

World Bank recommends neutral expert on Baglihar dam issue

India receives panel of three names; consultation process begins

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday said that the World Bank had recommended the appointment of a neutral expert to sort out differences with Pakistan on the design of the Baglihar dam, which is being constructed on the Sutlej River in Jammu and Kashmir.

A brief statement from the External Affairs Ministry said: "We have received a reply from the World Bank recommending appointment of a neutral expert. They have also proposed a panel of three names."

The Bank said on Tuesday it had informed the Indian and Pakistan Governments that it had determined that it is required to comply with Islamabad's request to appoint a neutral expert under the terms of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty. "The

Bank has now begun the process of consultation required by the Treaty for the appointment of the neutral expert," the statement said.

On January 18, Pakistan requested the World Bank to appoint a neutral expert to help resolve a difference that had arisen between the two parties to the Treaty, India and Pakistan.

"The World Bank is a signatory to the Treaty for certain specified purposes. It is not a guarantor of the Treaty. Many of the purposes for which the World Bank signed the Treaty have been completed," the statement said.

It added that the Bank now had three remaining responsibilities under the Treaty, relating to the settlement of differences and disputes. Disagreements by the parties on the interpretation of the provisions of the Treaty are classified in-

to three categories — questions are examined by the Permanent Indus Commission; differences by a neutral expert; and disputes by a Court of Arbitration. According to the Treaty, the remaining responsibilities of the World Bank are:

"One, a role for the World Bank in the appointment of a neutral expert. The first step under the Treaty is to resolve any 'question' through the Permanent Indus Commission itself. If the 'question' is not resolved there, it becomes a 'difference' and is referred to a neutral expert, to be appointed by the two countries, or by a third party agreed upon by the two countries. In the absence of such an agreement, the World Bank, in consultation with the two countries, would make the appointment of the neutral expert. The decision of the neutral expert on all matters within his competence

shall be final and binding.

"Two, the management by the World Bank of a trust fund to meet the expenses of a neutral expert.

"Three, a role for the World Bank in the establishment of a Court of Arbitration. If the 'difference' does not fall within the mandate of the neutral expert, or if the neutral expert rules that the 'difference' should be treated as a 'dispute,' then a Court of Arbitration would be established. The role of the World Bank, along with other institutions such as the Secretary-General of the United Nations, is to participate in the selection of three appointees to the seven-person Court. The parties to the Treaty each select two members of the Court. The World Bank itself plays no part in the actual hearing or determination of the issues before the tribunal," the statement added.

29 APR 2005

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

Musharraf safety fear gnaws India

SUJAN DUTTA

New Delhi, April 23: After General Pervez Musharraf's visit to India, Delhi is in a quandary: how to deal with a military dictator who talks peace and what are the chances that his presidency will be stable?

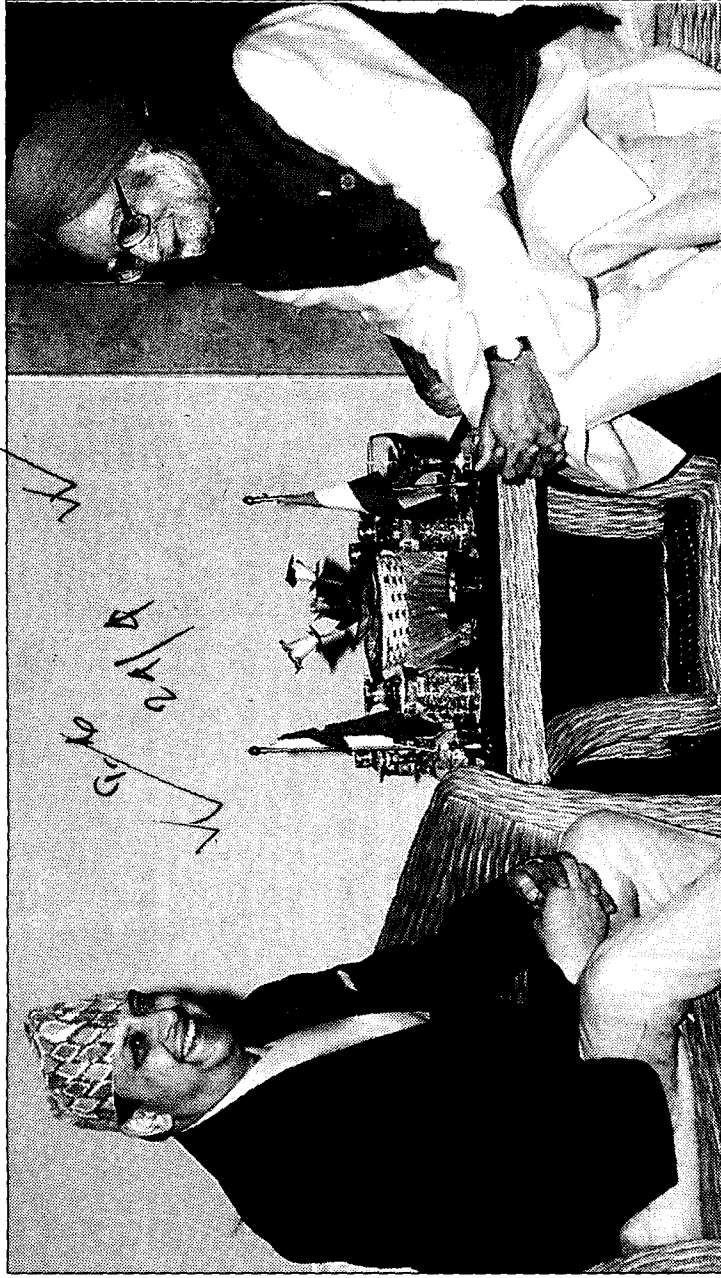
It is a sharp irony of contemporary politics that the world's largest democracy should be concerned about threats to the stability of a military dictatorship. But that is seen as India's best bet for lasting peace with Pakistan.

The concern was reflected in a briefing by the Prime Minister's special envoy to Pakistan, Satish K. Lambah.

A former ambassador to Pakistan, Lambah is also the convener of the 15-member National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), which met here on Thursday and Friday.

The NSAB comprises retired general-rank officers of the army, navy and air force, former officials of intelligence agencies, security analysts, representatives of voluntary organisations and academics nominated by the Centre. It functions as a sounding board for the government and has no executive authority.

As special envoy, Lambah is engaged in back-channel diplomacy with his Pakistani



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh with Nepal's King Gyanendra in Jakarta on Saturday (PTI)

counterpart Tariq Aziz. The two quietly scripted Musharraf's trip and his talks with Manmohan Singh.

The envoy's presentation and briefing to the NSAB mirrored the worry about the Pakistan President talking peace at a time he is confronted with domestic troubles.

Apart from the insurgency in Baluchistan — that

is being dealt with by the Pakistan Army — Delhi has also taken cognisance of the threat to Musharraf. It was important, peacemakers here concluded, for the general to have something substantial to "sell" to his constituents — the army and the intelligentsia.

Musharraf had pointed out that he has been a victim of terrorism. There have been

three attempts on his life. At a time when Delhi and Islamabad have embarked on a path to peace that has few parallels, Musharraf's presidency is seen as crucial.

The general had remarked in his breakfast meeting with editors that the atmospherics were just right for a peace deal and he pushed for resolution of disputes with haste, lest the en-

vironment changes.

Lambah is understood to have pointed out to the NSAB that Singh and Musharraf's joint statement would allow the general to claim real gains.

In particular, by citing the words "final settlement" in the statement, he would be able to assure his constituents that he has not abandoned his Kashmir agenda.

সংঘর্ষবিরতি নিয়ে ভাবতে রাজি হিজবুল

নয়াদিল্লি, ২৩ এপ্রিল: ভারতীয় সেনাবাহিনী চুক্তি মেনে চললে হিজবুল মুজাহিদিন সংঘর্ষবিরতির ব্যাপারে চিন্তা-ভাবনা করতে পারে। আজ স্থানীয় এক সংবাদসংস্থাকে একথা জানিয়েছেন, হিজবুল নেতা গাজি মিসবাহুদ্দিন। তাঁর অভিযোগ, এর আগে যত বার সংঘর্ষবিরতি ঘোষণা হয়েছে তত বারই ভারতীয় সেনা চুক্তিভঙ্গ করেছে। তবে সেনাবাহিনী যদি চুক্তি মেনে চলে তা হলে হিজবুল গোষ্ঠীর সংঘর্ষবিরতি ঘোষণায় আগ্রহ রয়েছে। তিনি দাবি করেছেন, আন্তরিক ভাবে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান চাইলে ভারত-পাকিস্তানের উচিত জঙ্গিগোষ্ঠীগুলিকেও আলোচনায় ডাকা। হিজবুলরা যে কেবল জঙ্গি-কার্যকলাপ পরিচালনা করেন তা নয়, তাঁরা রাজনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রেও যথেষ্ট তৎপর।

এ দিকে পাকিস্তানে সঙ্গে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার নামে যা ঘটছে তা ভারতকে ক্রমশ আর একবার দেশভাগের দিকে ঠেলে দিচ্ছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন গৃহচ্যুত কাশ্মীরীদের সংগঠনের সভাপতি। তাঁর দাবি, ভারত যে ভবিষ্যতে স্থায়ী সীমান্তের বদলে উত্তর সীমায় অস্থায়ী নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখাই মেনে নিতে চলেছে শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরবাদ বাস যোগাযোগ তারই প্রমাণ।

তাঁর অভিযোগ, সাম্প্রতিক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার ফলে এই প্রথমবার কাশ্মীরের ক্ষেত্রে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার ব্যাপারে পাকিস্তান ভারতের সমান মর্যাদা পাচ্ছে। সাধারণ মানুষের কাছ থেকে অনেক কিছুই গোপন করা হচ্ছে। তাঁর দাবি, শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরবাদ বাস চালানোর জন্য পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে ভারতের কি কি সামঝোতা করতে হয়েছে তা প্রকাশ্যে জানানো উচিত। — পি টি আই

সমাধান শান্তির পথেই, একসুর ভারত-পাকিস্তান

জাকার্তা, ২৩ এপ্রিল: কাশ্মীরকে ঘিরে দুই প্রতিবেশী দেশের শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ায় যে নতুন গতি সঞ্চার হয়েছে, তা এ বার আন্তর্জাতিক মঞ্চে দাঁড়িয়ে জোর গলায় জানিয়ে দিল ভারত ও পাকিস্তান। এক ধাপ এগিয়ে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ বললেন, শান্তি-প্রয়াসের জন্য দু'দেশেরই যুগ্ম ভাবে গর্বিত হওয়া উচিত।

ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী এবং পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট, দু'জনেই বলেছেন, আন্তরিকতার সঙ্গেই শান্তির পথে যাত্রা করেছে দু'দেশ। অতীতের তিক্ততা ভুলে বিশ্ব তথা উপমহাদেশে স্থিতিশীলতার স্বার্থে নিজেদের যাবতীয় সমস্যার মীমাংসা করতে দুই দেশই আগ্রহী। সন্ত্রাসবাদ, বিশ্বায়ন, সভ্যতার সংকট— এই সব প্রসঙ্গ উঠে এসেছে দু'জনের বক্তৃতাতেই। কিন্তু অতীতের মতো কাশ্মীর-প্রসঙ্গকে আন্তর্জাতিক মঞ্চে টানেনি পাকিস্তান।

আফ্রো-এশীয় সম্মেলনে আজ মনমোহন বলেছেন, “সাম্প্রতিক কালে পরিবর্তন এসেছে অত্যন্ত দ্রুত। এই পাক্তানো সময়ই এনে দিয়েছে সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়ার সুযোগ এবং দায়িত্ব।” প্রধানমন্ত্রী ব্যাখ্যা করেছেন, অতীতের ক্ষত ভুলে এগোনোর এটাই সময়। তাঁর কথায়, “এই মনোভাব থেকেই আমরা পাকিস্তানকে সহযোগী করে শান্তির পথে যাত্রা করেছি। প্রতিবেশীসুলভ সম্পর্ক গড়ে তুলতে চলেছি।”

পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতার এই সুর বজায় রেখেই শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফ বলেছেন, শান্তি ও সংহতির স্বার্থে ভারত-পাকিস্তান ‘নমনীয়তা’ এবং ‘সাহস’ দেখিয়েছে। এখন আঞ্চলিক এবং বিশ্ব শান্তির জন্যই বহুপাক্ষিক স্তরে সমস্যা সমাধানের ব্যবস্থাকে প্রতিষ্ঠানিক রূপ দেওয়াও জরুরি।

ইন্দোনেশিয়ার প্রেসিডেন্টের দেওয়া নৈশভোজে কাল দেখা হয়েছিল মনমোহন-মুশারফের। সে কথা উল্লেখ করে মনমোহন জানান, মুশারফের ইতিবাচক ভাবনার শরিক তিনিও। “পরস্পরের কাছে গ্রহণযোগ্য পথে যাবতীয় সমস্যার মীমাংসা করতে আমরা উভয় পক্ষই উৎসাহী,” মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন মনমোহন।

দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক মসৃণ করার অঙ্গীকারের সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই আন্তর্জাতিক প্রসঙ্গে সহযোগিতার নীতির কথাই বলেছেন মনমোহন। তাঁর প্রস্তাব, সন্ত্রাসবাদ বা এডসের মতো বিশ্বজোড়া সমস্যা রুখতে আন্তর্জাতিক মতৈক্য গড়ে উঠুক। বানদুং সম্মেলনের ৫০ বছর পূর্তি হচ্ছে এ বারের আফ্রো-এশীয় সম্মেলনে। অর্ধ শতাব্দী আগে বানদুং বিশেষ ভূমিকা ছিল প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী জওহরলাল নেহরুর আর আজ সেই নেহরুকেই উদ্ধৃত করেছেন মনমোহন। সেই সঙ্গেই জোর গলায় জানিয়েছেন, সব সংস্কৃতির মধ্যে আদানপ্রদানে তিনি বিশ্বাসী। সভ্যতার বিবাদের তত্ত্বে তাঁর বিশ্বাস নেই।

এই প্রসঙ্গে মনমোহনের প্রতিধ্বনি যেন শোনা গিয়েছে মুশারফের গলায়। পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের মতে, পর্যাণ্ড সতর্কতা না-নেওয়ার বিশ্বায়নের হাত ধরে বেড়ে যাচ্ছে সন্ত্রাস আর গণধ্বংসের হাতিয়ার।

এ দিন চিনা প্রেসিডেন্ট ছ জিনতাওয়ার সঙ্গেও বৈঠক করেন মনমোহন। সীমান্ত সমস্যাকে দু'দেশের মধ্যে শান্তি ও সম্প্রীতি প্রতিষ্ঠার পথে অন্তরায় হতে না দেওয়ার ব্যাপারে দুই নেতাই একমত হয়েছেন। এ ছাড়া সীমান্ত সমস্যা মেটাতে দু'দেশের বিশেষ প্রতিনিধিদের আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া ত্বরান্বিত করার সিদ্ধান্তও হয়েছে এ দিনের বৈঠকে। — পিটিআই

Indo-Pak

Indo-Pak talks: US does a fine balancing act

US
Gandhi

By Jal Taraporevala/TNN

The call issued by US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice to India and Pakistan to sustain the momentum of the peace process has again highlighted Washington's strategic calculations in balancing its relationship with the two South Asian nations. The statement is scarcely coincidental coming as it does following the visit of General Pervez Musharraf to New Delhi and as part of the gradual buildup to President George Bush's trip to the subcontinent later this year or early next.

Washington's increasing efforts to build on the economic foundation of its links with New Delhi by forging closer ties in the defence, nuclear and space fields should be interpreted in terms of multiple objectives. The purpose is to develop synergies with India in the hi-tech sector, counter China's growing economic and geopolitical clout and reduce Islamabad's negotiating leverage in the bilateral US-Pak relationship.

At the same time, by maintaining a fairly

substantial aid and defence programme with Pakistan, the US is seeking to retain the support of the Musharraf administration for its ongoing war on terror and place indirect pressure on both Islamabad and New Delhi to keep up the search for normalising relations.



General Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi last week

Even so, there are political and tactical reasons which suggest that the US will not want to get openly involved in trying to resolve the substantive questions in the Indo-Pak dispute. After all, the Bush administration which has generally pursued a reactive policy on the Indo-Pak question, can hardly be expected to adopt a pro-active approach at a time when the implementation of confidence-building measures has, for the present, helped stabilize the situation in South Asia. More important, the reluctance of

the US to get more actively involved is a reflection of its preoccupation with events in Iraq, Iran, North Korea and West Asia and the diplomatic risks of playing the role of a facilitator in a dispute which has defied solution for almost five decades.

22 APR 2001

Second bus leaves without incident

22/4
 Gujral PoK
 HD - 15

38 travel from Srinagar and 28 from Muzaffarabad; starting point kept secret

Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR: The second bus on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road left on Thursday without incident, or for that matter, the fanfare witnessed on its inaugural run on April 7.

While 38 passengers from here travelled to the other side of the Line of Control (LoC), the number of passengers coming from Muzaffarabad was less at 28, including 11 new passengers.

Tight security

There was tight security right from Srinagar to Kaman Post and even school buses were not allowed on the road till the "caravan of peace" had crossed the outskirts of Srinagar.

The start venue of the buses was kept secret till early morning and most of the passengers were under tight security since Wednesday evening. It was from the tightly-guarded Nehru Guest House in Cheshmashahi that the buses left. But two dummy buses accompanied by an ambulance went first. "Everything went off smoothly and there was absolutely no problem," said Raja Alijazz Ali, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, North Kashmir range.

Four militant organisations — al Nasireen, Save Kashmir Movement, al Arifeen and Farzandan-e-Millat — have not withdrawn their threat to "turn the bus into a coffin."

Heavy security on the 118-km



CROSSING THE LOC: Passengers from Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir on the second bus to Srinagar wave to onlookers at the Line of Control in Chakoti on Thursday. — PHOTO: AP

road from Srinagar to Kaman Post has probably made the bus service possible. Ten companies of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), five companies of Border Service Force (BSF), a number of army men and police personnel had been deployed to ensure an incident-free day.

Relaxed atmosphere

Unlike the panic created on April 6 after the attack on the Tourist Reception Centre, the atmosphere was relaxed on Thursday.

As against 19 passengers who boarded the bus on April 7, 26 new passengers and 12 residents of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir returning after spending 15 days here took the journey this time. But 14 passengers travelling to Muzaffarabad boarded the bus at Salamabad, the village close to the LoC where the Tourist Reception Centre has recently come up.

"We have enjoyed our stay here. It was a really good beginning," said Akram Shah one of the passengers who boarded the first bus. However, the number of passengers coming from Muzaffarabad today was just 11 in addition to the 14 who returned to Kashmir.

At Kaman Post, which made history on April 7, the atmosphere was quite different.

