডবাণীকে কাশ্মীরে সন্ত্রাস ও হরিয়ত নেতাদের পাকিস্তান সফর নিয়ে প্রশ্ন করা হলে তিনি বলেন, আড়াই ঘণ্টা ধরে কথা হয়েছে, সব জানানো সম্ভব নয়। হরিয়ত সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, যে ভাবে কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি দমন অভিযান চালানো হচ্ছে তা বন্ধ করার আবেদন জানিয়েছেন তাঁরা। সেনা ও পুলিশের বিরুদ্ধে হরিয়ত নেতারা সরব হয়েছেন।

Centre, Hurriyat agree to find 'durable solution' to Kashmir issue



The Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, making a point to the Hurriyat Conference leaders at the North Block in New Delhi on Thursday. The Hurriyat leaders (from left) are: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Bilal Lone, Abdul Gani Bhat, Maulana Abbas Ansari and Fazal Haque Qureshi. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, JAN. 22. THE Leaders of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, met here today and agreed to find an "honourable and durable solution" to the Kashmir problem through dialogue, hoping that all forms of violence at all levels would end.

The much-awaited meeting, the first at this level, also agreed to adopt a "step-by-step approach that would lead to the resolution of all outstanding issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir."

The Hurriyat leaders will pay a courtesy call on the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, tomorrow.

After the two-and-a-half-hour marathon-session between Mr. Advani and the Hurriyat delegation, led by its chairman, Maulana Abbas Ansari, and comprising Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Bilal Ghani Lone and Fazal-ul-Haq Qu-

reshi, the two sides expressed satisfaction that a "good beginning" had been made. The next round will be held in March.

According to privileged sources, the mood among the Hurriyat leaders was "more than positive" and they "soft-pedalled" their reported desire to visit Pakistan to talk to the militant organisations there. Sources said they realised that the first meeting was not the occasion to raise matters of "passport and visas."

A joint statement was read out by Mr. Ghani Bhat before a crowd of jostling camera teams and reporters outside North Block. It stated that the discussions were "amicable, free, frank and fruitful." The Hurriyat leaders were escorted out by security personnel.

Addressing a press conference later, Mr. Advani said the Hurriyat leaders expressed a desire to meet Mr. Vajpayee. "I have spoken to the Prime Minister in Pune and apprised him of our meeting. He has agreed to meet the Hurriyat lead-

ers tomorrow."

Mr. Advani said the meeting was a "good beginning" and a dialogue process had been initiated on Jammu and Kashmir insofar as elements not part of the political process were concerned. He sought to fit in today's meeting with the bigger picture emerging since the free and fair Assembly polls held in the State in 2002, the process that was consolidated by the Prime Minister's April 2003 offer of "hand of friendship" to Pakistan and which ultimately culminated in the recent joint statement between India and Pakistan in Islamabad.

"A climate has been created. All these contributed to the new atmosphere, an atmosphere in which there is determination all round to see violence come to an end and the State moves forward if only as development is concerned," Mr. Advani said.

Mr. Advani said he told the delegation that though he woul

with election tours, he would meet them in the latter part of March in keeping with the "good beginning" made today.

To a query, he said the Hurriyat leaders raised the issue of detenus languishing in jails and it was agreed to put systems in place for a "rapid review" of the cases of prisoners not involved in heinous crimes.

Clarifying the need to enlarge the dialogue process, Mr. Advani said he told the delegation about the plight of Kashmiri Pandits living in pathetic conditions in camps outside the Valley for more than a decade.

The joint statement said the delegation was committed to enlarging the dialogue process to cover all regions of Jammu and Kashmir and addressing the concerns of all communities.

Mr. Advani was assisted in the talks by the Centre's interlocutor on Jammu and

Hurriyat big break with bonus

SEEMAGUHA

New Delhi, Jan. 22: Leaders of Kashmir's separatist conglomerate today described as a "breakthrough" their meeting with deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, who promised them a rapid review of cases against political detainees.

The All Parties Hurriyat Conference can now return to the Valley with something to show for the risk they have taken in coming forward to talk to the Indian leadership. As a bonus, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee will meet the leaders tomorrow.

"It was agreed that today's meeting was the first significant step in the dialogue process initiated by the government of India and that a step-by-step approach would lead to the resolution of all outstanding issues relating to Jammu and Kashmir," a statement of the synopsis of the

meeting released at the end of the two-and-a-half-hour discussions said.

It gives the Hurriyat the legitimacy to be part of a tripartite talk at a later date when India and Pakistan sit down to discuss Kashmir.

"We have been accused by the hardliners of selling out on the Kashmir cause. But now they will have to eat their words," Hurriyat chairman Maulana Abbas Ansari, who led the team to the talks, said, calling today's meeting a "breakthrough".

"Gradually, we will inch closer towards the resolution of the Kashmir issue," he said.

The second round of talks with the Hurriyat leaders will be held in March. "I must say that the meeting proved a good beginning in a dialogue initiated in respect of Jammu and Kashmir in so far as elements of the political process are concerned," the

deputy Prime Minister said.

Advani arrived late for the news conference mainly because he was on the phone to the Prime Minister, who was away in Pune, to put in the request for a meeting with the Hurriyat.

"There is a perceptible change in New Delhi's mood. The deputy Prime Minister was willing to hear our side of the story and promised a rapid review of prisoners held under detention," Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, a former Hurriyat chief, said.

ICE MELTS

- Delhi promises rapid review of cases of political prisoners in Jammu and Kashmir
- Second round of talks in March
- Hurriyat leaders to meet Vajpayee on Friday

He said Advani had also promised to look into cases of human rights violations and make sure security forces do not commit excesses. Farooq said there were also other proposals on the table the Centre was willing to consider. These confidence-building measures will be discussed in the next round of talks.

Farooq refused to spell them out, but it is well-known that the question of a ceasefire inside Kashmir will come up. They have also been demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which still operates in Kashmir.

He said the Kashmir issue was now being tackled in two tiers: one was the Hurriyat's dialogue with the Centre and the other the talks between India and Pakistan. At some point, all three would have to meet, Mirwaiz added.

Picture on Page 7

A GOOD BEGINNING, SAYS ADVANI Kashmir talks raise hopes

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Jan. 22. — A promise to rapidly review cases of political detainees and positive assurances of consideration of other Hurriyat demands today saw the Advani-Hurriyat dialogue moving into second gear that would witness a drastic scaling down of rhetoric from both sides and adopting a step-by-step approach to build on the atmosphere of peace.

There were also indications of an important "announcement" being made on 3 February to coincide with Id. "I'm sure the Centre will announce something on the occasion of Id that would give some relief to the people of Kashmir," one of the Hurriyat leaders, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, said after the meeting. A possible halt of operations by security forces in the state is expected.

The five-member Hurriyat team will pay a courtesy call on the Prime Minister tomorrow. The leaders will return to Delhi in late March for a second round of talks with the Deputy Prime Minister.

At the end of the 90-minute meeting, the two sides said the discussions were "amicable, free, frank and fruitful". Mr LK Advani described the meeting as a "very good beginning".



Mr LK Advani with Hurriyat leaders on Thursday. — AFP

Besides Maulana Ansari, the Hurriyat team comprised Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, Mr Bilal Lone and Mr Fazal-ul-Haq Qureshi. Mr Advani was assisted by the Centre's interlocutor Mr NN Vohra and home secretary Mr N Gopaldaswamy.

During the meeting, the Hurriyat leaders talked about the lingering suspicion in Kashmir towards the Centre. They urged the Centre to work towards strengthening the people's faith in the government by keeping promises made to them. Mr Advani reassured them of the Centre's commitment to peace.

A synopsis of the minutes of the meeting said it was agreed that the only way forward was to ensure that all forms of violence at all levels should come to an end.

Mr Advani told the leaders that the Hurriyat should think of all sections of Kashmiris, including the Pandits who've been living in "pathetic conditions".

The Hurriyat, Mr Advani later said, "appreciated" this sentiment and in the joint statement, expressed their commitment to the "enlargement of the dialogue to cover all regions and all communities". The Hurriyat wants inclusion of the PoK people too in the peace process.

Mirwaiz Farooq said Mr Advani was not opposed to the idea of Hurriyat leaders visiting Pakistan.

The Hurriyat, he said, has been advocating a triangular dialogue process if tripartite is not possible, and "that is happening".

Mixed response from separatists, page 4

Top Hizb commander shot dead near Srinagar

● Climax of a long-running hunt

By Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, JAN. 16. Ghulam Rasool Dar, overall commander of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen's operations in Jammu and Kashmir, was shot dead by the Army this afternoon.

Better known by his aliases, Ghazi Nasiruddin, Riyaz Rasool and Zubair, Dar was second in the Hizb command, reporting only to its *amir* or supreme commander, Mohammad Yusuf Shah. Dar's elimination is a blow to the outfit's command structure and could have consequences for the imminent dialogue between the Centre and the secessionist politicians in the State.

Dar was killed in a brief encounter with the 2 Rashtriya Rifles battalion at Zainakot, near Srinagar. Fayyaz Ahmad, a Hizb deputy divisional commander in-charge of south Kashmir, was shot dead along with him. A resident of Tral, Ahmad also handled the outfit's finance and publicity work. Sources told *The Hindu* that the battalion, acting on the basis of information provided by a local source, cordoned off the house in which Dar and Ahmad were hiding.

Dar's elimination marks the climax of a long-running hunt that began soon after he took charge in November 2003. The breakthrough came when the intelligence agencies began intercepting calls made by him on his Thuraya hand-held satellite phone.

India is among the few countries in Asia with a significant satellite signal interception capability, which is enabled by a string of listening stations run by the Research and Analysis Wing's National Technical Intelligence Communication Centre.

Sources say the security forces finally succeeded in shutting the jaws of the trap around Dar last night — at 5.30 p.m., Border Security Force personnel eliminated the Hizb deputy commander, Mohammad Abbas Malik, at a safe house in Srinagar. They found Dar's satellite phone in the safe house, along with Rs. 12 lakhs and a Maruti car.



The body of Ghulam Rasool Dar, who was killed in an encounter at a house on the outskirts of Srinagar, on Friday. — AP

A series of raids began after Malik's elimination, targeting the locations of all local telephone numbers dialled from the satellite phone. Anticipating that the security forces would soon locate him as his safe houses were now known, Dar fled Srinagar along with Ahmad. The local intelligence available to the Rashtriya Rifles enabled them to win the race. "If the Rashtriya Rifles hadn't found him," a senior officer told *The Hindu*, "someone else would have. Half the security forces around Srinagar were looking for Dar last night, and we had a pretty good idea of the places he could be in".

Dar's elimination will have considerable consequences for the Hizb's operations. The organisation has lost a string of top-level commanders over the last year — a sign, some believe, of a blood feud within the organisation sparked off by the 2002 assassination of the pro-dialogue commander, Abdul Majid Dar.

In April, the security forces succeeded in eliminating Dar's predecessor, Ghulam Rasool Khan, who operated under the code names, Saif-ul-Islam and Engineer Zamaan. Dar's deputy, Saif-ul-Rahman Bajwa, a Pakistani, was subsequently killed by the BSF in November.

As things stand, the Hizb will be hard-pressed to find a credible successor to Dar, a Jamaat-e-Islami veteran, who enjoyed the personal confidence of the Hizb *amir*. Dar himself had been reluctant to serve in the Valley, and delayed filling the post for several months after Khan was killed.

Now, Shah needs to nominate someone from among his diminishing circle of confidants on the Hizb's central command council, since the organisation is fighting against time to stall the imminent dialogue between the All Parties Hurriyat Conference moderates and New Delhi.

In recent days, the Hizb and its sister organisations such as the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen have held out threats to the life of APHC moderates. Dar is also believed to have met the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, Syed Nazir Ahmad Kashani, to demand that the organisation throw its weight behind the Islamist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Mr. Geelani has opposed the talks soon scheduled to take place between the APHC and New Delhi, although he has backed the parallel India-Pakistan detente. Dar's efforts to swing support for Mr. Geelani had, however, met with little success.

Interestingly, both Dar and the Hizb central division commander, Abdul Rashid Pir, had in recent weeks met senior political leaders from the ruling People's Democratic Party and the Opposition National Conference.

One meeting, with a top PDP leader, is believed to have taken place only four days ago. Little is known about the possible content of this dialogue track.

While the PDP has enthusiastically backed the New Delhi-APHC dialogue, it has also been calling for the Hizb's participation in the negotiations.

Some analysts believe that the PDP has a long-term interest in seeing the APHC dialogue fail since the moderates and the party compete for essentially the same mass constituency.