It was a low-key affair with the Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla Dheeraj Gupta and his

"I am coming here after 33 years," said Shehzada from Mirpur in PoK. The passengers travelling from here complained that the bus fare was exorbitant. A sum of Rs. 1200 is a big amount for me," said a resident in Uri urging the authorities to lower the rates and make tickets available at TRC Salamabad. In contrast, the journey for passengers coming from PoK was free.

counterpart, Ghulam Fatima, a woman from Srinagar who saw her grand children in Muzaffarabad for the first time, said, "I miss them but may be will visit again."

were no emotional scenes similar to last time but Ghulam Fatima, a woman from Srinagar who saw her grand children in Muzaffarabad for the first time, said, "I miss them but may be will visit again."

Manmohan takes note of hurdles along Indo-Pak peace route

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 20 APRIL

PRIME Minister Manmohan Singh, who struck a cautious note on the engagement with Pakistan, said on Wednesday India remains "conscious of the difficulties ahead". Dr Singh, who acknowledged that the threat to the peace process from terrorist organisations was real, asked Pakistan to implement its assurances in letter and spirit.

"While I am satisfied with the progress achieved in our talks during the visit we should remain conscious of the difficulties ahead," the Prime Minister said in his statement on President Pervez Musharraf's visit. He said the difficult issues that divide the two countries have bedevilled relations for far too long to hope for an immediate resolution.

On the threat of terrorists he said, "I mentioned to President Musharraf that the whole process of serious and sustained dialogue hinges on building an atmosphere of trust and confidence, free from violence and terror. We look forward to Pakistan implementing its assurances in letter and spirit".

On the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, he said it had important outcomes like the agreement on the political parameters and guiding principles for the settlement of the India-China boundary question and the desire to pro-actively resolve outstanding differences.

Referring to the joint statement issued on



Monday at the end of the Pakistani President's visit, the Prime Minister said the reaffirmation of the commitments made in the joint statements of Islamabad and New York last year addressed "our concerns relating to terrorism from across the border." The Monday statement contained a pledge that terrorism would not be allowed to impede the peace process. It also underlined the importance of the peace process and the degree of improvement in relations between the two countries, he said.

Asserting that redrawing of boundaries was not possible, he said both countries have

agreed to pursue further measures to enhance interaction across the LoC. Declaring that India was committed to peace and friendship with Pakistan, the Prime Minister said that he and the Pakistan President agreed that attempts by terrorists to disrupt the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service have been condemned by the two countries, "giving us confidence for its continued and successful operation".

He said the Jammu and Kashmir issue was discussed with President Musharraf in a "positive" atmosphere and emphasised that "while redrawing of boundaries was not possible, all measures that could bring peoples of both sides together, including increased transportation linkages to facilitate greater traffic of people and trade across the border and the LoC, would help the process and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence".

Recalling that President Musharraf stressed the importance of addressing the J&K issue, Dr Singh said the Pakistani leader, however, also agreed that the confidence building process between the two countries had made significant progress. "We both felt that this process would continue to contribute to promoting a general sense of trust and understanding in our two countries, which in turn would be conducive to creating the environment for a just, fair and mutually acceptable solution to all outstanding issues," he said.

Threat to peace process not eliminated: Manmohan

'Terror-free atmosphere vital for sustained talks'

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today said in Parliament that the threat to the peace process (with Pakistan) from extremist forces and terrorist organisations had not been eliminated and that the whole process of serious and sustained dialogue hinged on building an atmosphere of trust and confidence, free from violence and terror.

Dr. Singh said while India was committed to peace and friendship with Pakistan, the difficult issues that divided both the nations had bedevilled relations for far too long to hope for an immediate resolution. "We look forward to Pakistan implementing their assurances in letter and spirit," he said in suo motu statement made in both the Houses on the recent visits of the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, and the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao.

Describing the talks with Gen. Musharraf during his visit from April 16 to 18 as "substantive," Dr. Singh said that on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir he told the Pakistan President that while redrawing of boundaries was not possible, all measures that could bring people together, including increased transporta-

tion linkages to facilitate greater traffic of people and trade across the border and the Line of Control, would help create mutual trust and confidence.

Gen. Musharraf did stress the importance of addressing the Jammu and Kashmir issue. However, he also agreed that the confidence-building process between the two countries had made significant progress. Both felt that this process would promote trust and understanding which would be conducive in creating an environment for a "just, fair and mutually acceptable solution to all outstanding issues." Referring to the Joint Statement signed with President Musharraf, Dr. Singh said it was meant to move the bilateral relationship forward. There was agreement on several forward-looking measures including restoration of rail link between Khokhrapar and Munabao on the heels of the Srinagar-Muzaf-

farabad bus service despite terrorist threats and the terrorist suicide attack on the Srinagar Tourist Reception Centre.

He said both sides reviewed the progress made in the bilateral relations through confidence-building measures and people-to-people contacts. India conveyed the importance it attached to enhanced bilateral economic and commercial cooperation and to the need to multiply beneficial linkages of trade and transit, including the gas pipeline.

Milestone pact with China

With China, the Prime Minister said that despite the signing of the "milestone" agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question, both sides were quite some distance away from a final boundary settlement. In the meantime, both sides agreed to strictly respect

and observe the Line of Actual Control (LAC), maintain peace in the border areas and expedite the work of clarification and confirmation of the LAC.

Sikkim was no longer an "issue" in India-China relations. China regarded Sikkim as an "inalienable part of India" and the joint statement signed between both the countries explicitly referred to "Sikkim State of the Republic of India."

The Chinese side officially handed over to India a revised map showing Sikkim within the international boundaries of India. The Joint Statement codified the consensus that India-China relations had transcended bilateral issues and acquired a global and strategic character. Both the sides agreed on reforms in the U.N. system. China said it supported India's desire to play an active role in the U.N. and in international affairs.

In the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister was continuously interrupted by Tapir Gao (BJP), who wanted to know whether the status of Arunachal Pradesh figured in talks with Mr. Jiabao.

Instead of clarifications, BJP members in Rajya Sabha sought a full-fledged discussion on the Prime Minister's statement, to which the government agreed.

- "Substantive" talks with Musharraf
- Joint Statement meant to move bilateral ties forward
- Global, strategic character of ties with China
- Sikkim no longer an "issue"

একটি 'ভুল' সফর

পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের নয়াদিল্লি সফর লইয়া গণমাধ্যম যত প্রত্যাশাই ছড়াক না কেন, কার্যত এই বহুবিজ্ঞাপিত সফরের পরিণামকে বহুবাবহৃত প্রবচন উদ্ধৃত করিয়া অনায়াসে 'পর্বতের মুষিক প্রসব' আখ্যা দেওয়া যায়। মুশারফ ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী, বিদেশ মন্ত্রী, শাসক দলের সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী, বিরোধী নেতা, প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী প্রমুখ সকলের সঙ্গে দেখা করিয়াছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সহিত আলোচনার শেষে যৌথ বিবৃতিও প্রচারিত হইয়াছে। তিনি সাংবাদিকদের মুখোমুখি হইয়াছেন, আগরা শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের সময়ের তুলনায় বর্তমানে আপন হৃদয়-পরিবর্তনের কথা বলিয়াছেন, শের-শায়েরি আওড়াইয়াছেন এবং অবশ্যই এক ফাঁকে ফিরোজ শাহ কোটলা ময়দানে ভারত-পাক ক্রিকেটও অল্প ক্ষণ উপভোগ করিয়াছেন। কিন্তু শেষ বিচারে এই সফর দুই দেশের সম্পর্কে কোনও বাঁক বা মোড় আনিয়াছে, এমন দাবি করা যাইবে না। হ্যাঁ, শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদের বাসযাত্রা আরও ঘন-ঘন করার কথা হইয়াছে। খোখরাপার-মুন্ডাবাও রেলযাত্রা পয়লা জানুয়ারি হইতে চালু করার প্রস্তাবে মতৈক্য হইয়াছে। বাণিজ্য-সম্পর্ক উন্নত করিতে যৌথ কমিশন জিয়াইয়া তোলার কথাও হইয়াছে। আরও কয়েকটি বাসরুট চালু করার কথাও। কিন্তু এগুলির জন্য পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্টের ভারত সফরের কোনও প্রয়োজন ছিল না। দুই দেশের বিদেশ দফতরের অফিসাররাই পারস্পরিক আলোচনার মাধ্যমে এ সব বিষয়ে সিদ্ধান্ত লইতে পারিতেন।

একটি দেশের রাষ্ট্রপ্রধান যখন অন্য দেশে সরকারি সফরে যান এবং দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কে কোনও গুণগত উল্লেখ ঘটাইতে চাহেন, তখন তাহার পটভূমি রচনা করিতে দীর্ঘ কাল ধরিয়া পদস্থ অফিসাররা খুঁটিনাটি বিষয়গুলির মীমাংসা করিয়া রাখেন। রাষ্ট্রপ্রধানদের শীর্ষ বৈঠকে কেবল প্রশাসনিক স্তরে আগে হইতেই স্বীকৃত বিষয়গুলির উপর রাজনৈতিক অনুমোদনের সিলমোহর দাগিয়া দেওয়া হয়। পারভেজ মুশারফের এবারকার ভারত সফরের পটভূমিতে তেমন কোনও প্রস্তুতি ছিল না। ভারত-পাক ক্রিকেট সিরিজ শুরু হইবার আগে পাক সংবাদপত্রে নিতান্ত খেলাচ্ছলে তিনি একটি ম্যাচ দেখিতে আসার ইচ্ছা ব্যক্ত করেন। সেই ইচ্ছাকে 'সম্মান জানাইতে' নর্থ ব্লক দ্বিধাগ্রস্ত প্রস্তুতি শুরু করে। আর তাহাতেই গোল বাধে। ভারতের উচিত ছিল পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্টকে খেলা দেখিবার সুযোগ করিয়া দেওয়া নয়াদিল্লির বাহিরে অনুষ্ঠেয় কোনও ম্যাচে। সে ক্ষেত্রে মুশারফ সরাসরি সেই স্টেডিয়ামে উড়িয়া আসিতেন, নির্দিষ্ট সময় খেলা দেখিতেন, তাহার পর বাড়ি ফিরিতেন। কিন্তু রাজধানী দিল্লিতে অনুষ্ঠেয় খেলায় তাঁহাকে আমন্ত্রণ জানাইয়া ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক চালে ভুল করিয়া ফেলে। মুশারফ এই সফরের পূর্ণ সুযোগ গ্রহণ করিয়া গোটা উপলক্ষটিকে ভারতীয় রাজনৈতিক কর্তৃপক্ষের সহিত শীর্ষ বৈঠকের উপলক্ষে পরিণত করেন। ক্রিকেট কূটনীতি তাঁহাকে একটি সুযোগ আনিয়া দেয়। ক্রিকেট গৌণ হইয়া ওঠে, কূটনীতিই মুখ্য। অতঃপর দুই দিন ধরিয়া রাজধানীর, বস্তুত সমগ্র দেশের রাজনীতির কেন্দ্রবিন্দুতে আসিয়া দাঁড়ান মুশারফ এবং তাহা সম্ভব হয় নর্থ ব্লকের ভুলেই।

তবে ভারতীয় বিদেশ দফতরের আমলা ও অফিসাররা দ্রুত এই ভুলটিকে শোধরাইয়া লইতেও সচেষ্ট হন। তাঁহারা পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্টকে এমন কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত বা বিবৃতি ঘোষণা করিতে দেন নাই, যাহা ভারত বা পাকিস্তানের সুবিদিত অবস্থান ও দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি হইতে স্বতন্ত্র এবং যাহা দ্বিপাক্ষিক মৈত্রী ও সহযোগিতার চলতি প্রক্রিয়ার সহিত সামঞ্জস্যহীন। এ জন্যই যৌথ বিবৃতিতে এমন কোনও প্রস্তাব নাই, যাহাকে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সহ অন্যান্য দ্বিপাক্ষিক সমস্যার স্থায়ী মীমাংসার পক্ষে অভিনব বলিয়া শনাক্ত করা যায়। একমাত্র উল্লেখযোগ্য বিষয় সম্ভবত হুরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় মুশারফের তরফে নয়াদিল্লির দিকে মুখ ফিরাইবার আবেদন জানানো। একা ইসলামাবাদ যে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার মীমাংসা করিতে পারে না, ভারতীয় নেতাদের সঙ্গেও যে হুরিয়তের আলোচনা চালানো উচিত, মুশারফ তাহা দ্ব্যর্থহীন জানাইয়াছেন। ফলে হুরিয়তের কটরপন্থীরা চটিয়াছেন, কাশ্মীরের সম্ভ্রাসবাদী সংগঠনগুলি বিবৃতি মারফত 'কাশ্মীরিদের স্বার্থ জলাঞ্জলি দিয়া নয়াদিল্লির কাছে মুশারফের নতজানু আত্মবিক্রয়'-এর নিন্দা করিয়াছে। কিন্তু কাশ্মীরের সাধারণ মানুষ ইহাতে উজ্জীবিত। এই প্রাপ্তিতুকু বাদ দিলে মুশারফের ভারত সফর কোনও যুগান্তকারী তাৎপর্য বহন করে না। বরং যে ভাবে সফর পরিচালিত হইয়াছে, তাহা ভারতীয় বিদেশ দফতরের অপরিণতবুদ্ধিরই পরিচয় দেয়।

Pushing peace

A mellowed Musharraf comes calling

India got to see a different face of General Musharraf this time. At the Agra summit in 2001 he was all belligerence, justifying, at the infamous editors' breakfast meet, the use of terror tactics and consequent harm to civilians as legitimate means for Kashmiri militant goals. This time he prayed for peace at the Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti shrine in Ajmer, one of the biggest shrines for sufis in South Asia, and *jehadi* hardliners reject Sufi Islam as being soft and pacifist. Symbolism apart, there is substance in the joint statement by the two sides, which declared the peace process to be "irreversible." Confidence-building measures have been boosted, with the two sides agreeing to increase the frequency of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, allow trucks carrying goods to ply the same route, and set up further routes between Poonch-Rawalakot and Khokrapar-Munabao. Besides, with the setting up of a Joint Economic Commission, trade between the two countries will get a boost. Musharraf has, in the main agreed to Delhi's suggestion that because differences between the two will not be resolved overnight, they should move forward on issues where there is agreement while discussing issues where there isn't. This is a significant improvement and the only practicable way forward.

The joint statement appears to have been held up for a day, one of the sticking points being Delhi's insistence that the counter-terror pledge contained in the January 2004 declaration signed in Islamabad, which does not allow terrorist activities from Pakistani controlled territory, should be reiterated. Delhi appears to have succeeded as the final statement mentions the issue, albeit indirectly; it asserts that commitments made in previous declarations such as the January 2004 one stand reaffirmed. Islamabad too, got what it wanted — Delhi has committed to discussing Jammu and Kashmir, with the objective of moving towards a final settlement. Unlike Agra, which was marked by lack of preparation, Delhi burnt the proverbial midnight oil on this one, and the results showed. Musharraf has been gracious enough to drop in on both Vajpayee and Advani, even though they are in the opposition now. An ulterior motive may be suspected — ensuring that the BJP doesn't queer the pitch for the peace process — but even if this is the case it suggests that Musharraf has learnt to play the consummate diplomat instead of being the commando leader he appeared to be on his last visit.

Disguised as a visit to watch a cricket match, the informal summit between Musharraf and Indian leaders may mean that the two countries will at last acquire the mutual confidence to play cricket, instead of cops-and-robbers or blind man's buff, in their relations with each other.

20 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Peace Dividend

Indians, Pakistanis Feel Conflict Is Counterproductive

By Amitabh Mattoo

It is usually only the politically naive who are optimistic about the future of India's relations with Pakistan. The terms "enduring rivalry", "protracted discord" and "communal conflict in armour" have become part of the global political vocabulary because of the depressing saga of India-Pakistan ties. But can the Manmohan Singh-Pervez Musharraf recent meeting undo the damage of the last half-century? Is the peace process now really irreversible?

There are no easy answers, but the good news is that India's prime minister and Pakistan's president can derive strength from the gradual transformation that is taking place in public opinion, in elite awareness and in the larger objective conditions. In other words, there is a unique coalition of forces creating an opportune climate for peace. Consider the evidence.

First, and most important, there is widespread acceptance within the political establishments of the two countries that military means cannot bring any tangible benefits. What had been obvious to strategic analysts after the nuclearisation of India and Pakistan in 1998 seems to have now been internalised by those who matter in New Delhi and Islamabad. It took, however, the Kargil war, Operation Parakaram and a number of simulated military exercises to finally bring home this realisation. What is equally heartening is the growing recognition within Pakistan that "proxy war" and the use of terror, violence and religious extremism in Jammu and Kashmir are not only globally unacceptable, but are counterproductive in almost every way. In sum, hard power can no longer be used by either India or Pakistan to earn major political dividends. It may not, therefore, be foolhardy to declare the end of war in South Asia if the violence continues to decline in Jammu and Kashmir.

Second, the political constituency for peace in South Asia has never been stronger. While in Jammu and Kashmir — located at the cutting edge of the conflict — the sentiment for peace is overwhelming, there is a strong movement all over the subcontinent for better bilateral relations, particularly among the youth. Almost every opinion survey of South Asia's "Gen Next" has revealed that they seek economic freedom and greater opportunities to carve out a niche in the global marketplace. Not even a small percentage of respondents sees any advantage accruing from political tension and military rivalry between Islamabad and New Delhi. The fact is that the peace constituency has expanded much beyond the peaceniks and the "candlelight vigils" to include the ordinary Indian and Pakistani. The ghost of Partition may finally be on the verge of being exorcised.

Third, globalisation demands greater unity in South Asia. It is clear that

globalisation offers threats and opportunities. It is equally clear that an economically integrated and politically stable South Asia is better equipped to face up to the challenges of globalisation. Every sensible economist knows that a "united" South Asia will not just work to the advantage of India, but equally so for Pakistan. In contrast, further divisions and continued disunity will disadvantage the people of the region. Political pragmatism and economic prudence thus call for a new relationship based on the prime minister's vision of a South Asia where there is a "free movement of ideas, people, goods and services" across borders.

Finally, let us face it, India cannot entirely bypass its neighbourhood, and Pakistan cannot keep holding India back. In other words, India's march to great power status would be quicker if it was at peace with its neighbourhood. For Pakistan, a harmonious relationship with India would generate tremendous opportunities and position it finally as a moderate, liberal Islamic state. But even with continued hostility India would finally move on. Hence, both India's ambitions and Pakistan's goals could be most efficiently achieved by a stable political relationship between them.

What should be the recipe for moving the peace process forward? One, expand the constituencies for peace by including stakeholders from all sections of the polity and society. Create new avenues of cooperation, especially in the softer areas. The real challenge, of course, is to see what incentives could be provided to Pakistan's army in order to

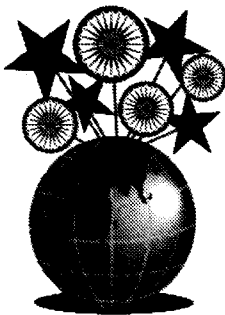
ensure that it does not have a vested interest in continued enmity. But this too is not an impossible task given the right blend of political imagination and determination.