কথা বলতে হুরিয়তের পাঁচ সদস্যের দল

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, শ্রীনগর, ১৫ জানুয়ারি— জঙ্গিদের হুমকি অগ্রাহ্য করেই কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার কর্মসূচি অপরিবর্তিত রাখল অল পাটি হুরিয়ত কনফারেন্স। আজ নিজেদের মধ্যে আলোচনা শেষে হুরিয়ত নেতারা উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানীর সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসার জন্য পাঁচ সদস্যের একটি প্রতিনিধিদল গঠন করেছেন। আগামী ২২ জানুয়ারি দিল্লি গিয়ে ওই দলটি আডবানীর সঙ্গে কথা বলবে। হুরিয়তের চেয়ারম্যান মৌলবী আব্বাস আনসারি ছাড়াও প্রতিনিধিদলে থাকছেন আব্দুল গনি বাট, মিরওয়াজ উমর ফারুক, বিলাল গনি লোন এবং ফজলুল হক কুরেশি। ভারত-পাকিস্তান সম্পর্ক স্বাভাবিক করার যে-প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে, তারই অঙ্গ হিসাবে উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে তাঁদের এই নির্ধারিত বৈঠকে গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছেন হুরিয়ত নেতারা।

রাজবাগে হুরিয়তের সদর দফতরে কর্মসমিতি এবং সাধারণ পরিষদের বৈঠকে পরে আঞ্চল গনি লোন জানিয়েছেন, “২১ জানুয়ারির আগেই আমরা দিল্লি পৌঁছে যাব।” আলোচনায় বসার আহ্বান জানিয়ে উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী আডবানী হুরিয়তকে যে-চিঠি পাঠিয়েছেন, সেই চিঠিটিও সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে পড়ে শুনিয়েছেন লোন। কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে কোনও রকম কথাবার্তা চালানো আগে মেরে

ফেলার যে-ক্ষমিক দিয়েছে জামিয়াত-উল-মুজাহিদিন, তাকে বিশেষ আমল নেননি প্রবীণ হুরিয়ত নেতা। তাঁর কথায়, “আমরা মোটেও ভয় পাইনি। ওরা আমাদেরই লোক, মাঝেমধ্যে আবেগের বশে এ ধরনের কথাবার্তা বলে ফেলো। পরিস্থিতি যে অনেক পাল্টে গিয়েছে, সেটা বুঝতে পারলে ওরাও আমাদের সঙ্গে একমত হবে।” লোনারা বিচলিত না-হলেও জঙ্গি হুমকির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে হুরিয়ত দফতরের ক্রিসীমানায় আজ নিরাপত্তার বন্ধ অটুনি দেখা গিয়েছে। রাজবাগ যাওয়ার পথে প্রত্যেকটি অলিগানিরও দখল নিয়েছিল পুলিশ আর বি এস এফ।

তবে আজ বৈঠকের দিনই শ্রীনগরের হায়দারপুরা এলাকায় গাড়ি-বোমা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা। একটি পৃথক ঘটনায়, আজ জঙ্গিরা নিরাপত্তারক্ষীদের এক টহলদারী দলের উপরে গুলি চালালে এক জন সি আর পি এফ জওয়ান প্রাণ হারান। জওয়ানের পাল্টা গুলি চালানোও জঙ্গিরা পালিয়ে যায়।

পি টি আই-এর খবর, আল-নুর কলোনিতে গাড়ি-বোমা বিস্ফোরণে এক সি আর পি এফ জওয়ান আহত হয়েছেন। ক্ষতিগ্রস্ত হয়েছে আধা সামরিক বাহিনীর একটি গাড়ি। সকাল সাড়ে এগারোটা নাগাদ টেঙপোরা বাইপাসের কাছে একটি বিস্ফোরক বোমাই আত্মসাদাভারে জঙ্গিরা

বিস্ফোরণ ঘটায়। সেই সময় সি আর পি এফের একটি কন্ডায় বারামুলা থেকে শ্রীনগরে আসছিল। বিস্ফোরণের ধাক্কায় এলাকার বহু বাড়িঘরের কাচের জানালা ভেঙে পড়ে। বিস্ফোরণের দায় স্বীকার করেছে জঙ্গি সংগঠন আল-মাসুরিয়ান। স্থানীয় এক সংবাদ সংস্থার দফতরে ফোন করে সংগঠনের এক মুখপাত্র বলেছেন, হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের সঙ্গে যৌথ ভাবে এই হামলা চালিয়েছে তারা। বিস্ফোরণের কয়েক ঘণ্টা আগেই টেঙপোরা বাইপাসে হিজবুল এক সন্দেহভাজন শীর্ষ নেতাকে নিরাপত্তারক্ষীরা গুলি করে মারেন।

কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার প্রসঙ্গে বলতে গিয়ে পাকিস্তানকেও এক হাত নিয়েছেন গনি লোন। তিনি বলেন, “পাকিস্তান যখন আলোচনার টেবিলে আসে, তখন বলা হয় যে, ওরা সততা নিয়েই কথা বলছে। আর আমরা কাম্বীররা যখন কথা বলতে যাই, বলা হয়, আমরা কাম্বীর বেচে দেবো এটা মেনে নেওয়া যায় না।” আলোচনার ফলাফল নিয়ে আগ

বাড়িয়ে বিরাট কিছু আশা করছেন না হুরিয়ত নেতারা। লোন বলেছেন, “একটা প্রক্রিয়া সবে শুরু হচ্ছে। প্রথম বৈঠকের পরেই সেই প্রক্রিয়ার গতির আন্ডাজ পাওয়া যাবে।” এ দিকে, আজ জাইনপোরা-পোপিয়ান এলাকায় একটি সভায় কাম্বীরের ক্ষমতাসীন পি ডি পি-র

সভানেত্রী মেহবুবা মুফতি বলেছেন, কাম্বীর-সমস্যার সমাধানে কেন্দ্র ভবিষ্যতে হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের সঙ্গেও কথা চায়।

হুরিয়ত কাম্বীরিদের উপযুক্ত প্রতিনিধি নয় বলে প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী জঙ্গি ও রাজনৈতিক গোষ্ঠীগুলির সমালোচনা উড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন লোন। তাঁর মন্তব্য, “আমরাই প্রধান দল। এবং আমাদের আলোচনা হবে কাম্বীরকে কেন্দ্র করেই। দিল্লিতে আমরা নিশ্চয়ই আবহাওয়া নিয়ে কথা বলতে যাব না।” পাকিস্তান সফরে যেতে দিতে হুরিয়ত কেন্দ্রের কাছে আবেদন জানাবে বলেও জানান তিনি। সেই সঙ্গে লোনের আশা, দুই প্রতিক্রমী দেশের সৌভবন্ধনের কাজ পাকা হওয়ার প্রক্রিয়ায় জঙ্গিরাও সামিল হবে।

করাচিতে বিস্ফোরণ

করাচি, ১৫ জানুয়ারি— পাকিস্তানের এই বন্দর শহরের একটি খ্রিস্টান ধর্মস্থানের সামনে আজ গাড়ি বোমা বিস্ফোরণে সাতজন আহত হয়েছেন। শহরের পুলিশ প্রধান তারিক জামিল জানিয়েছেন, খ্রিস্টান বাইবেল সোসাইটির বাড়িতে হামলা হতে পারে বলে টেলিফোনে আগাম খবর দিয়েছিল এক অজ্ঞাতপরিচয় ব্যক্তি। পুলিশ পাহারার মধ্যেই দুষ্কৃতীরা প্রথমে গাড়ি করে এসে বোমা ছোড়ে। এর পনোরো মিনিট পরে কাছেই দাঁড় করিয়ে রাখা একটি গাড়িতে বিস্ফোরণ হয়। — পি টি আই

হরিয়ত ও ভারত-পাকিস্তান

১৫ জানুয়ারী ১৯৫২

অবশেষে জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের সর্বদলীয় হরিয়ত সম্মেলন উপপ্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সহিত মুখোমুখি বৈঠকের ডাক পাইয়াছে। এই মর্মে গত বছর অক্টোবরেই সিদ্ধান্ত হইয়াছিল। এ বার সেই বৈঠকের পাল্লা। ইতিমধ্যে ভারতীয় হরিয়ত সম্মেলন দ্বিধাবিভক্ত হইয়া গিয়াছে। কট্টরপন্থী অংশটি সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানির নেতৃত্বে আপন স্বাভাবিক বজায় রাখিয়া চলিয়াছে। আর অপেক্ষাকৃত নরমপন্থী অংশটি আব্বাস আনসারির সভাপতিত্বে সংহত। আডবাণীর সঙ্গে বৈঠকের আমন্ত্রণটি আনসারির কাছেই প্রেরিত হইয়াছে। তাঁহার নেতৃত্বাধীন হরিয়ত বৈঠকের তোড়জোড়ও শুরু করিয়া দিয়াছে। হরিয়তের প্রতিনিধিদলে কে কে থাকিবেন, তাহা নির্ণয় করার জন্য অতঃপর দফায়-দফায় বৈঠক হইবে, ঠিক যেমন বৈঠকের আলোচ্যসূচি এবং আলোচনায় হরিয়তের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি ও অবস্থান লইয়াও বিশদ পরামর্শ হইবে। হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বেশ উৎফুল্ল। তাঁহারা যে নয়াদিনের কাছে কাশ্মীরীদের প্রতিনিধিত্বের স্বীকৃতি পাইয়াছেন, ইহাতেই খুশি। কেননা তাঁহাদের অগ্রাহ্য করিয়াই উপত্যকায় যাবতীয় রাজনৈতিক ও প্রশাসনিক উদ্যোগ গৃহীত হইয়াছে। একের পর এক নির্বাচন তাঁহারা বয়কট করিলেও সেই নির্বাচনের ফলাফলের ভিত্তিতে গঠিত আইনসভা হইতে রাজ্যের নির্বাচিত সরকার গড়া হইয়াছে।

সেই সরকার যে শাসনপ্রণালী প্রচলন করিয়াছে তাহাতে হরিয়তের কোনও ভূমিকা থাকে নাই। এই প্রক্রিয়ায় হরিয়ত ক্রমশ উপত্যকায় রাজনীতি ও প্রশাসন হইতে বিচ্ছিন্ন হইয়া পড়ায় বিপদের সম্মুখীন হইয়াছে। বিশেষ করিয়া সর্বশেষ নির্বাচনের মধ্য দিয়া রাজ্যে যে রাজনৈতিক গোষ্ঠী ক্ষমতাসীন হইয়াছে, তাহার বৈধতা লইয়া হরিয়তের পক্ষেও তত প্রশ্ন তোলা সম্ভব হয় নাই। নির্বাচনের পরেও গৃহযুদ্ধে রক্তাক্ত কাশ্মীরীদের ক্ষতে প্রলেপ দিবার নীতি অনুসরণ করিয়া নূতন সরকার জনসাধারণের মন জয়ে বহুলাংশে সফল হইয়াছেন। এমতাবস্থায় হরিয়তের পক্ষে দ্রুত কোনও রাজনৈতিক উদ্যোগ জরুরি ছিল। নয়াদিনে সেই সুযোগ হরিয়ত নেতাদের সামনে আনিয়া দিয়াছে। তবু নয়াদিনের তরফে এই উদ্যোগকে ভারত-পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের জট খোলার বৃহত্তর প্রকল্পের অঙ্গ

হিসাবেই দেখা উচিত। এ কথা ঠিক যে এই সম্পর্কের হিমায়নের মূলে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা, বিশেষত কাশ্মীরে পাকিস্তানের মদতপুষ্ট জেহাদি সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের সশস্ত্র নাশকতা। অন্তত বিগত এক দশকের কিছু বেশি কাল ধরিয়া এই নাশকতা ও সন্ত্রাসই দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে ক্রমাগত মীমাংসার অস্বীত পর্বায়ে লইয়া গিয়াছে। দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের অন্য বিষয়গুলিও যে বিষাক্ত হইয়া ওঠে, যোগাযোগ, যাতায়াত, স্বাভাবিক বাণিজ্যিক লেনদেন ও সাংস্কৃতিক বিনিময়ও যে ক্রমশ বন্ধ হইয়া যায়, তাহার কারণও কাশ্মীরই।