Two, open up institutions, markets and societal spaces to groups and people from both sides. Let businessmen, scholars, artists, journalists become agents of change by being allowed to live, work or study anywhere in India or Pakistan. Three, further delegitimise violence, the use of force and extremism through commonly agreed to legal, political and social measures.

Finally, the dialogue must be sustained at all costs. The dialogue and the peace process will encounter many hurdles, especially in the next few months. But it must go on. And for the dialogue to become effective, it must be solidly institutionalised. For this to happen, new structures and multiple channels must be created.

The truth is that hard power and hard borders have failed to resolve the India-Pakistan conflict for 58 years. In contrast, soft power and soft borders may have the capability of transforming the relationship in a way that issues of territory, identity and resources can be resolved to the benefit of all the people of the subcontinent.

The writer is vice-chancellor, Jammu University.



20 APR 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

শিথিল সীমান্ত শান্তির সোপান

(গণমা-২) ১৯/৪ ১৯৯৯

চাওয়া-পাওয়া



পাকিস্তানের প্রাপ্তি

- কোটলায় ক্রিকেট দেখার অবকাশে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে কার্যত শীর্ষ বৈঠক।
- যৌথ বিবৃতি প্রকাশ।
- পত্রিকা-সম্পাদকদের সঙ্গে আলাপচারিতায় কাশ্মীর নিয়ে জোরালো সওয়াল। পাকিস্তানের মানুষকে দেখানো, সমস্যা সমাধানে মুশারফ কতটা মরিয়া।

ভারতের প্রাপ্তি

- শিথিল-সীমান্তে গুরুত্ব।
- বাদ পড়েনি 'সন্ত্রাস' প্রসঙ্গ।
- ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্যের প্রসার নিয়ে বিশদ আলোচনা।

সম্পর্কের ওঠাপড়া

- ১৯৯৯: লাহোর বাসযাত্রা
- ১৯৯৯: কাগিল যুদ্ধ
- ২০০১: আগরা শীর্ষ বৈঠক পশু
- ২০০২: কাঠমাত্ত সার্ক সম্মেলনে কথা হয়নি
- ২০০৩: ইসলামাবাদ সার্ক সম্মেলনই বাতিল
- ২০০৪: ইসলামাবাদে সার্ক, যৌথ বিবৃতি
- ২০০৪: নিউ ইয়র্কে যৌথ বিবৃতি
- ২০০৫: নয়াদিল্লিতে যৌথ বিবৃতি

ছবি: উৎপল সরকার, গ্রাফিক্স: স্বরূপ দত্তপাট



দিল্লির চাপে যৌথ ঘোষণাপত্রে 'সন্ত্রাস' রইল, অন্যত্র 'কাশ্মীর' তুললেন মুশারফ

অম্লি রায় ● নয়াদিল্লি

১৮ এপ্রিল: কাশ্মীর নিয়ে মতপার্থক্য আপাতত সরিয়ে রেখে আজ যৌথ বিবৃতির মাধ্যমে মতৈক্যে পৌঁছতে চাইল ভারত ও পাকিস্তান। অতীতে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে যে সব কথা বলা হয়েছিল, তার কোনও উল্লেখ না-করে এ বার 'চূড়ান্ত সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে' এগোনোর কথা বলা হয়েছে। আর তার জন্য আত্মবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা, মানুষে মানুষে সম্পর্কে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া ও সর্বোপরি সীমান্ত শিথিল করার কথা যৌথ বিবৃতিতে রয়েছে। দু'দেশই বলেছে, শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া থেকে পিছিয়ে আসার প্রথ নেই।

নয়াদিল্লির বক্তব্য ছিল, সীমান্ত শিথিল হলে দু'পারের মানুষের মধ্যে ধর্মনৈতিক, সামাজিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক যোগাযোগ বাড়বে, যা ক্রমে কাশ্মীর-সমস্যা সমাধানের দিকে এগিয়ে নিয়ে

যাবে। তার পরেই ধীরে ধীরে সেনা সরানোর কথা ভাবা যেতে পারে। আজকের বিবৃতিতে রয়েছে, "নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার দু'পারে সমন্বয়, পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা বাড়তে আরও ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার ক্ষেত্রে দু'দেশই একমত হয়েছে। এর মধ্যে রয়েছে বিচ্ছিন্ন হয়ে যাওয়া পরিবার, বাণিজ্য, তীর্থযাত্রী ও সাংস্কৃতিক যোগাযোগের জন্য আরও মিলন বিন্দু তৈরি করা।"

তবে এই ন্যূনতম একমতে পৌঁছনোর কথা বলা হলেও ফিরে যাওয়ার আগে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট অবশ্য কাশ্মীর নিয়ে সতর্কবার্তা জানিয়ে যেতে ভোলেননি। মুশারফ বলেছেন, 'কাশ্মীরের মূল বিবাদের' সমাধান না-করলে তা কিন্তু যখন তখনই মাথাচাড়া দিতে পারে।

ভারত কিন্তু যৌথ বিবৃতির পরে এই মতপার্থক্যের দিকটি নিয়ে সরব হয়নি। শুধু তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ভাবে প্রধানমন্ত্রী

মনমোহন সিংহ বলেছেন, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যা সমাধানের "কোনও সুনির্দিষ্ট রাজপথ নেই। তবে আমরা সামনের দিকে এগোচ্ছি। একটা বৈঠকেই তো সব কিছু সমাধান হয়ে যেতে পারে না...আমি জানি না চূড়ান্ত সমাধান কী হতে পারে।"

ভারত স্পষ্টতই এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতি দিতে চায়নি। তবে কূটনীতির মঞ্চে না হলেও আজ সকালে সম্পাদকদের সঙ্গে প্রাতরাশ বৈঠকে মুশারফ কাশ্মীর ও সন্ত্রাস প্রসঙ্গে খোলাখুলি অনেক কথা বলার সুযোগ ছাড়েননি:

■ কাশ্মীরের মূল বিবাদের সমাধান না-করা হলে ভবিষ্যতে তা যে কোনও পরিস্থিতিতে, যে কারও নেতৃত্বেই ফের মাথাচাড়া দিয়ে উঠবে। ভারতীয় নেতৃত্বকে 'অত্যন্ত জোরালো ভাষায়' এ কথা জানিয়ে দিয়েছে পাকিস্তান। ■ কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধানের যে কোনও

ধরাবাঁধা সময়সীমা থাকা সম্ভব নয়, তা ঠিকই। কিন্তু তা বলে আলোচনা 'অনন্ত কাল' ধরে চলতে পারে না। ■ সীমান্ত নতুন করে আঁকা যাবে না, এই কথা ইসলামাবাদ শুনে আসছে। কিন্তু এটাও ঠিক। নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখাকে চূড়ান্ত সমাধান হিসাবে মেনে নেওয়া যায় না। ■ যে কোনও ধরনের হত্যা বন্ধ হওয়া উচিত। তা সে যে-ই করুক না কেন। হয়তো সীমানার এ পারে যে সন্ত্রাসবাদী, অন্য পারে সে-ই স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামী। 'বিষয়টি খুবই জটিল।' ■ কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান এমন ভাবে করা উচিত, যাতে তা ভারত, পাকিস্তান ও কাশ্মীরের মানুষের কাছেও গ্রহণযোগ্য হয়।

দিল্লি ছাড়ার আগে সম্ভবত দেশবাসীর কথা মাথায় রেখেই পাক সংবাদমাধ্যমের কাছে কাশ্মীর-প্রসঙ্গটি নিয়ে আরও বিশদ হয়েছেন মুশারফ।

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

কাশ্মীর প্রসঙ্গ তুললেন

প্রথম পাতার পর

সমস্যাটিকে অত্যন্ত জটিল হিসাবে বর্ণনা করে তাঁর বক্তব্য, তিনটি স্তরে এর সমাধান হতে পারে। প্রথম স্তরে মুশারফ কাশ্মীরের সব ধরনের মানুষের মন বোঝার কথা বলেছেন। ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের প্রতি ইঙ্গিত করে মুশারফের যুক্তি, কারও মতই অবহেলা করা চলবে না। তার পরের দু'টি ধাপ বিতর্ক ও আলোচনার মাধ্যমে একমত পেয়ে নেওয়া এবং সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া। তবে কাশ্মীরের সাধারণ মানুষ বা ছরিয়ত নেতাদের মতামত নয়, এই মুহূর্তে দু'দেশের শীর্ষ নেতৃত্বই যে এই জট ছাড়াতে পারেন, সে কথাও স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন মুশারফ।

তবে আজকের বিবৃতিতে এই মতপার্থক্য দু'পক্ষই মেনে নিয়ে পারস্পরিক মতৈক্যে পৌঁছানোর চেষ্টা করেছে। সমঝোতা মানে দু'পক্ষেরই জমি ছাড়া। তাই দু'পক্ষই দু'পক্ষের দাবি মেনে 'মধুরেণ সমাপয়েৎ' ঘটিয়েছে। ভারত যৌথ বিবৃতিতে 'সন্ত্রাস' শব্দটি বাদ দিতে রাজি হয়নি। বলা হয়েছে, "শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস সংযোগ বানচাল করতে যে প্রয়াস চালানো হয়েছিল, ভারত-পাকিস্তান

উভয়েই তার নিন্দা করেছে। সন্ত্রাস যাতে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ায় ব্যাঘাত না ঘটায়, তা নিশ্চিত করতে দু'দেশই এক্যবদ্ধ।" সন্ত্রাসের উল্লেখ থাকলেও ২০০৪-এর জানুয়ারিতে অটল-মুশারফের যৌথ বিবৃতিতে চড়া সুরে যা বলা হয়েছিল (পাক অধীনস্থ এলাকা ভারতের বিরুদ্ধে সন্ত্রাস ছড়ানোয় ব্যবহৃত হবে না, ইত্যাদি), তার পুনরাবৃত্তি হয়নি। মুশারফের বক্তব্য ছিল, ইসলামাবাদের বিবৃতিতে যা গৃহীত হয়ে গিয়েছে, সেটাকে মেনে সামনের দিকে তাকানো প্রয়োজন। এ ক্ষেত্রে তাঁর মতকেই মেনে নেওয়া হয়েছে।

সরকারি সূত্রে খবর, কাশ্মীরের সমাধানসূত্র নিয়ে এখনই আলোচনায় বসতে রাজি নয় ভারত। যাওয়ার আগে মুশারফের মন্তব্যেই স্পষ্ট, পাকিস্তান চায় চটজলদি সমাধান। তাই সীমান্ত শিথিলতায় রাজি হয়েও নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার এ'পারে কাশ্মীরের বাকি অংশটুকুর দিকে ইঙ্গিত করে মুশারফ বলছেন, এই নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা স্থায়ী নয়। এ সব মতপার্থক্য আপাতত চাপা দিয়ে বোঝাপড়ার ক্যানভাসে কাজ করার দিশা দিল মুশারফের সফর— এমনই ধারণা কূটনৈতিক মহলের।

19 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

PM offers to redesign Baglihar

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 18. — The Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, today said he was highly satisfied with the “productive and positive” results of his discussions with Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf.

And in an effort to break the deadlock on Baglihar, Dr Singh offered to change the dam’s design structure, if Pakistan gave concrete proof that it violated the Indus Waters Treaty.

However, in a glaring omission there was no reference to the Baglihar dam in the joint statement issued today.

The Prime Minister

- 9nd 19/4
park SUMMIT POSITIVES 517
- Establishment of the Khokhrapar-Munabao rail link by 1 January 2006. More buses and trucks planned on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route. Bus services between Poonch and Rawalkot and between Amritsar and Lahore on the anvil.
 - Pakistan to open consulate in Mumbai, India in Karachi.
 - More points along the LoC where families can meet.
 - Cooperation in the petroleum sector.
 - Pakistani students will be allowed admissions to institutes of technology and management.
 - Will try to settle Sir Creek and Siachen problems.

offered to reserve seats for Pakistani students in technology and management institutes and called for increasing cooperation between scientists.

Speaking to editors on the conclusion of General Musharraf’s visit, Dr Singh, however, cautioned that the road ahead “may be difficult”, but he said

both countries had evolved a “certain amount of commonality”.

“There is no single royal road to success but we are moving forward. We cannot resolve problems in one meeting. We have evolved a certain amount of commonality,” Dr Singh said.

Referring to Kashmir,

Dr Singh iterated that territorial disputes could not be resolved immediately, but the solution could be made “more amenable to reason”.

“I do not know what the ultimate solution will be,” he said, adding that the two countries had embarked on a process to promote people-to-people contacts, trade and other confidence-building measures out of which “a new sense of inter-dependence will emerge”.

Calling for a step-by-step and people-centred approach, the Prime Minister said lowering restrictions on the flow of goods and people would probably lead to the time “to look dispassionately at territorial issues”.

19 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

JOINT STATEMENT LASHES OUT AT TERRORISM

Kashmir cleft in peace palate

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 18. — After a weekend of bonhomie and warmth, Monday blues brought out the differences in the core issue between India and Pakistan — Kashmir. India's stand on no redrawing of borders was rejected by General Pervez Musharraf, who said the Line of Control could not be the permanent solution.

Exorcising the ghost of Agra, the Indo-Pak joint statement, released today, called for a final settlement to Kashmir. The statement, read out by the Prime Minister with the Pakistan President, said the peace process was "irreversible" and would not be allowed to be impeded by terrorism.

It included promises to increase the frequency of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, allow trucks to ply on that route and to open additional routes like between Poonch and Rawalkot and Amritsar and Lahore and more cooperation along the LoC. It also reaffirmed commitments made in the 6 January 2004 and 24 September 2004 joint statements.

Speaking to editors over breakfast at Taj Mansingh hotel, Gen. Musharraf said the LoC or a soft border could not be accepted as the final solution. He said a solution to the Siachen issue could be found, but the maps of the two countries required to be changed with regard to the Actual Ground Position Line from the last point Northern Junction 9842.

Unless Kashmir is resolved it can erupt in the future under a different leadership and in different environment... Right now, we have a very good relationship with PM Manmohan Singh but nobody is permanent in this world.

(There's) no single royal road to success, but we are moving forward.

He said a solution to the Sir Creek issue could be found as it boiled only down to deciding where the boundary between the two countries lay. He accepted that a "rigid time-frame" couldn't be set to resolve the Kashmir dispute, but insisted it could be resolved within a "reasonable time".

For a lasting peace with India, solution to the Kashmir issue has to be found, he said. "Unless the Kashmir dispute" was resolved it can erupt "in the future under different a leadership and in different environment (in the two countries)". "Right now, we have a very good relationship with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. But nobody is permanent in this world," he said.

He again made the point that India as the larger country should show magnanimity. Gen. Musharraf stressed that a military option on Kashmir was not on the table. He said nobody would be allowed to disrupt

'Kargil hero's sell-out'

JAMMU, April 18. — Hurriyat hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani today said the joint statement did not contain any proposal to resolve the Kashmir issue. Four militant groups, Save Kashmir Movement, Al-Nasreen, Al-Arifeen and Farzandan-e-Milat, accused President Pervez Musharraf of a "sell-out on Kashmir". In a joint statement, they stated: "The hero of Kargil, General Musharraf, has surrendered before India." — SNS & PTI

the ongoing peace process. Earlier, the General said he had come with a "new heart" — *naya dil laya hoon* — and had achieved "more than expected". The General left for Manila, after a morning full of action.

Three steps forward, three steps back?

"The LoC cannot be permanent. The borders must be made irrelevant. And (I keep hearing) the boundaries cannot be altered. Take the three together and now discuss the solution," President Musharraf said today. But for his audience back home, he seemed to have a different three-phase in mind, consisting of "broadly ascertaining" the will of Kashmiris to "set a broad direction", evolving a consensus "through debate and discussion" and lastly, the top leadership of India and Pakistan taking a decision on this basis.

More reports on pages 4 & 10

Peace road map is now out of the box

In the joint statement by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf lie most of the elements of a roadmap for peace between India and Pakistan.

Siddharth Varadarajan

THE LATEST meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf is proof of the fact that in diplomacy — as in cricket — the results of a high-level encounter are often inversely proportional to the expectations that precede it.

If the excitement before the July 2001 Agra summit led to nothing but bitterness and rancour all around, the days leading up to Sunday's path-breaking summit had seen both sides consciously seeking to talk down the hype. At an off-the-record briefing a few hours before the General arrived in New Delhi, senior Indian officials cautioned that the impending summit was not really a summit or even a mini-summit but simply an occasion for the frank exchange of views. And yet, what transpired during the 36 hours the Pakistani President was in the Capital was as momentous as anything the two countries have seen in recent years.

The joint statement read out by the Prime Minister in his deadpan style on Monday morning may seem anodyne to some but within its terse sentences and paragraphs — and the call made by General Musharraf and Dr. Singh in separate meetings with the press to make existing borders irrelevant — lie most of the elements of a roadmap for peace between India and Pakistan.

No turning back

Though the two sides wisely avoided formally capturing the notion of soft borders — the concept needs to be fleshed out and debated adequately in both countries — the joint statement is noteworthy in six respects. First, it stresses the irreversibility of the peace process now under way. The two Governments are saying that come what may, there will be no turning back from what has been achieved so far — the resumption and enhancement of cross-border traffic and people-to-people contact, including sports, and the ceasefire along the Line of Control and up in the Siachen Glacier. The self-imposed quarantine India brought about by cutting all air, raid and road links following the December 13, 2001 terrorist attack on Parliament will, hopefully, never again be repeated.

Secondly, it says that terrorism will not be allowed to disrupt the relationship. The specific formulation is worth noting: "The two leaders pledged that they would not allow terrorism to impede the peace process." Terrorism, here, is no longer a stick for India to beat Pakistan with but a problem which confronts both countries equally. If the statement implies that Islamabad will continue to work to ensure terrorist incidents are not planned or launched from territories it controls, New Delhi, too, has undertaken not to over-react to the odd terrorist incident that might still take place.

In other words, India and Pakistan have jointly resolved not to give terrorists the right to veto the peace process through dramatic acts of violence.

Thirdly, the statement stresses that the purpose of having discussions on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir is to reach a "final settlement." In contrast, the September 24, 2004 statement issued in New York spoke of "possible options for a peaceful, negotiated settlement of the issue," while the January 6, 2004 joint statement spoke of the "peaceful settlement of all bilateral issues, including Jammu and Kashmir, to the satisfaction of both sides." However, the reference in the latest statement to a 'final settlement,' though refreshing, is hardly new; it is, in fact, taken directly from the Shimla Agreement of July 2, 1972, Clause 6 of which commits both Governments "to discuss further the mod-



CLASP OF FRIENDSHIP: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh after making the joint statement at Hyderabad House in New Delhi on Monday. PHOTO: V.SUDERSHAN.

alties and arrangements for the establishment of durable peace and normalization of relations, including the questions of prisoners of war and civilian internees, a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir and the resumption of diplomatic relations." (emphasis added)

After conceding the need for such a final settlement as far back as 1972, India, somewhere along the line, chose to take the view that this was unnecessary. Reams of paper have been wasted on futile debates about whether Kashmir is a core issue or not. By returning to the Shimla language, India and Pakistan have wisely agreed to give the Kashmir issue the importance it actually has and not remain hostage to the linguistic sensibilities of those who do not know the diplomatic history of the bilateral relationship.