লক্ষণীয়, সার্ক শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের মধ্য যখন ভারত-পাক সুপ্রতিবেশীসুলভ সম্পর্কের মাইলফলক হইয়া ওঠে, অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী ও পারভেজ মুশারফের পারস্পরিক পিঠ-চাপড়ানোয় হরিয়ত সম্মেলনের মতো কাশ্মীরি রাজনীতিকরা বিচলিত হইয়া পড়িয়াছিলেন। বিচলিত পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের রাজনীতিকরাও। সীমান্তের উভয় পারেই এই ভাবনা মাথা চাড়া দিতে থাকে যে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা ফেলিয়া রাখিয়াই বুঝি নয়াদিন ও ইসলামাবাদ আপসে নিজেদের বিরোধ মিটাইয়া ফেলিবে! পাক প্রেসিডেন্টকে কাশ্মীরের মানুষকে আশ্বস্ত করিতে বলিতে হয় যে তাঁহাদের কথাও মুশারফের মনে আছে এবং কাশ্মীর সমস্যাকে পাশ কাটাইয়া দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ককে উন্নত করা হইবে না। হয়তো হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বা অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের নেতাদের এই উৎকণ্ঠা সম্পূর্ণ অমূলকও নয়। দুই দেশ যদি নিজেদের সম্পর্ক উন্নত করিবার সিদ্ধান্ত লয়, তবে কাশ্মীর অন্তরায় হইবে না। পাকিস্তান যখন ভারতের সহিত সুসম্পর্কের স্বার্থে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের তত্ত্বাবধানে গণভোটের দাবি এক কথায় ছাড়িয়া দেয় এবং দু'দেশের নৈকট্য নিবিড় করিতে একের পর এক ছাড় বা সুবিধা ঘোষণায় ভারতের সহিত প্রতিযোগিতায় অবতীর্ণ হয়, তখনই বুঝা যায়, উভয় রাষ্ট্রেরই রাজনৈতিক নেতৃত্ব নূতন যুগের ভাবনা ও বোধে দীক্ষিত। পুরানো কাজিয়ার জের টানিয়া চলিতে তাঁহাদের প্রবল অনীহা। কাশ্মীরের বিক্ষুব্ধ রাজনীতিকদেরও বিষয়টি বুঝিয়া লওয়ার সময় আসিয়াছে। নিজেদের কাল্পনিক সার্বভৌমত্ব লইয়া গর্বিত হওয়ার দিন তাঁহাদের গিয়াছে। ভারত-পাক দ্বিপাক্ষিকতার চৌহদ্দিতেই তাঁহাদের নিজেদের অবস্থান নির্ণয় করিতে হইবে।

Hurriyat in unity last call

Srinagar, Jan. 14 (PTI): Hurriyat Conference chairman Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari today said he was making a last attempt at uniting the factions of the conglomerate before sitting down for talks with the Centre and also expressed willingness to amend the Hurriyat constitution to curtail his tenure.

"This is my last attempt to forge unity among freedom-loving parties," Ansari said a day after receiving the invitation for talks on January 22 from the Centre. "Those who come this time are welcome.... There will be no more offers."

Ansari said a written invitation from a Hurriyat delegation has been sent to Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chairman Mohammad Yasin Malik, People's League leader Shiekh Abdul Aziz, who is at present in jail, and Jamaat-e-Islami chief Syed Nazir Ahmad Kashani.

The JKLF and the People's League have maintained distance from both factions of the Hurriyat since it split in September last year. Jamaat pulled out from the Ansari-led faction and decided not to support the rival one led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani till greater unity was achieved.

Rejecting the invitation, Jamaat spokesman Zahi Ali said the call to attend tomorrow's meeting was "irrelevant" as his party did not support any of the Hurriyat factions.

"We want to make it clear that following the split in the Hurriyat, the forum has lost the right to represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir," Ali said in a statement here. All the units of the Hurriyat were functioning independently and these entities could not hold talks on behalf of the people of the state, he added.

But Ansari iterated the invitation, saying: "We have been trying to impress upon all the leaders to attend the meeting to be held tomorrow as it is in the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that we unite."

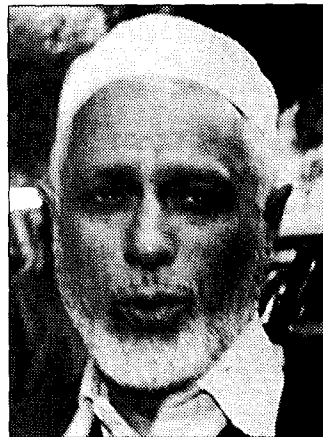
Asked if Geelani had been invited, he said: "There is no question of that till he claims to be Hurriyat chairman. Hurriyat is an amalgam of parties, not individuals."

The Hurriyat chairman said he was ready for an amendment to the Hurriyat constitution that would limit his tenure, and that of his successor, to six months. "Let me make it clear that I am not going to step down, but an amendment is possible. Those

who feel that I should go, will have to follow the proper channel," Ansari said.

Geelani would have to form a party and apply for general council membership of the amalgam after which the Hurriyat would decide whether his case "merits admission into the executive", he said.

"Assuming that all this happens and Geelani or someone else is elected chairman of the



Death threat

Srinagar, Jan. 14: The hardline Jamiat-ul Mujahideen today threatened to kill Maulana Mohammad Abbas Ansari (in picture above) and other leaders of his faction, a day after the Hurriyat received an invitation from the Centre for talks.

"Ansari and his colleagues are hereby warned not to kneel at the doorsteps of Delhi or else they will face dire consequences," the outfit's self-styled field commander-general Mohammad Umer said. "Ansari and his colleagues will be done to death one by one," he said.

Hurriyat, I will have no objection. But we need to follow the Hurriyat discipline," Ansari said.

On taking like-minded parties outside the Hurriyat into confidence ahead of the talks, Ansari said the amalgam would discuss the issues tomorrow and a separate meeting would be held for such organisations.

"We will be inviting parties and groups outside the Hurriyat, like traders and the chamber of commerce, separately. Doctors, engineers and intellectuals will also be consulted on a later date," he added.

Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party chairman Shabir Ahmad Shah is also likely to be invited for consultations.

SLOW BUT STEADY

The tortoise beat the hare. The slow negotiations to establish peace in Jammu and Kashmir should not dishearten anybody. The decision by the Centre to schedule talks with the All Party Hurriyat Conference shows progress is being made. Although it is unlikely that there will be an immediate breakthrough, it is critical to initiate and sustain a dialogue with separatist groups from Jammu and Kashmir. It may be recalled that the Central government has, over the last couple of years, made attempts at starting formal talks with the APHC. It had even appointed Mr K.C. Pant, the deputy chairman of the planning commission, and, then, the former Union home secretary, Mr N.N. Vohra, as its interlocutors. These efforts, however, were not successful for a variety of reasons. Hardliners in the APHC were insisting that the talks should include Pakistan as well. The separatists also wanted that the talks should be unconditional and be carried out by the political leadership in New Delhi. Many of these objections have been dealt with because of reciprocal concessions by the Centre and the APHC. The deputy prime minister, Mr L.K. Advani, will now initiate the talks, but the process may be continued by Mr Vohra. The APHC has given up its demand for Pakistan's inclusion, while New Delhi has made it clear that the dialogue will be conducted without pre-conditions. Moreover, the expulsion of the hardliner Jamaat-i-Islami leader, Mr Syed Ali Shah Geelani, from the APHC paved the way for the dialogue.