Trucks bearing fruit

Fourthly, having stressed the need for a final settlement, the statement suggests preliminary steps consistent with the notion of soft borders. Thus, it speaks of further measures "to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC," including passenger movement and trade.

Allowing trucks to cross the LoC — presumably laden with fruit on the outbound, and Pakistan-made consumer goods on the inbound — is a radical leap of faith for both India and Pakistan as it will eventually allow the economic geography of the region to revert to its pre-partition days. The position

of Jammu as an *entrepot*, not just for the valley but also Poonch and Rajouri — once the road to Rawalakot in Pakistan is opened up (or even the old 'Mughal Road' to the valley) — would be undermined, which could have unintended consequences for Jammu and Kashmir.

Fifthly, the joint statement undertakes to speed up deliverables, such as an agreement

NEWS ANALYSIS

on Siachen and Sir Creek, and strive for greater business interaction. So long as Pakistan had the impression that India was using CBMs as a diversionary tactic to avoid reaching a final settlement on Kashmir, it was not interested in forward-movement on trade or fast-tracking the solution of specific disputes that have readymade agreements for the taking.

By not shying away from the Kashmir issue, India has achieved what it wanted: a Pakistani commitment to put easier problems on the front-burner.

Sixthly, Dr. Singh and General Musharraf have not only endorsed the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline in the face of U.S. criticism of the project but also expanded the scope for energy cooperation between their two countries.

Given the growing demand for energy in both Pakistan and India and the need for

South Asia to access Iranian and Central Asian oil and gas, it is essential that the two countries start a broad energy dialogue.

Irrelevance of LoC

In his interaction with Indian editors, General Musharraf reiterated the proposal for soft borders made by him a few days ago. It is my belief that the Indian side — our leadership and the bulk of our media — has not yet understood the huge shift that the General's endorsement of soft borders along the LoC implies. To drive home the point, he reminded the editors of Pakistan's position that the LoC should not become the border, India's position that there could be no redrawing of borders and the only possible via media between these two positions: "The LoC cannot be permanent, borders must be made irrelevant and boundaries cannot be altered. Take the three together and now discuss the solution," he said.

A soft border is the only administrative arrangement that allows India and Pakistan to maintain their respective *de jure* or *de facto* sovereignties in Kashmir while not coming in the way of the people of the divided State enjoying the fruits of a unified territory. The LoC need not be made permanent or redrawn; the solution is to make it irrelevant. Monday's joint statement contains six new elements that will enhance the irrelevance of the LoC. Future meetings between India and Pakistan must find many, many more.

TUESDAY, APRIL 19, 2005

A positive step for trade with Pakistan

19/4 10-10
One of the positive outcomes of the Manmohan-Musharraf summit is the decision to set up a Joint Business Council (JBC) that can provide a momentum to bilateral trade. The two Federations of Chambers of Commerce and Industry already have a joint business commission, but it has not been able to achieve anything substantial. Official bilateral trade figures are nothing much to write home about, and the fact that a large chunk of the trade is either illegal or routed through third countries speaks volumes about the potential held in check by politically-inspired barriers. While India has been demanding the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to get the road blocks to freer trade removed, Pakistan has been harping on the tariff and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) that it feels have been hampering exports from that country. Now that a JBC is to be set up very soon and the joint study group discussing the MFN issue will be meeting in June to take a final view, industry and trade are hoping for a breakthrough before the year ends.

The objective of the JBC and the demand for MFN status is to increase bilateral trade tenfold, from \$ 0.5 billion now (according to the official data) to about \$ 5 billion by 2006. Given the track record, this may seem a little too ambitious, but if the two Governments are serious enough in their endeavour the target should be well within reach. The joint statement of the two leaders has also spoken of opening up the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route to truck traffic so as to lend substance to the border trade. This is of a piece with the announcements regarding the resumption of train services on the Kokhrapar-Munabao route, the operation of buses with increased frequency, and the continuation of serious talks on building gas pipelines from Iran and Turkmenistan to India. Enhanced people-to-people contact may create a greater awareness of travel and trade possibilities and the kind of products that the other country can provide at competitive prices.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has promptly welcomed the JBC idea. But its president, Onkar S. Kanwar, has rightly focussed on the limited list of items that Pakistan has so far been willing to import from India. Obviously trade volumes cannot build quickly if a huge list remains banned. FICCI is clear that infrastructure facilities will have to be developed to give a push to easy flow of goods across the Wagah border, with custom-bonded warehouses on either side. In addition to commodities and manufactured goods, bilateral trade will also have to encompass trade in services as India could offer expertise in areas such as health, and Information Technology and its related services. The fact that South Asia will be moving into a Free Trade Area (SAFTA) next year must propel India and Pakistan to free up trade between them.

19 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Peace process is 'now irreversible'

'Terrorism will not be allowed to impede it'; Manmohan accepts invitation to visit Pakistan



LET'S MAKE HISTORY TOGETHER: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf bids farewell on Monday at the Palam Airport, New Delhi, at the end of a three-day tour of India. - PHOTO: RAJEEV BHATT

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: In a great leap forward, India and Pakistan underlined on Monday that the peace process between the two countries was "now irreversible." They agreed to open trade across the Line of Control by allowing trucks between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, open the trans-LoC Poonch-Rawalakot route and take steps for the meeting of divided families along the LoC.

Condemning the attempts to disrupt the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, pledged in a joint statement that they "would not allow terrorism to impede the peace process."

The statement committed the two sides to re-open their consulates in Karachi and Mumbai by the end of 2005, setting in motion the process to implement a decision taken last year. Gen. Musharraf told Pakistani presspersons here that Dr. Singh had agreed to take a positive view of handing over the Jinnah House in Mumbai to Pakistan.

Reminding Gen. Musharraf of his commitment to prevent terrorism from Pakistani territory, Monday's statement spoke of the January 6, 2004, joint press statement issued in Islamabad and the one issued on September 24, 2004, in New York.

"Conscious of the historic opportunity created by the improved environment in relations and the overwhelming desire of the peoples of the two countries for durable peace and recognising their responsibility to continue to move forward towards that objective, the two leaders had substantive talks on all issues. They determined that the peace process was now irreversible."

• **Trade to be opened across LoC**

• **Jammu-Rawalakot route to be operationalised**

• **Karachi, Mumbai Consulates to be opened by year end**

• **Steps for meetings of divided families along Line of Control**

convene discussions "immediately" with a view to finding mutually acceptable solutions to both issues "expeditiously."

It was also agreed that the Ministers of Petroleum and Natural Gas of the two countries would meet in May to "explore cooperation in this sector including on the issue of pipelines."

Committing themselves to re-establish the Khokhrapar-Munabao "route" by January 1, 2006, the two leaders agreed that "enhanced economic and commercial cooperation would contribute to the well-being of the two countries and bring a higher level of prosperity to the region."

Dr. Singh accepted an invitation extended by Gen. Musharraf to visit Pakistan. "Mutually agreed dates would be worked out through diplomatic channels," the statement said.

"Achievements far more than expected"

Earlier, Gen. Musharraf told a gathering of Indian editors that the achievements of his visit were far more than he had expected.

Stating that the Kashmir issue could only be handled at the "leadership level," he reiterated that he was not "unifocal" in his approach.

Gen. Musharraf put a possible "settlement" of the Kashmir issue in perspective when he pointed to the parameters within which it could be discussed — India saying there could be no change in boundaries, Pakistan stressing that the LoC was not acceptable as a border and both holding that boundaries should be made irrelevant.

Kashmir issue

"In this spirit, the two leaders addressed the issue of Jammu & Kashmir and agreed to continue these discussions in a sincere and purposeful and forward-looking manner for a final settlement."

They were satisfied with the discussions and expressed their determination to work together to carry forward the process and to bring the benefit of peace to their people," the statement said.

It held that the frequency of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service would be increased and trucks allowed to use this route to promote trade. Additional routes, including the old "Mughal Road" between Poonch and Rawalakot, would be operationalised.

"They also agreed to pursue further measures to enhance interaction and cooperation across the LoC including agreed meeting points for divided families, trade, pilgrimages and cultural interaction." (According to Gen. Musharraf, Dr. Singh had agreed to let Hurriyat leaders visit Pakistan).

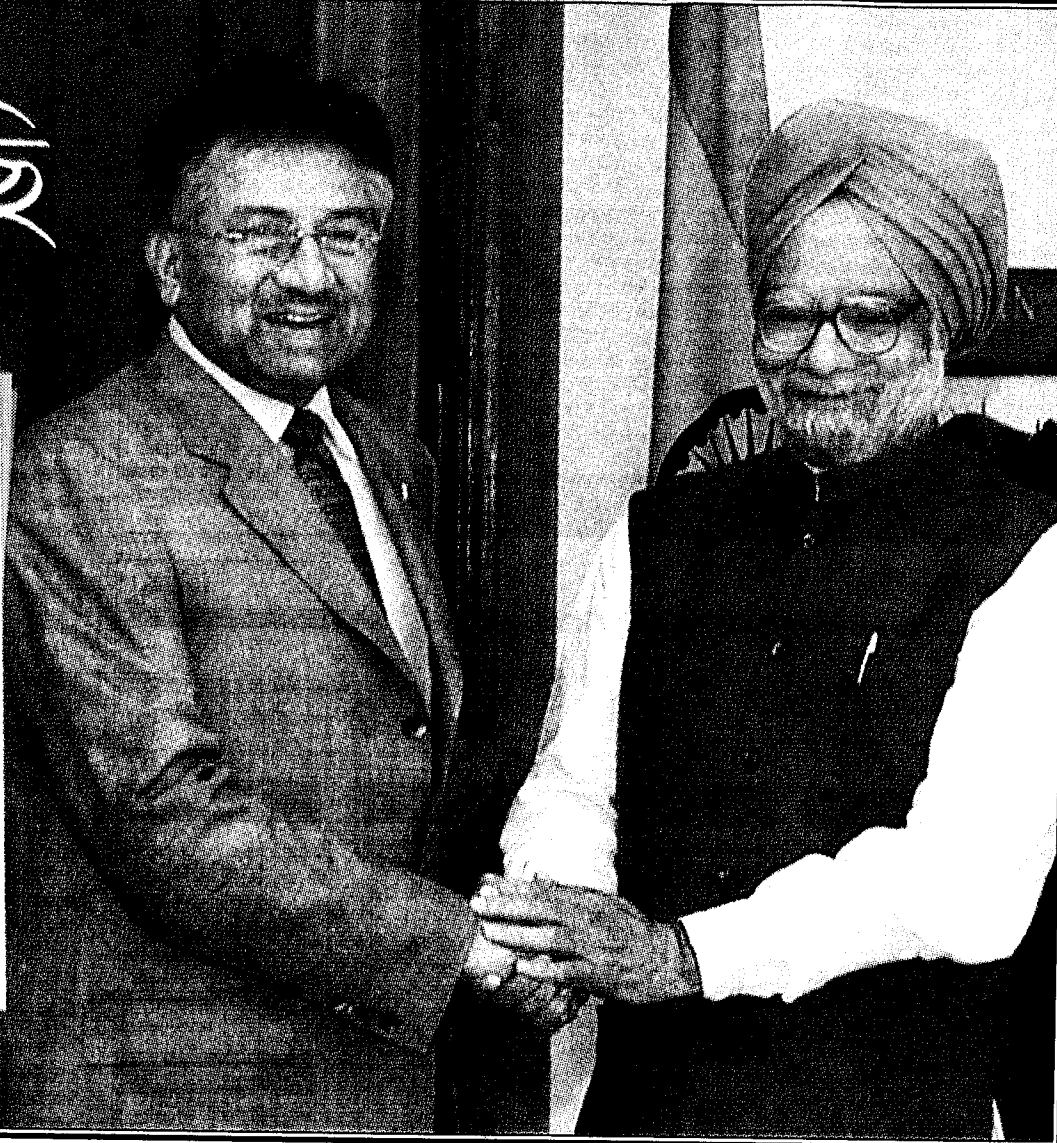
On the issues of Sir Creek and Siachen, the two leaders "instructed" that the existing institutional mechanisms should

কাশ্মীর ছাপিয়ে করমর্দন

আরও কাছাকাছি

- সিয়াচেন সমস্যা সমাধানে অগ্রাধিকার
- যৌথ বাণিজ্য পরিষদ গড়া হবে
- মুন্নাবাও-খোকরাপার রেল যোগাযোগ ডিসেম্বরে
- শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাসের সংখ্যাবৃদ্ধি
- নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা বরাবর ট্রাক চলাচল
- বাগলিহার নিয়ে বিশেষজ্ঞ পর্যায়ে আলোচনা
- গ্যাস পাইপলাইন প্রকল্পগুলি নিয়ে সহমত

হায়দরাবাদ হাউসে রাবিবার দুইটি বৃহৎ উৎসব সাক্ষর।
আগি রায়, নয়াদিল্লি



সম্প্রীতির মাঝে মতভেদ শুধু 'সন্ত্রাস' নিয়েই

আগি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

১৭ এপ্রিল: মুশারফ-মনমোহন বৈঠকের মৈত্রীর বাতাবরণের আড়ালে 'সন্ত্রাস' শব্দটি নিয়ে দিনভর টানা পোড়েন চলল ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্য। দিল্লি চাইছে, যৌথ বিবৃতিতে সন্ত্রাসের উল্লেখ থাকুক। পাকিস্তান তাতে রাজি নয়। চার বছর আগে এই প্রসঙ্গেই ভেঙে গিয়েছিল আগরা শীর্ষ সম্মেলন। এ বার তেমন কিছু ঘটান সম্ভাবনা যে নেই, তা অবশ্য জোর গলাতেই বলে দিচ্ছেন দু'দেশের কর্তারা। দিনের শেষে যা ছবি, তাতে বলাই যায় যে, আগরার তিক্ত স্মৃতি মুছে ফেলে শান্তির পথে কয়েক ধাপ এগিয়ে গেলেন পারভেজ মুশারফ ও মনমোহন সিংহ।

আজ হায়দরাবাদ হাউসে মুশারফ-মনমোহন বৈঠকে বেশ কয়েকটি সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে। সেগুলি হল, দু'দেশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্য পরিষদ তৈরি করা, শ্রীনগর থেকে মুজফ্ফরাবাদ পর্যন্ত আরও বেশি বাস চালানো, নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার দু'পারের মানুষের মধ্যে যাতায়াতের বিভিন্ন রাস্তা খুলে দেওয়া এবং খোকরাপার-মুন্নাবাও রেল যোগাযোগ ডিসেম্বরে শুরু করা। এ ছাড়া সিয়াচেন ও সার ক্রিক বিবাদ দ্রুত মেটানো এবং গ্যাস পাইপ লাইনগুলির বিষয়ে সবুজ সঙ্কেত দেওয়া নিয়েও দু'দেশের মধ্যে মতৈক্য হয়েছে।

বৈঠকে সুর যেটুকু কেটেছে তা সন্ত্রাস নিয়েই। মুশারফের ইচ্ছা অনুযায়ী বিবৃতিতে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার উল্লেখ করতে আপত্তি করেনি ভারত। কিন্তু তাদের প্রশ্ন, কাশ্মীরের পাশাপাশি সন্ত্রাসের প্রসঙ্গও কেন থাকবে না? এই প্রশ্নে মুশারফ যোরতর আপত্তি জানিয়েছেন। অন্য দিকে, মনমোহনের বক্তব্য, ন্যায় কারণেই বিবৃতিতে সন্ত্রাসের উল্লেখ থাকা দরকার। এই টানা পোড়নের জেরে আগরা সম্মেলনের পুনরাবৃত্তির আশঙ্কা অবশ্য করছেন না কেউই। সকলেই বলছেন, তখন পরিস্থিতি ছিল সম্পূর্ণ আলাদা। কার্গিল যুদ্ধের স্মৃতি তখন তরতাজা। কার্গিল জঙ্গিদের সদ্য বাংলাদেশের মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের সঙ্গে তুলনা করেছেন মুশারফ।

এর পরে ২০০৪ সালের জানুয়ারিতেও এই বিষয় নিয়ে মতৈক্য হয়েছিল ভারত-পাকিস্তানের। সে বার ইসলামাবাদে মুশারফের সঙ্গে বৈঠক হয়েছিল বাজপেয়ীর। তখনও পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট চাননি যে যৌথ বিবৃতিতে সন্ত্রাসবাদের উল্লেখ থাকুক। কিন্তু সেই আপত্তি গ্রাহ্য করা হয়নি। শেষ পর্যন্ত পাকিস্তান ভারতের দাবি মেনে নেয়। ৬ জানুয়ারির সেই বিবৃতিতে বলা হয়, জঙ্গিদের তাদের নিয়ন্ত্রণাধীন জমি ব্যবহার করতে দেবে না পাকিস্তান।

আজ সেই প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখ করেই মুশারফ ভারতীয় প্রতিনিধিদের বলেছেন, সন্ত্রাসবাদ সংক্রান্ত সমস্যার সমাধানের প্রয়োজনীয়তা নিয়ে দু'দেশের মধ্যে মতৈক্য তো হয়ে গিয়েছে। সম্প্রতি শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস চলাচলের সময় কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি হানার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই তার কড়া নিষিদ্ধ করেছেন ইসলামাবাদ। এখনও কেন সেই বিষয়টিকে আঁকড়ে ধরে থাকা? দিল্লির পাল্টা বক্তব্য, উপত্যকায় সীমান্তপার সন্ত্রাস বন্ধ হয়নি। কাজেই বিষয়টি এখনও প্রাসঙ্গিক।

এই বিষয়ে ভারতের বক্তব্য পাকিস্তান মানবে কি না, তা স্পষ্ট হবে কাল। তবে ভারতীয় কর্তারা বলছেন, আজ মনমোহনের বক্তব্য অনেকটাই মেনেছেন মুশারফ। মনমোহন দ্ব্যর্থহীন ভাষায় তাঁকে বলেছেন, সীমান্ত নতুন করে আঁকা সম্ভব নয়, তবে সীমান্তকে গুরুত্বহীন করে দিয়ে অর্থনৈতিক জোয়ার আনা সম্ভব। মুশারফ দ্বিমত হয়েছেন এমন কথা স্বীকার করেননি ভারতীয় কর্তারা।

হায়দরাবাদ হাউসে দু'দেশের শীর্ষ নেতাদের দীর্ঘ একান্ত বৈঠকের পরে ভারতীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রকের কর্তারা যা বলছেন তার থেকে কয়েকটি জিনিস স্পষ্ট। এক, কাশ্মীরের নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা নিয়ে নতুন করে ভাবনার কোনও অবকাশ নেই। দুই, তা সত্ত্বেও যাতে দুই কাশ্মীরের মানুষ অবাধে সীমান্ত পারাপার করতে এবং ব্যবসা বাণিজ্য করতে পারেন তা নিশ্চিত করতে হবে। তিন, কাশ্মীর ছাড়াও ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের বাকি অংশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্যিক আদানপ্রদান অনেক গুণ বাড়িয়ে তুলে গোটা দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার অর্থনীতিকে আরও এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে চায় দিল্লি। চার, এই সব কিছু অর্জন করতে গেলে 'দু'দেশকেই সন্ত্রাসবাদী সংগঠনগুলিকে নিয়ন্ত্রণ

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

দিনভর সংঘত মুশারফের মুখে নেই কাশ্মীর-সূত্র

জয়সুত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

১৭ এপ্রিল: প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দেওয়া নৈশভোজে কাল কোনও লিখিত বক্তৃতা নয়, প্রথা ভেঙে তাৎক্ষণিক বক্তৃতা দিয়েছিলেন পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট। সুকৌশলে সেখানেও তিনি দু-দু'বার কাশ্মীর সমস্যার কথা বলেছিলেন। শুধু তা-ই নয়, মনমোহন সিংহ সরকারের উপরে কূটনৈতিক চাপ সৃষ্টির জন্য মুশারফ এ কথাও বলেন যে, দু'দেশের দ্বন্দ্ব সামলানো নয়, এ বার চাই দ্বন্দ্ব নিয়ে কিছু সিদ্ধান্ত।

ছোট্ট ঘটনা। কিন্তু আজ সকালে মনমোহনের সঙ্গে মুশারফের বৈঠক হওয়ার আগে পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের দূত তারিক আজিজকে জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এম কে নারায়ণন স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দেন যে, পাকিস্তান এই সফরে

প্রকাশ্যে কাশ্মীরকেই প্রধান আলোচ্য বিষয় করার জন্য চাপ সৃষ্টি করলে ভারতও সীমান্ত সন্ত্রাস নিয়ে মুখর হবে। ইসলামাবাদ থেকে আসার আগেও মুশারফ ঘোষণা করেছিলেন, ক্রিকেট ম্যাচ নয়, কাশ্মীরই হবে প্রধান আলোচ্য। আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়ায় হরিয়ত নেতাদেরও সামিল করার কথা জানিয়েছিলেন তিনি।

এ বার ভারত সফরে মুশারফ আসলে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনায় একটি বিষয়ে সাফল্য অর্জন করতে চান। তিনি চেয়েছিলেন, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মতপার্থক্যের জায়গাগুলি চিহ্নিত করে একটি 'পেপার' তৈরি হোক। পাশাপাশি, কোন কোন ক্ষেত্রে দু'দেশের মতৈক্য হতে পারে, সেগুলিও খতিয়ে দেখতে চেয়েছিলেন তিনি। এই প্রস্তাবেও

ভারত রাজি হয়নি।

মনমোহন-মুশারফ বৈঠকের আগেই ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে নারায়ণন-সতীন্দ্র লাধা, যুগ্ম সচিব অরুণ সিংহ এবং দিলীপ সিনহা এই ব্যাপারে পাক প্রতিনিধিদলকে দিল্লির অবস্থান ব্যাখ্যা করে দেন। এর ফলে আজ সারা দিন বিভিন্ন শীর্ষ বৈঠকে কাশ্মীর সমাধানসূত্র নিয়ে আলোচনাই হয়নি।

মনমোহন সিংহ-লালকৃষ্ণ আডবানী বা সনিয়া গাঁধী, কারও কাছেই মুশারফ কাশ্মীরের ক্ষেত্রে সমাধানের রাস্তা নিয়ে কথা বলেননি। তিনি মনমোহন ও আডবানী— দু'জনের কাছেই মুম্বইয়ের 'জিমা হাউস' পাকিস্তানের হাতে তুলে দেওয়ার অনুরোধ করেন। আগে বাজপেয়ীর সরকার এই পাক প্রস্তাবে তৎকালীন অ্যাটর্নি জেনারেলের অভিমত চেয়েছিল। তিনি বলেছিলেন,

জিমা কন্যা ও নাতি মুসলি ওয়াদিয়ার সঙ্গে কথা বলে সরকার সিদ্ধান্ত নিক। এই ব্যাপারে মুশারফ মনমোহনকে বলেছেন, "আপনারা জিমা হাউস আগে আমাদের দিয়ে দিন। পরে জিমা পরিবারের সঙ্গে কথা বলে নেব।" মুশারফের পায়ে আজ ভারত সরকার সাত সকালেই বেড়ি পরিয়ে দিয়েছিল। মুশারফ তাই সারা দিন ধরে প্রায় মনমোহন সিংহের সুরে সুর মিলিয়েই কথা বলেছেন। দু'দেশের মানুষের সম্পর্ক আরও মধুর করতে আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা, বাস-টেন-ব্যবসা-বাণিজ্য ইত্যাদি ইত্যাদি। সব মিলিয়ে এ যেন এক অন্য মুশারফ।

আগরা শীর্ষ সম্মেলনে যখন তিনি এসেছিলেন, তখন দু'পক্ষেই টেনশন ছিল তীব্র। কার্গিল যুদ্ধের পর সেটাই ছিল তাঁর প্রথম ভারত সফর। সে সময়

ভারত কিছুতেই ভুলতে পারছিল না, তিনিই কার্গিলের স্থপতি। আবার মুশারফ নিজেও কাশ্মীর নিয়ে প্রকাশ্যে কট্টর মনোভাব দেখিয়েছিলেন। তার পরে অবশ্য অনেক স্রোত বয়ে গিয়েছে গঙ্গা-সিন্ধুতে। আগে মুশারফ কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান না-করে বাণিজ্য নিয়ে আলোচনায় রাজি ছিলেন না। ৯/১১-এর পরে তাঁকেই আমেরিকার চাপে আল-কায়দার সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযানে নামতে হয়।

ইসলামাবাদে বাজপেয়ীর-মুশারফ যৌথ ঘোষণা অবশ্য বরফ গলিয়ে দেয় অনেকটাই। মনমোহন সিংহ আসার পরে সেপ্টেম্বরে দু'জনের কথা হয় নিউ ইয়র্কে। তখন থেকেই ফের মুশারফ বসতে চাইছিলেন। কিন্তু জানুয়ারিতে ঢাকায় সার্ক সম্মেলনও না-হওয়ায় তিনি

এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

সম্প্রীতির মাঝে মতভেদ 'সন্ত্রাস' নিয়ে

প্রথম পাতার পর দু'পক্ষের বৈঠকের পরে ভারতের বিদেশসচিব শ্যাম সারন জানিয়েছেন, প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফ "অত্যন্ত ইতিবাচক সাড়া দিয়েছেন এবং মনমোহনের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির শরিক হয়েছেন।" আর বৈঠক শেষে রাষ্ট্রপতিভবনে মধ্যাহ্নভোজ সেরে মুশারফ নিজে বলেছেন, "আলোচনা হয়েছে অত্যন্ত ইতিবাচক পরিবেশে এবং আশার ইঙ্গিত রয়েছে।"

সীমান্ত শিথিল করা ও সন্ত্রাসবাদের পাশাপাশি মনমোহন-মুশারফ বৈঠকে আজ অগ্রাধিকার পেয়েছে দু'দেশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্যিক সম্পর্কের রূপরেখাও।

সিদ্ধান্ত হয়েছে, ভারত-পাকিস্তান যুগ্ম কমিশন নতুন করে গড়া হবে। ১৯৮৯ সালে এই কমিশন তৈরি করা হয়েছিল। কিন্তু তার পর থেকে একবারও তার বৈঠক হয়নি। সারন জানিয়েছেন, "এই কমিশন দু'দেশের মধ্যে অর্থনৈতিক সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে একটি ছাতা-সংগঠনের কাজ করবে।"

স্থির হয়েছে একটি যুগ্ম বাণিজ্য পরিষদ তৈরি করা হবে। দু'দেশের বেসরকারি সংস্থাগুলির পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতার ক্ষেত্রে এই পরিষদ কাজ করবে। দু'দেশের মধ্যে বাণিজ্য সম্পর্কিত যে সমস্যা ছিল সে সম্পর্কে আজ মনমোহন সিংহ বলেছেন,

"আমরা বাণিজ্য বৃদ্ধি করতে চাই। সে পথে যদি কোনও বাধা আসে তা হলে অবশ্যই তার সমাধান করা হবে।"

এ দিনের বৈঠকে পাকিস্তান অভিযোগ করে, মাসুল ও শুষ্কের ক্ষেত্রে ভারত নানা রকম বিধিনিষেধ চাপিয়ে রাখার কারণে তাদের দেশের ব্যবসায়ীরা বিশেষ লাভের মুখ দেখে উঠতে পারে না। পাকিস্তানের পক্ষ থেকে বিশেষ করে বস্ত্রশিল্পের ক্ষেত্রে এই অসুবিধার প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে। ভারতের পক্ষ থেকে আশ্বাস দেওয়া হয়েছে, এই বিষয়গুলি পুনর্বিবেচনা করা হবে। দরকার হলে বাধাগুলি দূর করা হবে।

18 APR 2005

ANADARAZAR PATRIKA

Positive, forward-looking talks: Manmohan

4 HO-1 18/1
Sudh Park

Frequency of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service to go up; Munabao-Khokrapar rail link to be operationalised

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, today committed themselves to increasing the frequency of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service and operationalising the Munabao-Khokrapar rail link by December end.

While Dr. Singh described the over two-and-a-half-hour meeting at Hyderabad House as "very positive, fruitful and forward-looking," Gen. Musharraf said progress had been made on all issues, including Jammu and Kashmir. A joint statement on the visit is likely to be issued on Monday.

Both Dr. Singh and Gen. Musharraf met the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams before the one-day game got under way at Ferozeshah Kotla this morning. They witnessed the game for some time before proceeding to Hyderabad House.

Giving a sense of what was discussed, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons that the sides had decided to "revive" their Joint Commission, intensify work in the private sector Joint Business Council and discuss obstacles to free trade at the Commerce Secretary-level Joint Study Group on economic issues.

For lasting peace

Mr. Saran quoted Dr. Singh as saying that he was willing to travel the road to "lasting peace" with Gen. Musharraf. Dr. Singh also stressed the importance of thwarting the actions of terrorist elements responsible for the April 6 terrorist attack on passengers of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus.

According to him, the condemnation of the terrorist act revealed that there was a greater degree of congruence in the views of India and Pakistan on the issue. Acts of terrorism could have a negative effect on bilateral relations.

Mr. Saran said that Gen. Musharraf responded "very positively" to the "vision" outlined by Dr. Singh for transforming relations in South Asia, for which improvement in India-Pakistan ties was crucial.

Dr. Singh reiterated that



CRICKET LESSONS: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf explains the beauty and nuances of cricket shots to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the sixth ODI at the Ferozeshah Kotla in New Delhi on Sunday. In turn, Dr. Singh can teach the General a thing or two about hockey and football. The Prime Minister's wife, Gursharan Kaur, wanted to know from President Musharraf what, among other things, LWF and LWS shown on the giant TV screen meant. Pakistan won the ODI series 4-2, trouncing India by 159 runs in the final encounter. — AP (MATCH REPORT ON PAGE 19)

while the redrawing of boundaries was not possible, India was willing to take steps to bring the people living on the two sides of the Line of Control closer, including opening cross-LoC trade and transport links. He said that due to the commitments made by Pakistan to prevent terrorism from its territory in the January 6, 2004 joint statement, many opportunities had opened up.

Mr. Saran quoted the Pakistan leader as saying that while confi-

dence-building measures (CBMs) should be continued and no "deadline" or "timeline" had been imposed to resolve the Kashmir issue, the problem had to be addressed.

According to the Foreign Secretary, all CBMs proposed by the two sides would be discussed further.

The two leaders also discussed the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India and the Turkmenistan-Pakistan-India

gas pipelines and felt that these were projects to be pursued. When pressed for specifics, Mr. Saran said that Gen. Musharraf had spoken of the energy requirements of the two countries and its importance for their development.

Transit routes

Dr. Singh is said to have pointed to the importance of opening up transit routes to Central Asia and to the Gulf. Vast opportuni-

ties would open up if normal trade were possible through these transit routes, he maintained.

The two sides agreed that there was a need to expedite the process of addressing the Siachen and Sir Creek issues, which were part of the composite dialogue menu.

On Baglihar, Gen. Musharraf said he was thankful for the assurance held out by Dr. Singh that India was committed to the

1960 Indus Waters Treaty. Also, the bilateral route for further technical discussions on the dam was still open even though

Pakistan had taken the issue to the World Bank.

Mr. Saran did not disagree with the possibility of India pulling out more troops from Kashmir in case violence did not increase after the snow melted in May. India, it may be recalled, has already pulled out troops from the Kashmir Valley.

"An incubator for CBMs"

PTI reports:

The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, asked Gen. Musharraf, to place all CBMs in an incubator or a goodwill basket for properly nurturing them.

"It is essential for India and Pakistan to place all their acts (CBMs) in one incubator or basket and then watch the eggs nurture in this basket of goodwill and also see that no one kicks it over," Mr. Kalam was quoted as saying by his spokesman, S.M. Khan.

"We should harness or direct all our energy to nurture this goodwill and no third party should be allowed to enter and damage it," Mr. Kalam said during a lunch hosted by him for Gen. Musharraf and his wife, Begum Sehba Musharraf.

The Vice-President, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, and Dr. Singh were among the dignitaries who attended the lunch.

Mr. Kalam, during his talks with Gen. Musharraf, recalled his interaction with school children of Pakistan as well as people from other walks of life, including politicians, and said every student of Pakistan had a desire to live in a happy, healthy and a prosperous country and the similar desire was harboured by "the children of our country."

The event could not have gone without a lecture from the teacher in Mr. Kalam, who had placed a huge display screen linked to his computer through which he told Gen. Musharraf about his scheme of Providing Urban amenities in Rural Areas.

MONDAY, APRIL 18, 2005

Softly does it in India-Pakistan ties

Sunday's summit between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has set a new benchmark for political interaction between the two countries. Not only was the tone and tenor of the interaction exceptionally positive; the two principals and their delegations also managed to generate specific outcomes on a number of issues. Dr. Singh and General Musharraf set a new date for the resumption of train services between Rajasthan and Sindh and examined the possibility of fast-tracking the ongoing dialogue under a few heads, such as Siachen and Sir Creek. The proposal to revive the Joint Commission on economic and trade issues, which last met in 1989, and the resolve to strengthen the activities of the private sector-led Joint Business Council, are most promising. In the meeting, Dr. Singh stressed the need for India and Pakistan to work together for the economic prosperity of South Asia so that the region could emerge as a dynamic pole in Asia and the world. It is reassuring that despite the negative pressure exerted by the United States on the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, the two leaders have reiterated their intention to pursue the strategic project.

As far as Jammu and Kashmir is concerned, both sides seem comfortable with the newly emerged shared vocabulary of soft borders. Dr. Singh reiterated his position that there could be no redrawing of boundaries but pointed out that the removal of restrictions on the movement of people and goods across those boundaries could help make them less and less of a problem. The Pakistani side is happy to go along with this conceptually but believes that outstanding political differences must be addressed within a reasonable time frame. Soft borders are clearly the way forward on Kashmir: the frequency of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus is to be increased and the two Governments are examining the possibility of opening more routes within the divided State for the movement of passengers and, eventually, even goods. For *détente* to maintain its momentum, India and Pakistan need to generate concrete outcomes in areas that can make a material difference to peoples' lives, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir. In nature as well as in politics, quantitative changes often give rise to qualitative ones. General Musharraf can take quiet satisfaction from the sea change that has occurred in the Indian political and public mood since his July 2001 visit to New Delhi and Agra; and also from the well-merited reversal of cricket fortunes since the Indian team made a triumphal visit to Pakistan in March-April 2004. It is only in the fitness of things that Islamabad, which in the past has seen CBMs as a trap that might compromise its basic position on the "core issue," should come around to appreciating the big difference enhanced economic, cultural, and political interactions and people-to-people contacts can make to the environment surrounding the quest for a final solution, which nobody expects will come in the conceivable future.

18 APR 2005

THE HINDU

INDUSTRY UPBEAT OVER TRADE PROSPECTS

India, Pak agree on JBC

NEW DELHI, April 17. — A Joint Business Council of India and Pakistan will be set up to intensify trade and economic ties in the private sector.

This is besides the revival of the joint commission which will provide the "umbrella" under which trade-related issues will be taken forward. The last meeting of the joint commission was in 1989.

This was generally agreed upon at the official delegation level talks between the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf. Later, commerce minister, Mr Kamal Nath, met his Pakistani counterpart in a separate meeting at Hotel Taj Palace later this evening. A joint study group to study the granting of MFN status to India would be held in June. India has already accepted that it will consider the removal of certain non-tariff barriers, which is the biggest obstacle for Pakistan against granting MFN status.

Total bilateral trade is around \$483 million, which has been growing steadily over the years.

So far, the trade has been certainly skewed in favour of Pakistan. The latest figures for 2004-2005 till January states that out of the total bilateral trade of \$483 million, India's imports alone accounted for over \$400 million.

India exports sugar, drugs, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, iron-ore, spices and tea to Pakistan and imports fruits and nuts, pulses, spices, cotton yarn and textiles.

Welcoming the decision, India Inc. today said it was a "huge fillip" to bilateral trade and expressed the hope that select sectors would now be identified and opened up for joint ventures, leading to increased employment.

"We welcome the decision to open up border land routes for trade and setting up of the



Gen. Musharraf and Dr Singh and President APJ Abdul Kalam at a meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

JBC," director general of CII, Mr N Srinivasan said. "There are many items in the trade basket and these should be fully leveraged," he said.

The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry said the Council would help the JBC agreement already existing between FICCI and the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Under its framework since 1999, there have been frequent exchanges of trade delegations, trade exhibitions and JWGs have been set up on trade, non-trade barriers and infrastructure," FICCI president, Mr Onkar S Kanwar, said. "FICCI shall be delighted to refurbish this agreement into a powerful Joint Business Council with involvement of other stakeholders and business associations."

Outlining four focus areas that this JBC must focus on, Mr Kanwar said it was imperative to open up trade from India to Pakistan across a large number of

sectors, which is at present limited to 768 items. Instead of a small positive list (768 items) which Pakistan government currently allows for trade, there should be a negative list from their side of sectors that they may wish to protect and all other sectors must open up. This has become a stepping-stone to the grant of MFN, he added.

For trade and investment to prosper, the infrastructure facilitation is critical. A road route through the Wagah border through custom bonded warehouses on either side of the border on the pattern of Indo-Bangladesh transshipment across Petrapole shall multiply trade manifold.