The beginning of the dialogue will be welcomed in Jammu and Kashmir. The APHC may or may not represent the opinion of the majority in Jammu and Kashmir, but they do articulate the sentiments of all those in the Kashmir valley alienated by the Central government's policies. Expectations of a quick agreement would, however, be misplaced. The moderates within the APHC cannot be seen as compromising with New Delhi, and the Centre too cannot be expected to produce an imaginative political package before the general elections. What would be useful is to exploit the initial phase of the dialogue to build trust and explore options. It is essential, of course, no matter how great the differences, that the dialogue be continued until there is some successful outcome. The conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, as is obvious, has both external and internal dimensions. It is heartening that the government has now taken steps to address both the dimensions, by reviving the dialogue with Islamabad and by initiating talks with Srinagar.

Centre invites Hurriyat for talks on January 22

● Government open to one-on-one meeting with Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 13. To give fillip to the peace efforts concerning Jammu and Kashmir, the Government today invited the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) for talks with the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, here on January 22.

The formal invitation was extended to the Hurriyat faction led by the moderate Maulana Abbas Ansari, official sources said here.

The invitation said that "pursuant to the decision of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on October 22, the Deputy Prime Minister would like to meet you on January 22."

The Centre's invitation to the Hurriyat comes close on the heels of a thaw in India-Pakistan relations and a successful SAARC summit which concluded last week in Islamabad.

Sources said the Government would be "open" to the approach of the Hurriyat if it wanted to have a one-on-one meeting with

Mr. Advani or would also like officials like the Union Home Secretary, N. Gopalaswami, and the Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir, N.N. Vohra, to meet them. It was also not clear as to how many Hurriyat leaders would like to visit North Block for a meeting with Mr. Advani. It would be their highest level of contact in the Government ever since the CCS authorised the Deputy Prime Minister to talk to the Hurriyat. The Government is keen not to evolve either a rigid or "too bureaucratic approach" towards proposed talks with the Hurriyat, the sources said here.

Over the past few months, the Hurriyat too has suffered setbacks as another faction of the separatist amalgam was formed under the leadership of Syed Ali Shah Geelani with the Jamat-e-Islami walking out of it.

On the other hand, the Centre too was busy formulating its strategy and working out modalities for talks with the Hurriyat. A subcommittee of top bureaucrats from the Prime Minister's Office, the Home Ministry and the Intelligence Bureau was formed for

the purpose. It met as recently as last week amid indications that the invitation to the Hurriyat would be sent out soon though the air was thick with the debate on early Lok Sabha polls.

Kashmir observers opine that the Vajpayee Government appears keen to demonstrate its commitment and sincerity in working out a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the Kashmir problem and restoring peace in the strife-torn valley.

The "peace initiative" gathered momentum when the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, addressed a public rally in April last in Srinagar and offered the hand of friendship to Pakistan.

In August-end, Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Advani and a number of Chief Ministers gathered for a two-day inter-State meeting in Srinagar and the decision to have talks with the Hurriyat came two months later. Also, the Congress-PDP Government in the State, led by Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, impressed upon the Centre on the need to talk to the Hurriyat.

আসছেন না গিলান

১৩ জানুয়ারি

কেন্দ্র-ছরিয়ত বৈঠক ২২শে

১৯৮১/৮২

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি ও নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, শ্রীনগর, ১৩ জানুয়ারি— অবশেষে ২২ জানুয়ারি বাজপেয়ী সরকার ছরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে চলেছে। উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী দিল্লিতে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করবেন। কেন্দ্রের পক্ষ থেকে একটি চিঠি দিয়ে ছরিয়ত নেতাদের আলোচনায় বসার আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হয়েছে। ছরিয়ত কনফারেন্সের প্রধান মৌলানা আব্বাস আনসারি আজ চিঠি প্রাপ্তি স্বীকার করেছেন। তিনি বলেছেন, ছরিয়তের কার্যনির্বাহী কমিটি, সাধারণ পরিষদ ও ওয়ার্কিং কমিটি বৈঠকে বসবে। সেখানেই কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসা হবে কিনা, সেই বিষয়ে বৈঠকে চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হবে। আব্দুল গনি বাট বলেছেন, চিঠিটা এক লাইনের। তবে 'আমরা যে হেতু আলোচনা চেয়ে এসেছি তাই আলোচনায় বসতে বাধ্য।'

ছরিয়ত নেতারা আজ সরকারি ভাবে বিষয়টিকে ঝুলিয়ে রাখলেও প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, আলোচনায় বসতে ছরিয়ত নেতারাও রাজি। ইসলামাবাদে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর বৈঠকের পরেই বরফ গলতে শুরু করে। এতদিন পাকিস্তানই কাশ্মীরি নেতাদের সঙ্গে কেন্দ্রের বৈঠকের সবচেয়ে বড় প্রতিবন্ধক ছিল। কিন্তু ভারত কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া শুরু করতে রাজি হয়ে যাওয়ায় পাকিস্তানও আগের অবস্থান বদলায়। ইসলামাবাদ থেকে ফিরে দিল্লিতে পাক হাই কমিশনার আজিজ আহমেদ খান কিছু ছরিয়ত নেতাকে ডেকে পাঠান, এমনকী কটরপহী গিলানিকেও। কিন্তু গিলানি দিল্লিতে বৈঠক করতে আসেননি। আডবাণীর সঙ্গে বৈঠকেও আসছেন না তিনি। কেন না, চিঠি গিয়েছে ছরিয়ত প্রধান আনসারির কাছে। কেন্দ্র তাই গিলানির দিকে নজর রাখছে যাতে তিনি আলোচনা ভেঙে না দেন। মিরওয়াইজ ওমর, ফজল হক কুরেশি এলেও গিলানির নির্দেশে ইয়াসিন মালিক দিল্লির বৈঠকে আসতে রাজি হচ্ছেন না। ছরিয়ত নেতাদের অভ্যন্তরীণ গণগোল চরমে। দিল্লির শুধু একটাই ভরসা, পাকিস্তান গিলানিকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ করবে। মুশারফের নির্দেশে পাক তথ্যমন্ত্রী শেখ রশিদ আহমেদ কাশ্মীরে ফোন করেছিলেন ছরিয়তের বিভিন্ন নেতাকে। মিরওয়াইজ ওমর, ইয়াসিন মালিক ও সাবির শাহকে ফোন করে পাকিস্তান জানিয়ে দেয়, দিল্লির সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরু করার জন্য।

ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বেশ কিছুদিন স্থিতিবিহীন। এক দিকে মধ্যপহী আনসারি ক্ষমতাসীন। অন্য দিকে, গিলানি-সহ বেশ কিছু নেতা ছরিয়ত থেকে বেরিয়ে পৃথক দল তৈরি করেছেন। প্রথম দিকে বাজপেয়ী সরকার ছরিয়তদের এই অন্তর্ভুক্তিকে কাজে লাগিয়ে পাকিস্তানকে বিপাকে ফেলেছিল। কিন্তু পাকিস্তানের কটরপহী নেতারা গিলানির পক্ষ নেন। তারা মধ্যপহী নেতৃত্বকে বাজপেয়ী সরকারের 'সেফটি ভালভ' বলে মনে করতে শুরু করেন। এই কারণেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটিতে আডবাণীকে দিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করার সিদ্ধান্ত ঘোষণা করলেও কথা শুরু হয়নি।

আনসারি গিলানিকে সরিয়ে ক্ষমতা দখল করেই কেন্দ্রের সঙ্গে আলোচনার ডাক দেন। আন্তঃরাজ্য পরিষদের বৈঠকে যোগ দিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী যখন কাশ্মীর গিয়েছিলেন, তখনই ছরিয়ত নেতারা তাঁর সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসতে চেয়েছিলেন। কৌশলগত কারণে প্রধানমন্ত্রী কাশ্মীরে না বসে পরে আডবাণীকে দিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু করার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলেন। তখন প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দূত হিসাবে আডবাণীর নেতৃত্বে আলোচনা শুরু করার প্রস্তাবকে আনসারি স্বাগতও জানিয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু তারপরেই পাকিস্তান থেকে আলোচনায় না-বসার চাপ আসতে থাকে। কাশ্মীরি নেতাদের দিয়ে পাকিস্তান কূটনৈতিক দর কষাকষি শুরু করে। গোপন বার্তা ছিল এটাই— দ্বিপাক্ষিক বৈঠক শুরু করার আশ্বাস ভারত রাজনৈতিক শীর্ষ স্তরে দিলে ছরিয়ত নেতাদেরও পাকিস্তান সবুজ সঙ্কেত দেবে। মধ্যপহীরা আলোচনা চাইলেও জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলি গিলানির দিকে বেশি। ফলে গিলানি কাশ্মীরে বন্ধ-হরতাল ডাকলে জঙ্গিরা সমর্থন করে। এবং সাধারণ মানুষকে তা মানতে বাধ্য করে। এই পরিস্থিতিতে অসহায় মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সৈয়দ ইসলামাবাদ সফরের আগে দিল্লি

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

14 JAN 2004

Invite cloud on Valley talks

SEEMAGUHA

New Delhi, Jan. 10: The crucial meeting between deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani and the moderate Hurriyat leadership is in danger of coming unstuck over an invitation letter.

The group led by Maulana Abbas Ansari of the Hurriyat Conference is keen to get a formal invitation from the Centre, but highly placed sources in Delhi said the deputy Prime Minister believes it is not necessary as a formal announcement has been made.

The Ansari faction today said it had not received any formal invitation from the Centre for talks as yet, according to a PTI report. "We have not received any formal invitation for talks as yet. We will frankly admit having received the invitation when it is formally extended to us," Ansari said when asked to comment on media reports that the Centre had extended an invitation for talks to the Hurriyat, said the report.

The Hurriyat leaders want a formal invitation mainly because they do not want to give the impression to local supporters that, in their eagerness to talk to New Delhi, they are willing to overlook normal courtesies.

The Hurriyat wants "talks with honour". Delhi, however, does not seem to be in a mood to oblige and the best the Hurriyat can hope for is an invitation like the one sent by Planning Commission deputy chairman K.C. Pant when he travelled to Srinagar for consultations with all section of Kashmiri society.

One reason those in Delhi dealing with the Hurriyat talks are eager for a start to be made is to ensure that efforts to get moderate leaders like Mirwaiz Umer Farooq to join the Syed Shah Geelani faction of the Hurriyat is defeated. Delhi does not trust Geelani, believing he is too close to Pakistan.

However, even if the Hurriyat leaders meet Advani, the first meeting will not have much on the agenda. "We have no agenda. We want to listen to what the Hurriyat leaders have to say," explained a senior official dealing with Kashmir. The government wants to keep the Hurriyat leaders engaged and wait to see the outcome of the India-Pakistan peace moves, he said.

For now the entire government is with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's peace efforts, especially Advani who has once again publicly backed the peace moves.

"Three days ago Vajpayeeji was in Islamabad. The decision (to meet President Pervez Musharraf) no doubt is historic and a major breakthrough," said the deputy Prime Minister today at the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas function here.

Advani said the situation in Kashmir has improved considerably after elections were held in the state in October 2002. The return of tourists is a good indicator of the changed circumstances, he added.

"Last year, the Valley attracted over 1.5 lakh tourists. Dal Lake and Gulmarg are again places of holiday today," he said and asked NRIs to visit Srinagar.

Jamaat-e-Islami takes on Hizb

By Praveen Swami

SRINAGAR, JAN. 8. The top Hizb-ul-Mujahideen commander Ghulam Rasool Dar, who operates using the *nom de guerre* Riyaz Rasool, has returned to the Kashmir valley, charged with drumming up support for the pro-Pakistan Islamist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Mr. Dar, a member of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen's Pakistan-based Command Council, is thought to have entered Jammu and Kashmir in mid-December. Since then, he has brought pressure to bear on the Jamaat-e-Islami, at one time considered the patron political front of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, to back Mr. Geelani's rejection of imminent talks between members of the secessionist All Parties Hurriyat Conference and the Indian Government.

So far, however, Mr. Dar's high-risk mission has not had a lot of success. Growing resistance to Pakistani fiat is evident within the powerful Jamaat-e-Islami, which nurtured most of the Hizb commanders. In early December, Mr. Geelani's protégé, Ashraf Sehrai, had launched a campaign to garner the Jamaat-e-Islami's support for the Islamist leader, who has rejected the mainstream APHC's efforts to begin a dialogue with India. Mr. Sehrai's public support for Mr. Geelani led to his removal as the Jamaat-e-Islami's Naib Amir, or deputy chief. The decision was taken by the Amir, or chief, of the Jamaat-e-Islami, Syed Nazir Ahmad Kashani, a moderate long opposed to the ongoing violence in the State.

Pressure from the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Jamaat-e-Islami insiders say, then forced the organisation's leadership to summon a meeting of their highest decision-making body, the Markazi Majlis-e-Shoora, on December 29. To their surprise, hardliners within the Jamaat-e-Islami found them-

selves marginalised. Mr. Kashani was made head of the Jamaat-e-Islami's political wing, a post earlier held by Mr. Geelani, but was firmly told to toe the organisational line. Mr. Sehrai, with Hizb backing, launched a fresh offensive on January 6, telling a rally in Sopore that Mr. Geelani "was headed in the right direction." The very next day, however, the Jamaat-e-Islami issued a signed statement denying that Mr. Sehrai had said any such thing.