Similarly, bilateral agreements on regular cargo movement through rail and the connectivity of the two capitals by air would enhance trade and investment flows between the two countries. Already, the two countries are together committed to the South Asia Free

Trade Agreement, which is due to start in 2006. Under the bilateral FTA, India and Pakistan can move faster towards a tariff-free regime and together take advantage of third country's exports by enhancing competitiveness of core sectors.

Assocham president, Mr MK Sanghi, said the JBC should involve the industry and dialogue between the two governments be intensified to restore transportation linkages.

Since the Kargil war, bilateral trade has increased three times, from an admittedly low baseline of 161 million dollars. However, India has had a large advantage in trade — while exports grew by 4.5 times, imports rose by just ten per cent in the period.

Besides, India had proposed 24 confidence building measures for commercial and trade co-operation, including opening of Attari-Wagah land route for trade and grant of transit facilities for each other's goods on reciprocal basis.

Siachen, Sir Creek discussed

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, today discussed unsettled issues like the disengagement in the Siachen Glacier and the delineation of the Sir Creek area.

While there was no final decision on these complex issues — none were expected — the technical committees working on the issues could be expediting their work, the foreign secretary, Mr Shyam Saran, said. If Gen. Musharraf accepts the Indian suggestion that the position in the Siachen Glacier be delineated on the map according to the present ground situation, it would lead to an offer to clear the world's highest battlefield.

India wants the actual ground positions the two armed forces are holding, delineated on a map. If

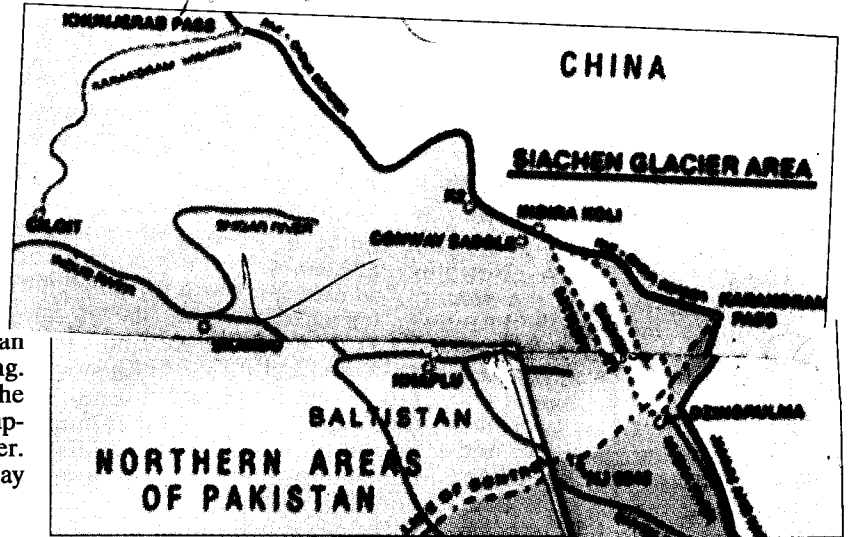
that happens, both sides can get off the glacier, which is 20,000-feet high. Even after the LoC was marked, the glacier remained unmarked because no one at that time felt it would be a battlefield.

While there was no final decision on these complex issues... the technical committees working on the issues could be expediting their work

The Siachen issue has been discussed at a recent Cabinet Committee on Security meeting where the Army chief, General JJ Singh, was present. So far, Pakistan is hesitant to agree, primarily, it is felt,

because it holds the lower ground, with the Indians at the ridge-line, and therefore in a better tactical position.

If there is a line dividing the glacier, disengagement would be easier. It would not allow Indian forces to occupy the ridge-line and take the important positions — that is the Indian line. At present, the Army's Ladakh-based 3 Division has over 20 battalions, mostly of the Ar and some from Indo-Tibetan Border Police. On the North, Central and South glaciers in then, there are about 1,000 men at a time. Soldiers can stay there for six months before returning. Pakistan army has smaller forces in the part of the glacier it occupies, but it is easier for them to supply the troops — the logistical bases being closer. India, some reports say, spends Rs 3 crore a day on to maintain the bases.



Sehba keeps date with history

Syed Asim Ali in New Delhi

April 17. — The General might have been busy discussing contentious bilateral issues with Indian leaders but his wife wanted to relax on Sunday.

The morning started with an hour's stay at Feroz Shah Kotla. Seated beside Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mrs Sehba Musharraf saw hapless Indian bowlers being thrashed by Pakistani batsmen. She then went back to Taj Man Singh and from there to Pakistan House.

In the evening, she decided to visit some of Delhi's prized historical places. Her entourage meant a dozen odd security men and hundreds of mediapersons.

Mrs Musharraf arrived at Humayun's Tomb around 4:30 p.m. Clad in a light salwar suit and accompanied by diplomatic officials and the wife of the high commissioner, Mr Aziz Ahmed Khan.

For half-an-hour, Pakistan's First Lady appreciated the 16th Century monument. She asked the ASI guide, Sanjay Singh, how long it took to build the tomb and how many artisans were involved in the construction work. Mrs Musharraf, however, refused to speak to the media. She just said: "The experience was very good."

In the visitor's diary, she described the tomb as, "a beautiful testimony of our heritage. The restoration work has certainly brought out the most effective and aesthetic features of this simple yet impressive monument". On cricket, she quipped: "I would love to watch more matches between the two countries".

Denied visit

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Militant-turned-separatist leader Javed Ahmed Mir's request to meet President Pervez Musharraf today was turned down by officials of the Pakistan High Commission here. Mir, who entered Pakistan House with other separatist leaders from Jammu and Kashmir, was stopped at the reception by the guards. Mir was first asked to wait and then refused entry. — PTI



Mrs Sonia Gandhi with President Pervez Musharraf during their meeting in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

Sonia, Advani meet Pervez Khana khazana

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Congress president and UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi called on the visiting Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, this afternoon, who invited her to visit his country.

Mrs Gandhi, along with the external affairs minister, Mr K Natwar Singh, met Gen. Musharraf for about 30 minutes during which they are said to have discussed various aspects of the two countries' bilateral relations. An MEA spokesman said Mrs Gandhi accepted the General's invitation. The dates for her visit to Pakistan will be worked out through diplomatic channels.

The spokesman said that "important aspects of Indo-Pak relations were discussed during Mrs Gandhi's meeting with the Pakistan President". Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, also said Mrs Gandhi accepted Gen. Musharraf's invite. Mr Kasuri said President Musharraf was all praise for Mrs Gandhi's refusal of the Prime Ministership despite leading her party to power. "In this regard, Gen. Musharraf called Mrs Gandhi a unique leader," said Mr Kasuri. During the meeting, Mrs Gandhi recalled the "great fondness and enthusiasm" with which her son Rahul and daughter Priyanka had been received in Pakistan last

Atal visit today

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf will meet former Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee tomorrow before leaving New Delhi on his way to the Philippine Capital, Manila. President Musharraf is likely to handover some gifts to the former Prime Minister, sources said. The two leaders share a good relationship since the Agra Summit, in spite of the summit's failure, followed by renewed tensions and escalation of violence in the Kashmir Valley. The Agra Summit was preceded by the Kargil war and Mr Vajpayee's bus trip to Lahore during his tenure as the Prime Minister of India. — PTI

year when they had gone there to watch the Indo-Pak cricket match, said Mr Kasuri.

BJP president Mr LK Advani also met Gen. Musharraf at his hotel. They seemed to have hit it off well, with Mr Kasuri appreciating Mr Advani's remarks after the meeting. Mr Advani noted that relations between the two countries — both people-to-people as well as between the two governments — have improved. He also accepted the General's invitation to visit Pakistan. He will go there in June.

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Before he went to see cricket, the General was offered a calorie-rich traditional Indian breakfast at Taj Man Singh. From a variety of parathas to north and south snacks — chefs at the Taj served a typical traditional fare to the President and his wife, for breakfast.

"Special warki paratha, besides stuffed potato, cauliflower and carrot parathas, were sent to the General's room in the morning. The breakfast menu also included idlis, dosas and north Indian snacks like puri and chhole, besides fresh fruit juice," said the chief chef at the hotel, Irshad Ahmed Qureshi.

The chefs at the hotel were waiting for the day for over a week. "Special care was taken to select the menu keeping in mind his special liking. The idea is to make Musharraf sahib's stay at the hotel a memorable experience," said Qureshi. However, he is a bit disappointed that he could not be present personally to serve the breakfast. "Because of the elaborate security arrangements, the breakfast was sent directly to the room where the President was staying. No one was allowed to go. We don't know what all the President and his wife had and if they liked the fare or not," he rued. With the President slated to have his dinner outside the hotel, chefs are now gearing up for tomorrow to whip up another culinary delight spread on the breakfast table. — SNS

CBM for winter: Politics with dollops of cricket

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 17. — A desert train would soon be whistling the tune of cross-border friendship. India and Pakistan today confirmed that the rail link between Munabao in Rajasthan and Khokrapar in Sindh would be operational by 31 December.

India had earlier announced that the rail link will open on 2 October, but Pakistan has conveyed that the date is not feasible. The new inaugural date has now been decided in December 2005.

The two border towns are only at a distance of six km, but the technical problem was a difference in gauges. While the Indian side was in broad gauge,

Pandits' request

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Displaced Kashmiri Pandits today urged Gen. Musharraf to renovate the famous Sharda Peeth in PoK, so that pilgrimage to the shrine can be commenced from this side of the border. "We welcome Musharraf's visit to India," they said. — PTI

the Pakistani line is a medium gauge one.

Delhi today also told Islamabad that it was committed to the parameters laid down by the Indus Water Treaty and was ready to hold technical discussions with Pakistan on Baglihar power project, adds PTI. Dr Singh sought to allay fears on the issue. "Pakistan's President was thankful for the assurances," an MEA official said.

NEW DELHI, April 17. — After spending over an hour watching cricket with President Musharraf, Manmohan Singh is certainly more learned about India's favourite sport. Gen. Musharraf, a cricket enthusiast, explained certain shots to the PM while they sat beside each other in a bullet-proof enclosure at Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium to watch the sixth and last One-Day international cricket tie. PM's wife, Mrs Gursharan Kaur, had reportedly wanted to know the meanings of some terms such as LWF and LWS on the TV screen. Gen. Musharraf explained to her that it stood for the "Last Wicket Fell" and "Last Wicket Score". The other occupants of the box were Begum Sehba Musharraf and Mrs Sonia Gandhi. — SNS

Musharraf meets Hurriyat leaders

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 17. — Gen. Pervez Musharraf, held a series of separate meetings this evening with different factions of the separatist leaders of Kashmir, who reflected their different concerns in the face of Pakistan's bid to ensure unity in their ranks.

President Musharraf spared three-and-a-half hours amidst a crowded schedule for the Kashmiri separatists, underlining their importance that Pakistan would like to project in the Kashmir affair.

The meetings were held at Pakistan House — the residence of Pakistan High Commissioner Mr Aziz Ahmed Khan.

The separatist leaders, however, spoke in different voices, underlining the deep cracks in their campaign. Firebrand separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani expressed displeasure over Pakistan's move to strengthen relations with India while "ignoring" the Kashmir issue.

In the 90-minute-long meeting with the General, Mr Geelani, leading a five-



GENERAL-ALLY SPEAKING: Gen. Musharraf talks to Syed Ali Shah Geelani (second from left) and his associates in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

member delegation of his own Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, claimed that the recent action of Pakistan to agree on some CBMs with India was creating a sense of "anxiety" among the Kashmiri people. Mr Geelani, who rejected a proposal for unity amongst the separatist leaders in Jammu and Kashmir, asked President Musharraf to differentiate between "pro-movement and anti-movement" people and not to bank upon those who were out to "sell themselves" for petty political

gains. This was interpreted as a veiled reference to the Hurriyat Conference faction being led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq.

Mr Geelani's delegation included Nayeem Khan, Aga Hassan Budgami, Saidullah Tantray and Sheikh Ali Mohammad. The Pakistan President was assisted by the foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri and information minister Sheikh Rashid.

The moderate Hurriyat delegation, led by Mirwaiz Farooq, which met Gen.

Musharraf, comprised Prof. Abdul Ghani Bhat, Mr Bilal Lone and Maulana Abbas Ansari.

This faction appreciated the ongoing peace initiatives and the process of dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad. But Mirwaiz Farooq said both the countries have to take the Kashmiri people from both sides of the border as well as the militant leadership into confidence to resolve the Kashmir issue. He said his delegation had apprised the General of the sentiments of Kashmiris.

I.C.S.E. 2006
Correspondence Course
Under the guidance of Prof. O.P. SINHAL
Author of "A Text Book of I.C.S.E. Maths"

The salient features of this course are:

- Exhaustive set of study material consisting of more than 500 solved questions and answers in each subject.
- More than 60 tests (including 20 Final Tests) strictly on the I.C.S.E. Pattern with full solutions.
- Regular HW Assignments & Tutorials.

Highlights of our results at I.C.S.E. 2004

6	Students secured 100/100 in Maths
182	Students secured 95% or above in Maths
257	Students secured 90% or above in Maths
214	Students secured 90% or above in Science
187	Students secured 90% or above Overall
213	Students secured 90% or above in Maths-Sc.

For free prospectus & admissions write / fax us at:

Sinhal Classes
(Excellent for Eminence, Since 1981...)
Best Comm. Complex, 3rd Floor, Opp. Andheri Rly. Stn. (W),
Mumbai - 400 058. Telefax: 91-22-2670 5281/91-22-2671 2140

Win-win for both sides off the field

April 17. — A new railway link, more trade, war against terrorism and more buses between the two Kashmiris. Both India and Pakistan can call this "cricket summit" between Dr Manmohan Singh and General Pervez Musharraf, a success.

Islamabad seems to have realised that a decision on J&K will take more time. The results look modest, but no dramatic breakthrough was expected unlike in Agra in 2001.

Pakistan won at Feroze Shah Kotla, but it was a win-win situation for both countries off the field. The agreements were aimed at reviving the existing mechanism for trade and economic ties. The Khokraphar-Munabao rail link will open by December. The people living across the Line of Control would expect more links, both physical and cultural. Dr Singh made one thing clear: redrawing India's boundaries was out of the question. This means that New Delhi considers PoK as part of India. Both sides, however, stressed joint responsibility for not derailing the peace process. The

- HIGHLIGHTS**
- No redrawing of borders
 - Joint Business Council
 - Stress on Kashmir
 - More peace buses
 - Rail link by December
 - Joint war against terror
 - Differences on Bagilhar
 - The General Invites PM

gas pipeline from Iran was described as a "worthwhile project". But there were still some sticking points of disagreement, namely Bagilhar. After watching cricket for nearly 90 minutes, the Prime Minister and Pakistan President moved to Hyderabad House. The delegation level talks were followed by a one-on-one meeting. Dr Singh described India and Pakistan as two powerful economies in South Asia. Gen. Musharraf invited him to visit Pakistan.

Dr Singh said while redrawing the boundaries was not possible, India was ready to consider any measures to bring the two people across the LoC together. Gen. Musharraf agreed that the CBMs had made a lot of progress. Alluding to Kashmir, he accepted that no timeline can be imposed, but stressed that outstanding



PEACE PITCH: Dr Singh and General Musharraf at Feroze Shah Kotla on Sunday. — AFP

issues should be addressed. Dr Singh said it was the joint responsibility to ensure that the peace is not thwarted by terrorists. "While there has been forward movement, there are still some difficulties," foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran said.

Late tonight, there was intense speculation that there were hectic negotiations between the two sides on wording of the joint statement that had delayed its scheduled release tonight. Sources said the main point of disagreement was the

More reports: pages 3, 4 & 9

Swarup Kar Purkayastha in New Delhi

April 17. — It was Shahid Afridi once again. He scripted the fate of the match in the second over itself, when he hit Ashish Nehra for 22 runs. Pakistan went on to score 303 for eight and the hosts never looked to be in the reckoning.

India were bowled out for a mere 144 in 37 overs, losing the match by 159 runs. Pakistan, down 0-2 in the series, finally emerged triumphant 4-2. India, after losing Virender Sehwag and Sachin Tendulkar within a space of a few balls, with just 36 runs on the board, never really recovered. Arshad Khan was the pick of the Pakistani bowlers. He returned with a figure of 3 for 33.

Earlier, Pakistan won the toss and elected to bat on a flat wicket that was ideal for batting. Though Afridi scored only 44 runs, the fact that he got them in 23 balls that included six stunning boundaries and a massive six gave their innings the required momentum. Nehra, however, re-deemed himself when he had the Pakistani opener caught behind.

The visitors raced to 100 in 15

...But it was Pak's day at Kotla

Wright era ends
NEW DELHI, April 17. — Today was the last game for Team India coach Mr John Wright and with this the Gungu-Wright era of Indian cricket comes to an end. — SNS
Details on page 12

overs. Man of the Match Shoaib Malik made 72 off 87 balls. Inzamam-ul-Haq fell prey to a controversial decision. When everybody was waiting for umpire Mr AV Jayaprakash to signal a wide, he lifted his finger, adjudging Inzamam caught behind for 68. Younis Khan scored a racy 40 to ensure his team reached the 300 mark. Rana Naved-ul-Hassan was adjudged Man of the Series for his 15-wickets haul.

Crowd trouble

The crowd at the Feroze Shah Kotla erupted today just after the departure of Md Kaif. With India tottering at 94/6, spectators started pelting missiles. The umpires had to take the players off the field and the match was held up for 16 minutes.

More reports on page 12

মুশারফের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে 'শিখিল সীমান্তে' জোর

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ও অগ্নি রায়
● নয়াদিল্লি

১৬ এপ্রিল: চার বছর পরে আজ আবার পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফকে তাঁর 'জম্মুভূমিতে' স্বাগত জানাল ভারত। মুশারফের এ বারের সফরে দিল্লির স্লোগান একটাই, 'শিখিল করা হোক সীমান্ত।' কারণ, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে তাড়াছড়োয় নারাজ ভারতের মতে, দু'দেশের মানুষের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ালেই সম্পর্কের উন্নতি হবে। সেই লক্ষ্যে কাল মুশারফকে এক গুচ্ছ প্রস্তাবও দেবে দিল্লি।

এত দিন কাশ্মীরকে পাখির চোখ দেখা মুশারফ এখন অন্য বিবদমান বিষয়গুলি নিয়েও ভারতের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে রাজি। আজ দিল্লিতে নেমে এক বিবৃতিতে তিনি বলেছেন, "সার্বিক আলোচনা ও সাধারণ মানুষের মধ্যে যোগাযোগের ফলে দু'দেশের মধ্যে সম্প্রীতির বাতাবরণ তৈরি হয়েছে। রাজনৈতিক পরিস্থিতিরও উন্নতি হয়েছে। আমাদের উচিত এই অভূতপূর্ব সুযোগকে কাজে লাগিয়ে কাশ্মীর-সহ সব দ্বিপাক্ষিক সমস্যার সমাধান করা।"

এই ছাড়ের বিনিময়ে মুশারফের আশা কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে খানিকটা হলেও তাড়াছড়ো করবে ভারত। আজ রাতে তাঁর সম্মানে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের দেওয়া ভোজসভায় তিনি বলেন, "আমরা সংঘাত নিয়ন্ত্রণের সময় পার হয়ে এসেছি। এখন সংঘাত মিটিয়ে ফেলার সময়। সমস্যা ধামাচাপা দিয়ে রাখলে চলবে না। স্থায়ী শান্তি স্থাপন করতে হলে আমাদের সমস্যা মিটিয়ে ফেলতে হবে।"

কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের আগে দু'দেশের সম্পর্ক সহজ করতে চায় ভারত। সেই লক্ষ্যেই শিখিল সীমান্তের কথা বলা হচ্ছে। যার মূল উদ্দেশ্য দু'দেশের সাধারণ নাগরিকদের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানো। এ দিন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের সঙ্গে মুশারফের যে বৈঠক হয় তাতে মূলত দু'দেশের সীমান্তকে আরও উদার করা নিয়েই কথা হয়েছে। এর পাশাপাশি কাশ্মীরে সন্ত্রাস বন্ধের ব্যাপারেও পাকিস্তানকে

চাপ দিচ্ছে দিল্লি। ভোজসভায় মনমোহন বলেন, "শান্তি আলোচনা এগিয়ে নিয়ে যেতে কাশ্মীরে দু'দেশকেই সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই করতে হবে।" প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় (পিএমও) সূত্রে খবর, শিখিল সীমান্ত এবং জনসাধারণের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানোর পথে জঙ্গিরা বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়ালে তাদের মোকাবিলা করার জন্য চাপ দেওয়া হবে মুশারফকে।

মুশারফ অবশ্য মনে করছেন, গত পনেরো মাসে আত্মবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার ফলে পরিস্থিতির যথেষ্ট উন্নতি

হয়েছে। আগের সম্মেলনের সঙ্গে এখনকার অবস্থার আকাশপাতাল তফাৎ। সমস্যা সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে এগনোর জন্য এটাই উপযুক্ত সময়। ভারত কিন্তু এখনই এতটা এগিয়ে ভাবতে রাজি নয়।

কাশ্মীর সমস্যার আশু সমাধান সূত্রের পথে না হটলেও কাল মনমোহন-মুশারফ বৈঠকে কাশ্মীর বিষয়ক একগুচ্ছ আত্মবর্ধক প্রস্তাব দিতে চলেছে ভারত। এ দিন ভারত সফরে রওনা হওয়ার আগে ইসলামাবাদে মুশারফ বলেন, "হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে কথা বলাটা জরুরি বলেই আমি ওদের সঙ্গে কথা বলব। কেননা এটা ওদেরই ভবিষ্যতের প্রশ্ন। আমি হরিয়তকে এখনই সমাধান প্রক্রিয়ায় অন্তর্ভুক্ত করার পক্ষে। তবে সেটা ভারতের উপরেও নির্ভর করছে।" পিএমও সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, মুশারফকে কাল মনমোহন বলবেন, ভারত কাশ্মীর সমস্যা এড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে না। কিন্তু সীমান্ত নিয়ে রক্ষণশীলতা বর্জন করে দু'দেশের মধ্যে যদি আরও বেশি যাতায়াত শুরু হয়, দু'দেশের মধ্যে ব্যবসা বাণিজ্য বাড়ানো যায়, সাংস্কৃতিক সমন্বয়ের ভিত গড়া যায়, তা হলেই কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের দিগন্ত উন্মোচিত হতে পারে।

কাশ্মীর নিয়ে সমাধান সূত্র যে 'এক রাতের মধ্যে' পাওয়া সম্ভব নয় তা আজ বারবার বলেছে পিএমও। এক শীর্ষ কর্তার মতে, "প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফ হয়তো খুব ব্যস্ত মানুষ। কিন্তু আমরা বারবারই বলছি এই দৌড়টা ম্যারাথন। একে নির্দিষ্ট সময়সীমা দিয়ে বাঁধা সম্ভব নয়।" বিদেশসচিব শ্যাম সারনও আজ বলেন, "কাশ্মীরের বিষয়টি অত্যন্ত জটিল। ৫৮ বছর ধরে যার চর্চা হয়ে চলেছে। এর সমাধানের পথে এগোতে হচ্ছে দু'দেশের মধ্যে বোঝাপড়া তৈরি হওয়া প্রয়োজন। আর সেটা করা যেতে পারে দু'দেশের মানুষের মধ্যে আস্থা বাড়িয়ে বৃহত্তর জনমত তৈরি করে।" কালকের বৈঠকের পরে যে যৌথ বিবৃতি দেওয়া হবে তার মূল সুর এটাই হবে বলে খবর।

'শিখিল সীমান্তের' বিষয়টি নিয়ে এর পর পাঁচের পাতায়

পতাকা বিভ্রাট

জয়পুর, ১৬ এপ্রিল: বিসমিল্লায় গলদ। ভারতের পতাকা উল্টো করে লাগিয়ে ইসলামাবাদ থেকে এল পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের বিমান। পাকিস্তান ইন্টারন্যাশনাল এয়ারলাইন্সের বিশেষ বিমান জয়পুর বিমানবন্দরের মাটি ছোঁয়া মাত্র গুঞ্জন। এই ভ্রান্তির জেরে সফরটাই না ভেঙে যায়। শেষ পর্যন্ত অবশ্য তেমন কিছু হচ্ছে না। পাকিস্তান এই ভুলের জন্য আন্তরিক দুঃখপ্রকাশ করেছে। ভারতও বিষয়টি নিয়ে শোরগোল চায় না। বিজেপি বলেছে, মুশারফকে ক্ষমা চাইতে হবে। কারণ এতে ভারতীয়দের ভাবাবেগে আঘাত লেগেছে।

পিআইএ-র যে বিমানে মুশারফ জয়পুরে আসেন তার সামনের দিকে দু'টি পতাকা লাগানো ছিল। ডান দিকে ভারতের, বাঁ দিকে পাকিস্তানের। কিন্তু ভারতের পতাকার সবুজ রং উল্টে গেরুয়া নীচে। পাক কর্তৃপক্ষকে জানানোর সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই অবশ্য ত্রুটি সংশোধন করা হয়। মুশারফ অজমের রওনা হওয়ার পরেই 'জাজা' করে দেওয়া হয় ভারতের পতাকা। বিমান চালক ওয়াইসিমুল ইসলাম পরে সাংবাদিকদের বলেন, "এটা নিছক ভুল। বিষয়টি জানার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই সেটা ঠিক করে দিয়েছি। ভারতের পতাকার সম্মান সর্বদা অক্ষুণ্ণ থাকবে।" — পি টি আই

'শিখিল সীমান্তে' জোর

প্রথম পাতার পর
সম্প্রতি মুশারফ এসে মত হওয়ায় দিল্লি খুশি। বিদেশমন্ত্রক এবং প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় একযোগে জানিয়েছে, এই প্রস্তাব আসলে ভারতেরই দেওয়া, এবং ইসলামাবাদের তাতে সাদা দেওয়াটা ইতিবাচক একটা দিক। কাল যৌথ বিবৃতিতে এই সীমান্ত-শিখিলতারও প্রতিফলন ঘটবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। মুশারফকে মনমোহন এ কথাই বলবেন যে, ইউরোপ-সহ বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশ যখন সীমান্তের তোয়াক্কা না করে বিভিন্ন সুযোগ নিতে পারছে তখন দক্ষিণ এশিয়া কেন পিছিয়ে থাকবে? আজকের দু'নিয়য় সীমান্ত অপ্রাসঙ্গিক। দিল্লির আশা, একমত হবেন মুশারফ। যে সব প্রস্তাবের ভিত্তিতে কাল যৌথ বিবৃতি তৈরি হতে পারে, সেগুলি হল:

- বাড়তি যোগাযোগ সূত্র, যেমন কার্গিল-সাক্র বাস যোগাযোগ এবং পৃথক রাজৌরি সেক্টরের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানো।
- নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা বরাবর আরও সংযোগ বিন্দু বাড়ানো। পৃথক, মেসার, সূচেরগড়, উরি, তাংদার (নিলম উপত্যকা) এবং লাদাখের কার্গিল সেক্টরে যাতে দু'পারের মানুষ মিলিত

হতে পারে তার ব্যবস্থা করা।

- নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখা এবং আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত বরাবর বাণিজ্য সংযোগ বাড়ানো।
- এক দেশের তীর্থযাত্রীদের অন্য দেশে যাওয়ার অনুমতি দিয়ে শিখ, হিন্দু ও মুসলমান তীর্থস্থানগুলিতে যাতায়াত অবাধ করা। যার মধ্যে রয়েছে শারদা মন্দির, পির চিন্নাসি এবং গুরদোয়ারা চাট্রি পাটশাহি। হয় এগুলিকে ১৯৭৪ সালের প্রোটোকলের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করা হোক, অথবা নতুন চুক্তি হোক।
- ক্ষেপণাস্ত্র পরীক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে আগে থাকতে নোটিস দেওয়া, দু'দেশের মাদক নিয়ন্ত্রক কর্তৃপক্ষের মধ্যে চুক্তিপত্র স্বাক্ষর করা।
- মুনাবাও-খোকরাপার রেল সংযোগ।
- সাংস্কৃতিক যোগাযোগ এবং সহযোগিতা বাড়ানো।
- জন্ম ও কাশ্মীরে পর্যটন বাড়ানো পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতা।
- পরিবেশ, বনসম্পদ ইত্যাদি বিষয়ে পারস্পরিক সহযোগিতার ক্ষেত্র চিহ্নিত করা।
- দু'দেশের বিদেশমন্ত্রকের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানো, বিদেশ সচিবদের মধ্যে হট লাইন তৈরি।

17 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

MUSHARRAF VISIT

Hopefully, Agra won't be repeated

GENERAL Musharraf's upcoming visit to India is looking more and more like a summit, with meetings lined up with the President, Prime Minister, opposition leaders, and the UPA chairperson. In that context the latest signals sent by him sound positive, and give rise to the hope this visit will not repeat the Agra summit fiasco in 2001. Many of the things Musharraf told a news agency in an interview are reasonable, as well as a discernible shift from Islamabad's earlier positions. He has favoured more traffic between both parts of Kashmir as a way of turning the LoC into a "soft border," which is not only close to Delhi's position but even uses Delhi's language. It by no means follows that Musharraf accepts the LoC as the final border, and he has been explicit about this, but that is only to be expected — Delhi and Islamabad cannot possibly resolve all their differences overnight. What Musharraf has said, instead, is that it is enough if both sides make progress and find some common ground, which is certainly a change of tone from the hardline "solve Kashmir first, confidence-building measures later" kind of stance one had come to expect from Islamabad. That common ground could be restoration of transport links and people-to-people contact between divided Kashmir.

Islamabad had earlier appeared ambivalent about this, as there were no senior officials to wave off the first bus plying from Muzaffarabad to Srinagar, as opposed to the hoopla at the other end where Prime Minister Manmohan Singh flagged off the bus himself. But Musharraf has said the peace process is now "irreversible," which is a nice change of emphasis from holding out the implicit threat of ratcheting up the terror campaign in case Delhi should fail to meet Islamabad's terms. What makes the changes in Musharraf's outlook seem comprehensive is that he is also sending out signals to moderate politicians at home. Internal and foreign policy are intertwined in Pakistan. As recent events such as the bonhomie over cricket have shown, hostility towards India is no longer widespread among the Pakistani masses, and it is not the case that there will be a popular backlash if Islamabad arrives at an understanding with Delhi. There are hardliners, however, in the military and intelligence apparatuses, and among religious fundamentalists in the MMA. Making peace with Delhi could upset the MMA, and hence internal political alignments, but this bogey could be got out of the way if Musharraf were to align with moderate forces in domestic politics. Just such a shift may be underway, which would strengthen the hands of peaceniks over warmongers in Islamabad. If Musharraf appears amenable on this tour Delhi, on its part, should not hesitate to engage him in substantive discussion.

17 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

MANMOHAN FOCUS ON FIGHTING TERROR

Musharraf in peace mode

Shirin Pakistan

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 16. — Advocating a substantive dialogue with India, President Pervez Musharraf tonight asserted that issues should not be “swept under the carpet”, while Dr Manmohan Singh said that to carry forward the peace process both countries must jointly fight terrorism.

Gen. Musharraf said India and Pakistan should seize the “unique opportunity” to resolve Kashmir and all other outstanding issues. “Failure is no more an option,” he said at a banquet hosted in his honour by the Prime Minister this evening. Dr Singh said time has come to find an enduring solution to all the problems between the two countries. “The peace process and the composite dialogue need to be carried forward with even greater determination. However, in order to take forward and sustain the dialogue process, acts of terrorism must be prevented and we must together fight the scourge of terrorism in our region,” he said in his banquet speech.

Earlier, Gen. Musharraf began his round of cricket diplomacy with a prayer for peace at Ajmer Sharif. Besides watching the One-Day cricket match, Dr Singh and the General will discuss the future of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, and the possibility of a soft border, tomorrow.

The General and his wife, Mrs Sehba Musharraf, went to the *dargah* of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, where he

prayed for peace between Pakistan and India. “Peace will lead to prosperity... We hope our prayers will be answered,” he said.

On their arrival in the Capital from Jaipur, the President and his wife were received by external affairs minister Mr Natwar Singh.

At the banquet, Dr Singh called for “practical ways and means” to resolve bilateral issues. He said India and Pakistan, especially the people of Jammu and Kashmir, had paid a heavy price in terms of peace and development because of the persistent conflict of the past half century. Accepting that the past could not be rewritten, Dr Singh said that “a more secure future” could be built. “We must find practical ways and means to resolve all outstanding issues between us in a reasonable, pragmatic manner cognizant of the ground realities,” the Prime Minister said.

In his reply to the toast, Gen. Musharraf said he looked forward to substantive discussions with Indian leaders on all issues and disputes, including Jammu and Kashmir. “The period of conflict management is over. We have entered an era of conflict resolution,” said the General. Emphasising that issues should not be “swept under the carpet”, the President said that the Tashkent and Shimla Agreements were intended to bring amity but they had failed because the environment and the leadership had changed with time.

■ See PEACE: page 7

17 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

"I have come with a message of peace"

Manmohan has a vision of a world where borders become less relevant, says Saran

Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI: Nearly four years after the abortive Agra summit, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, arrived in India on Saturday to hold talks with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh. He will watch the final one-day cricket match between the two sides at Ferozeshah Kotla on Sunday.

Earlier in the day, he landed in Jaipur en route to Ajmer to visit the dargah of the Sufi saint, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti. "We have come here with a message of peace and unity... We have prayed that in times to come, all differences between India and Pakistan are resolved and peace returns," he told presspersons there.

On arrival in New Delhi later, Gen. Musharraf was met by the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh. Later, he attended a dinner hosted in his honour by the Prime Minister.

The Cabinet Committee on Security met this morning and gave the green signal to further the peace process with Pakistan. In the evening, the Prime Minister had a meeting with senior aides to fine-tune a possible joint statement to be issued by the two sides after formal talks on Sunday.

According to highly-placed sources, the meeting between Mr. Natwar Singh and the Pakistan President was crucial in clinching the joint formulation, which is likely to increase cross-Line of Control contacts between India and Pakistan.

The positive sentiments expressed by Gen. Musharraf in Agra were echoed by the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, who was all appreciation for the suggestion made by Gen. Musharraf for "soft borders" between the two countries.

"We are looking forward to a

• **Musharraf speaks: God willing, whatever happens, it will be good**

• **Extremely glad to be in India**

• **A world of difference in the atmosphere**

• **Looking forward to purposeful talks**

• **We are not for scoring points**

• **We must seize this opportunity to address all issues**

very friendly and a very successful visit with a constructive and forward-looking result. We trust that our respective cricket teams will put forward an exciting display of their cricketing skills and sportsmanship tomorrow morning," Mr. Saran told presspersons.

"As our Prime Minister has pointed out, when two leaders meet, they can talk about whatever they wish to talk about. We have no hesitation in discussing whatever may be of interest to President Musharraf... this visit takes place after a year and a half of a very intense dialogue process that has been continuing between the two countries. We have, I think, very much of an improved atmosphere in the relationship between the two countries."

'A major breakthrough'

Pointing out that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service was a major breakthrough on the Kashmir issue, Mr. Saran said that Dr. Singh had a vision of a world where borders would become less relevant.

"We look forward to a time

when there will be a much freer traffic across the borders, across the Line of Control; there will be greater transport linkages, cultural exchanges; there would be perhaps even the peoples of the two sides getting together to look at shared problems of the environment."

The positive statements augured well for Gen. Musharraf's visit, he maintained. "...It will be a very informal, relaxed visit celebrating the cricketing bonds between the two countries, and at the same time taking advantage of this opportunity to engage in a very wide-ranging and fruitful dialogue."

Explaining what India meant by soft borders, Mr. Saran said: "There should be a much freer traffic across the borders; that people should find it very easy to come and go, meet their relatives; there should be very easy trade relations between the two sides; we should have very efficient transport linkages between the two sides."

Baglihar issue

Asked if the Baglihar dam issue would be raised during the talks, an issue of particular concern to Pakistan, he pointed to the repeated assurances given by India side that it would not do anything which was in violation of the letter and the spirit of the Indus Water Treaty.

"We have also explained that the apprehensions which Pakistan may have about this particular project, if there are certain technical objections that it has, we are ready to discuss it bilaterally... But it is Pakistan which decided that it wanted to take this matter to the World Bank. We consider that premature. So, we are prepared to engage in another round of technical discussions, if Pakistan is willing to do so."



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf at the Ajmer dargah, in Rajasthan on Saturday. - AFP

Musharraf prays for peace at Ajmer dargah

Mohammed Iqbal

AJMER: The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, paid obeisance at the historic dargah of the 13th century Sufi mystic, Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti, here on Saturday before beginning the official part of his visit to India. His entourage arrived here from Jaipur by Indian Air Force helicopters and he prayed at the shrine for peaceful and cordial relations between India and Pakistan.

Accompanied by his wife, Seh-

ba Musharraf, and several Pakistani officials, Gen. Musharraf — clad in a white salwar — performed 'ziyarat' at the dargah where he was welcomed by beating of drums. The Pakistan Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmood Kasuri, the Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, and the High Commissioner to India, Aziz Ahmed Khan, formed part of the 20-member delegation.

Speaking to reporters after coming out of the Sufi saint's tomb, Gen. Musharraf said he

had brought a message of peace to India and desired that the differences between the two countries be resolved amicably "in the coming times."