As things stand, the Jamaat-e-Islami has studiously kept itself out of the Islamist-centrist power struggle. On January 1, the Markazi Majlis-e-Shoora, or central consultative committee, reiterated its traditional stand by calling for either the implementation of the United Nations resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir or a three-way dialogue between India, Pakistan and representatives of the State's people. Notably, however, the Jamaat-e-Islami went public with a commitment to "democratic and constitutional struggle," an indication of willingness to operate within the four corners of the Indian political system. Article 5 of the Jamaat-e-Islami's own constitution obliges it to use such means, and to desist from any which "may contribute to the strife on earth."

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu*, Mr. Kashani dwelt on several important strands in the Jamaat-e-Islami's new thinking. He welcomed the ongoing détente process between India and Pakistan, rejecting criticism directed at it by the head of the Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, and the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen supremo, Mohammad Yusuf Shah, who uses the code-name Syed Salahuddin. "The fact that these two countries are headed in the direction of peace," he said, "should be a source of great happiness to us all."

"The primary purpose of the Jamaat-e-

Islami," Mr. Kashani continued, "is to invite all people, irrespective of their language, colour or nationality, to the path of Islam, by placing its message before them. To this end, we are committed to peaceful, over-ground means."

Jamaat-e-Islami sources say that Mr. Kashani's stand is the outcome of a five-year ideological debate within the organisation. In 1997, the Jamaat-e-Islami's then-Amir, G.M. Bhat, was released from prison and took charge of the organisation. In an interview given soon after, Mr. Bhat distanced the Jamaat-e-Islami from the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, and called for an end to "gun culture." This incensed Mr. Geelani, but had the backing of the Jamaat-e-Islami rank and file, who had been at the receiving end of the Indian military operations directed at the Hizb supporters. Mr. Bhat also had the support of those within the Jamaat-e-Islami leadership who believed that the organisation's linkages with the Hizb had become an obstacle to its primary, proselytising mission.

Matters came to a head in May last year, when Mr. Bhat announced that Mr. Geelani would no longer represent the organisation in the APHC. The decision was taken as relations between Islamists and centrists had reached a breaking point, and Mr. Geelani had stopped attending APHC meetings. Hizb-ul-Mujahideen spokesperson Salim Hashmi described Mr. Bhat's action as helping an "Indian plot of derailing the freedom movement," and demanded that the Jamaat-e-Islami endorse Mr. Geelani's "principled stand" to "save the freedom movement from disintegration at this crucial juncture."

Now, the failure of Mr. Dar's high-risk covert visit to the valley suggests the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen has few friends left, even among its one-time mentors.

SC rejects plea on J&K status

R. VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Jan. 7: The Supreme Court today dismissed a petition that sought scrapping of Article 370, the constitutional provision which accords special status to Jammu and Kashmir.

A division bench of Justices Ruma Pal and S.B. Sinha said "constitutional provisions cannot be challenged on political grounds" and declined to give any reason for dismissing the petition.

Balraj Madhok, former president of the erstwhile Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the BJP's earlier avatar, had challenged the provision on the ground that the Constitution envisaged it as a "temporary provision".

This is the first time that the provision has been challenged in the apex court, as successive governments have failed to do away with it, Madhok's counsel R.V. Bhasin said.

Madhok argued that the Constitution had made it clear that the provision was temporary. The heading to the article, he pointed out, reads "Temporary provisions with respect to the state of Jammu and Kashmir". The provision, he added, does not anywhere specify or define the temporary period and sought a directive to the Union government to "fix" a period and abrogate the article after that period is over.

The petition contended that Article 370 was "contrary to the basic structure of the Constitution" as it went against the "equality" clause mandated in the statute by providing special status to a state.

"There cannot be discriminatory treatment between 500 princely states on one side and the state of J&K on the other side," the petition said, pointing to the annexation of these princely states at the time of Independence.

"The existence of Article 370 in the Constitution has created more trouble in Kashmir," Madhok said in his petition. He argued that it was "absolutely essential" that normality returns to Jammu and Kashmir, "which cannot be done without permitting the citizens of India to purchase or acquire properties" in the state and "permitting...free flow of business".

Bhasin contended that citizens of Jammu and Kashmir were allowed to reside, settle and purchase properties anywhere in the country, but under Article 370, citizens from other parts of India cannot purchase or acquire property in the state. This, Bhasin said, was a violation of the fundamental right under Article 14, which enshrines "equality before law and equal application of law" for all citizens of the country.

The petition said many of those who migrated to the state since 1947 have not been allowed to vote in local body and Assembly elections and the "fundamental rights" of a large section of people living in the state have been "denied" for over 50 years.

The petition requested the court to declare that "inclusion and continuation of Article 370 in the Constitution is against the spirit of the Constitution itself".

Six killed in ultra attack on Jammu station

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Jan. 2. — Two days before the start of the Saarc summit in Islamabad, terrorists attacked Jammu railway station this evening, killing four securitymen. The two ultras involved in the attack were gunned down by police and the Army in a joint operation, which was launched within minutes of the attack and continued for more than three hours. An Army lieutenant, two BSF jawans and a policeman were killed in the en-

counter, during which 13 civilians were injured.

Though this was the first major attack by militants in the state during the ongoing Indo-Pak ceasefire, this was not the first *fidayeen* strike at the station. On 7 August 2001, more than 12 people had been killed when a two-member suicide squad attacked the station.

It's now a familiar pattern in this state that whenever a significant peace attempt is made, militants let loose their firepower. This time too the attack came just when the Prime Minister is about to leave

for Islamabad for the Saarc summit. Mr ML Fotedar, SSP (crime and railway), said the two militants appeared on platform number 4 at 6.45 p.m. and started firing indiscriminately at the security-men posted there. The Army's Quick Reaction Team was quick to reach the spot and engage the ultras in an encounter.

The scene of action was platform no. 2, to which the ultras crossed over using the foot overbridge.

Heavy exchange of fire took place between the two sides. Several armoured

personnel carriers as well as Army and civil ambulances were seen entering the station premises. The security forces reportedly used rocket launchers to kill the ultras. Lt Triveni Singh 8 J&K Light Infantry) shot one of the ultras, but the slain militant could manage to kill Singh before dying. The two BSF men killed in the encounter were constable Dinesh Chander and head constable Govardhan Ram. The slain policeman was Rajkumar. The casualty figure was comparatively low because all trains had left the station by then.