Gen. Musharraf spent about half an hour in the dargah, fulfilling his long-cherished wish to visit the shrine, and offered a 42-metre-long green velvet *chadar*, brought from his country. The Anjuman Khuddam Syed-zadgan — representing the Khadims who work as the dargah's custodians — performed his *dastarbandi* by tying a pink tur-

ban on his head and offered him a bouquet of flowers.

The elaborate motorcade of Gen. Musharraf and his delegation drove from Ghooghra helipad, 10 km from the city, amid strict security with barricades put up on the roads.

A tight security blanket was thrown around the dargah and about 2,000 security personnel were pressed into service all over the town, while the shrine was vacated and searched thoroughly before his arrival.

Anaro Begum waits for her son

"He was a very sweet boy"

Mandira Nayar

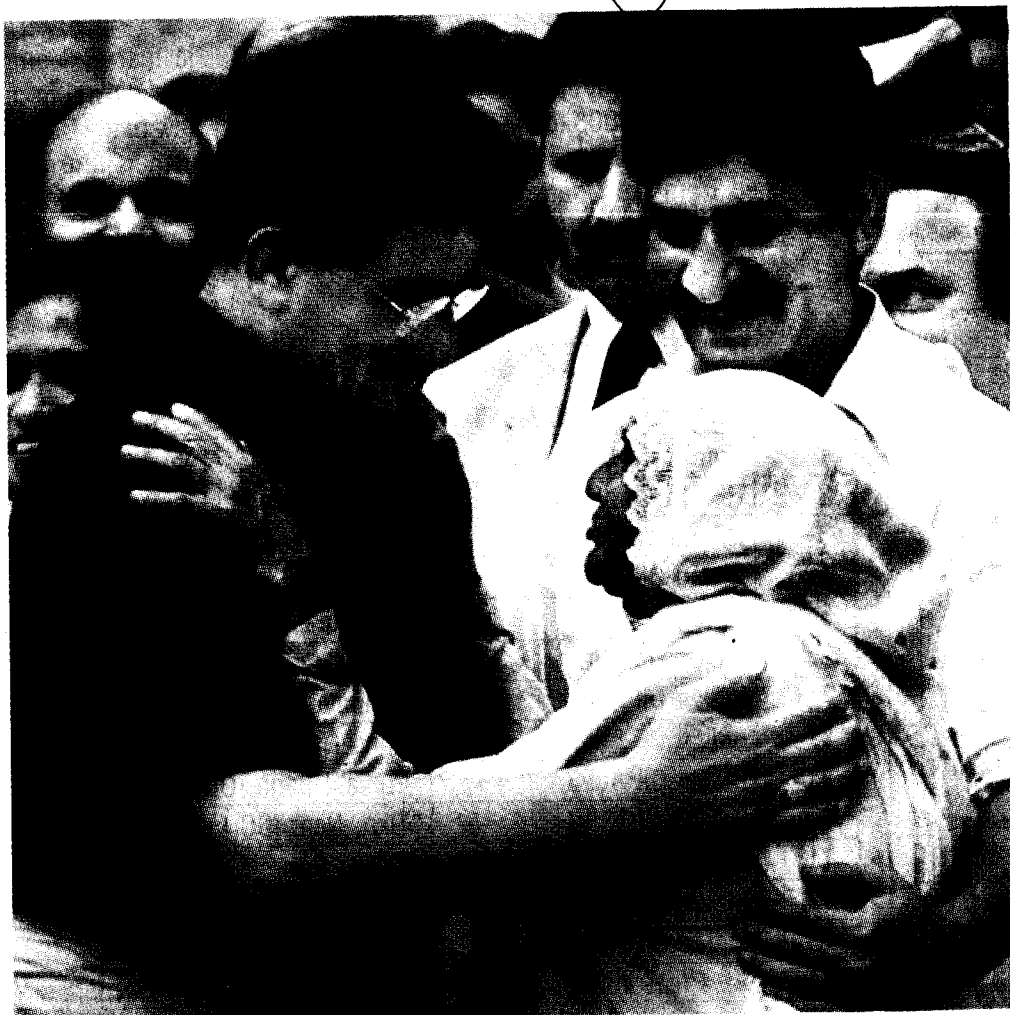
NEW DELHI: Sitting outside a photocopy shop in the crowded Darya Ganj area of the Walled City of Delhi on Saturday, Anaro Kashmire is eagerly waiting to see her first child — Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf. While she may not be the General's real mother, she will always be "Mummy" to him as she brought him up for four years.

"I will go and stand outside the cricket stadium on Sunday and wait for him to come. Ever since I learnt from the newspapers that he was scheduled to visit Delhi, I have been worrying how I will get to see him," she says with a broad toothless smile.

Climaxed by an emotional moment for General Musharraf when he hugged her during his last visit to Delhi back in 2001, these are strong bonds that go beyond just blood and boundaries. "I was 12 years old when I started working in the Musharraf's family house here in Darya Ganj. He was just a newborn. His aunt told him that he must call me 'Mummy', because I was his mother too. He always calls me that. He was just four years old when he left the country," she says.

General Musharraf might have found it difficult to recognise his old home at Neharwali Haveli in Darya Ganj the last time he came calling here, but he did not forget the woman who brought him up. "He was a very sweet boy, not naughty at all. He used to tell me, 'Mummy, get this', and I did. He used to play 'gili-danda'," she remembers now.

Having got married after the



ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER DATE: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf hugging Anaro Begum during his visit to his childhood home in Delhi four years ago.

Musharraf family left India, Anaro Begum had four children of her own, but the General seems to be a favourite. "The woman who brings up a child is as much a mother as the one who gives birth to him. I used to carry him around all the time when he

was a child. 'Apne se zyada pyaar karti hoon' (I love him more than myself)! He will always be my first child," she says.

Determined to meet him this time, too, Anaro Begum wants just to be able to take another picture with him. "I will go and

stand outside the stadium and send a message telling him that his mother is waiting outside. The last time he met me, he hugged me and asked me what I wanted. I told him all I wanted was the two countries to come together," she says.

Musharraf for early inclusion of Kashmiris in talks

Meeting Hurriyat factions "important"

B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has sought the early "inclusion" of Kashmiris in the Pakistan-India dialogue process.

Before leaving on his three-day visit to India, on the first leg of his three-nation tour, Gen. Musharraf said, "We will try to make them [Kashmiris] a part [of the dialogue process] as soon as possible." "As far as I am concerned, earlier the better, but we need to see... it has to suit our counterpart [the Indian leadership] and us," he said. The Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, the Chairman Senate, Muhammad Soomro, the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, Ahsan Saleem Hayat, and senior government and military officials saw him off at the military airport.

Gen. Musharraf, who will

meet the rival factions of the Hurriyat in New Delhi, said: "It is extremely important that I meet them because we have to decide on their future. Therefore their involvement is extremely important."

"Historic visit"

He agreed with media reports describing his visit to India as "historic." "I think it is a very historic visit after Agra. I think it [visit] has more chances of optimism because the environment — when you compare Agra with today — is very different, it is a congenial environment," he said. He said there was a desire on both sides to make the visit a success and "therefore I think it is very much a historic visit."

At the end of his visit to India on April 18, Gen. Musharraf will

leave for Philippines and Indonesia. Pakistan, he said, had very good and friendly relations with the two Southeast Asian countries. He hoped his visit would help to further strengthen these ties and develop understanding on political and world issues.

The First Lady, Begum Seeba Musharraf, the Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid Ahmad, the Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, the Minister of State for Religious Affairs, Amir Liaquat Hussain, the Minister of State for Education, Ghulam Bibi Bharwana, the Advisor to the Prime Minister on Women's welfare, Nilofer Bakhtiar, and the Foreign and Information Secretaries are accompanying Gen. Musharraf.

The Commerce Minister, Humayan Akhtar, will join the delegation in New Delhi.

Let President's rule continue: Paswan

Sandeep Dikshit and K.V. Prasad

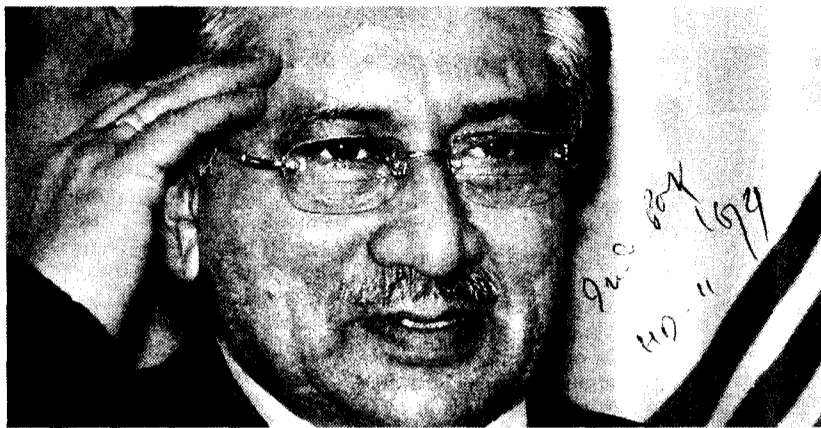
NEW DELHI: The Lok Jan Shakti Party chief and Union Minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, has put on hold moves to form a government in Bihar to allow "aspirations" of Chief Ministerial and Ministerial candidates to "cool down". "Let there be President's Rule for a few months. This would allow all those who are

hankering after posts to see reason," Mr. Paswan told *The Hindu* on Saturday. He becomes the second political leader after Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United) to have pulled out of all efforts at government formation. Mr. Paswan claimed that his proposal to install a Muslim as Chief Minister was increasingly finding favour among the people and dared the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) president, La-

lu Prasad, to project a Muslim

instead of his wife Rabri Devi. Similarly, he said, the JD(U) should follow suit. As of now, the LJP chief insisted that there was no change in his stand of keeping equi-distance from the RJD and the Bharatiya Janata Party and said he could not think of supporting the RJD even if its MLAs elected a leader other than Mr. Prasad and his wife.

'Soft border' emerges as common vocabulary



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf ... focused on his agenda.

India and Pakistan are still far from a breakthrough on Kashmir. But by constantly coming up with formulae and suggestions, General Musharraf's aim is to ensure that the focus remains on the Kashmir issue.

Siddharth Varadarajan

NEW DELHI: In using the words "soft border" on the eve of his visit to India, Pakistan's President, Pervez Musharraf, has, for the first time, hit upon an element of a solution for Kashmir that has also been explicitly endorsed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

General Musharraf told the Reuters news agency in an interview on Thursday that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus and other proposed routes within Jammu and Kashmir could be "the first step towards converting (the Line of Control) into a soft border". On May 24, 2004, Dr. Singh, in his first interview after being sworn in as Prime Minister, had made the same suggestion. "Short of succession, short of re-drawing boundaries, the Indian establishment can live with anything," he told the columnist Jonathan Power, adding that meanwhile, "we need soft borders — then borders are not so important. People on both sides of the border should be able to move freely."

While accepting the significance of what President Musharraf said on Thursday, Indian officials are cautious about the precise implications. "This is the first time Pakistan is talking of soft borders", an official told *The Hindu*. "But we shall have to see what precisely comes up in his discussions here."

At this stage, it is reasonable to assume that a wide gulf probably separates what the two countries mean by a "soft border." General Musharraf himself was quick to add that Pakistan would not accept the proposal that the LoC be converted into a permanent border. Indeed, by counter-posing 'soft' with 'permanent', the General has bowled the Indian side something of a googly since the opposite of 'soft' is 'hard' while 'permanent' is the opposite of 'temporary'.

Range of proposals

Given the Pakistani fear that India considers soft borders a sop for maintenance of the political *status quo*, what General Musharraf probably means is that a soft border is only a temporary solution. Amidst all the clutter of proposals, counter-proposals and trial balloons from both sides over the past few years, this is perhaps the first time that anything resembling a common vocabulary has appeared on the table.

To be sure, India and Pakistan are still far, far away from a breakthrough on Kashmir. But by constantly coming up with formulae and suggestions — in his *iftaar* dinner proposal last year he spoke of the divided state as consisting of seven distinct regions whose fates could be settled individually, and now there is the endorsement of a soft border — General Musharraf's aim is to ensure that the

focus remains on the Kashmir issue.

Specifically, his concern is that India's approach of front-loading confidence-building measures (CBMs) might end up creating new facts on the ground in Kashmir that could then weaken the demand for self-determination within the Kashmir Valley.

Indian officials, on their part, deny that the emphasis on CBMs is meant as a diversion from tackling what Pakistan considers the "core issue" of Kashmir. "It is only by slowly building confidence and mutual trust that India and Pakistan can reach a stage where they can tackle a difficult problem in any meaningful sense", a senior official said. "Besides, the CBMs help the people of Kashmir, they are directly improving their quality of life".

At the same time, New Delhi knows Gen Musharraf is likely to use his time in India to call for the Kashmir issue to be dealt with promptly. So much water has flowed under the bridge since his last visit that it will take a lot more than a breakfast meeting with editors — scheduled for the morning of April 18 — to rock the ongoing peace process.

Three-and-a-half years after Agra, the General's preoccupations might not have changed but his language and formulations certainly have. As for India, its leadership today is far more self-assured and far less prickly than it was in the summer of 2001, when the Pakistan President's televised references to "Kashmiri freedom fighters" pushed an angry Vajpayee Government into abort mode as far as that summit was concerned.

Tangible gains

There may not have been any progress so far on the political aspects of the Kashmir issue but the 18-month-long ceasefire on the LoC as well as the starting of fortnightly bus services between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad represent tangible gains for the people of the divided region. Moving beyond Kashmir, the scale of people-to-people contact has reached such a level that it is difficult to imagine New Delhi or Islamabad turning the tap off. Indeed, judging by the public response to the intra-Kashmir bus service inside 'Azad Jammu Kashmir', the Pakistan Government will soon find itself under pressure to accept the demand for additional buses and points of contact and transit, especially to Poonch and Jammu and even Kargil, where the bulk of divided families on the Indian side of the State live. At the current frequency and capacity, the bus from Muzaffarabad will remain booked solid for two years in advance if the applications for travel already submitted are anything to go by.

Musharraf to discuss gas pipeline

Global consortium for project security proposed



CRICKET FEVER: The scene in New Delhi on Friday as tickets for the upcoming India-Pakistan match at Ferozeshah Kotla on Sunday go up for sale.

Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The Pakistani President, Pervez Musharraf, has said that he will discuss the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline with the Indian leadership during his talks in New Delhi over the weekend.

General Musharraf was quoted as conveying this to the Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, during a telephone conversation, according to the IRNA news agency reporting from Teheran.

Mr. Khatami had phoned the Pakistani leader to remind him about the subject of "gas transfer" to India. "We are ready to form an international consortium to upgrade security indices of the project," Mr. Khatami added. Washington, it may be re-

called, has openly opposed this pipeline project since it involves the Iranian Government.

Gen. Musharraf, who arrives in Jaipur on Saturday afternoon, will visit the dargah in Ajmer before reaching New Delhi in the evening. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, will call on him soon after and the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is to host a dinner for the President at Ashoka Hotel on Saturday night.

Formal talks

Though the whole visit has been described as "informal", a "formal" session of talks has been scheduled at Hyderabad House on Sunday soon after the President and the Prime Minister watch the one-day cricket match at Ferozeshah Kotla. Some itinerary adjustments have been made due to problems of scheduling in Ajmer.

The Pakistan Foreign Minis-

ter, Khurshid Kasuri, the Commerce Minister, Humayun Akhtar Khan, and the Information Minister, Sheikh Rasheed, will accompany President Musharraf. Tariq Aziz, a close aide of the President, is also part of the Pakistani delegation.

On Sunday itself, the General will meet the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, who is to host a lunch in his honour. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, and the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani, will call on General Musharraf the same day. A meeting with the Hurriyat leadership is also on the cards.

Though the earlier Pakistani plan was not to have any "breakfast meeting" with editors as it revived memories of Agra in July 2001, the Editors' Guild of India will have a session with the visiting President on Monday morning, before he takes off for Manila.

Kashmir on the menu

Anjali Dhal Samanta

NEW DELHI: Kashmir is on the menu here. And this time round New Delhi hopes that it would suit the Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's palate. As Rashtrapati Bhavan prepares to host the General for lunch this coming Sunday, on the menu among other delicacies is a special dish from the Valley.

And apart from this Kashmiri dish "tsamana", cuisine from all over would also be on the menu to give the General a real taste of India. The spread includes a variety of kebabs, Hyderabadi biryani, momos and a few Rajasthani dishes. Also on the menu will be some of President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's favourites including idli and dosa.

But more than just the culi-

nary feast, according to sources at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the atmosphere at the luncheon would be of love and a feel of India. "There is no official theme as such. But if we were to give a theme, then it would be love. And a feel of India, a feeling of togetherness," say sources.

In tune with the ongoing peace process between the two countries, setting the tone for the luncheon would be the popular Bollywood number, "Mit gayee dooriyan..." from the blockbuster "Veer Zaara". Reflecting a theme of love, other songs that have been listed include "Pyar hua, ikraar hua..." and "Chhoo kar mere man ko...". Western tunes selected include "Time to remember..." and "I want to hold your

hand...".

A tune based on Indian ragas has been specially prepared for the occasion and would also be played by the Naval Band.

Meanwhile, ready to roll out the red carpet for their high-profile visitor, there was plenty of activity at the Taj Mahal hotel on Man Singh Road here. While the Grand Presidential Suite on the ninth floor is waiting for the dignitary, there was plenty of activity in the kitchens as the chefs were busy preparing a menu that includes kebabs, kormas and bread to suit the President's palate. Adding to the atmosphere were men in khaki and plain-clothesmen as they mingled with the visitors and staff. "It is very hectic here. There are still plenty of things to be worked out," said an official.

HURRIYAT PUTS GENERAL BEFORE PM Pervez for LoC as 'soft border'

15/4/05 5:01
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, April 14. — General Pervez Musharraf today indicated that he favoured converting the Line of Control to a "soft border" but would not accept it as a permanent border for a final solution to the Kashmir problem.

The Pakistan President said Islamabad would like to see more routes opened across the territory after the start of the bus service across the LoC. "That really is the first step towards converting it into a soft border," he told Reuters in an interview.

Gen. Musharraf, who arrives here Saturday on a three-day visit, said he had made it very clear to Dr Manmohan Singh that "we cannot accept the LoC to be the final solution... We have to find an out-of-box solution".

Gen. Musharraf, who is scheduled to hold talks with Dr Singh on Saturday, said he was going to India in a "very harmonious and friendly environment". Gen. Musharraf said he planned to take up the Kashmir dispute immediately "because we don't have that much time", but declined to say if he would be bringing anything new to the table in India. He added that he was fairly optimistic about a solution to the Kashmir issue "because I see Dr Manmohan Singh to be a sincere person and wanting to come to a resolution of this dispute".

Meanwhile, India has announced that

it will release 156 Pakistani fishermen on 19 April.

Also today, the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference said it would not be able to meet the Prime Minister before 17 April, when a four-member delegation of the organisation led by its chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, will meet Gen. Musharraf in New Delhi.

It, however, added that it was willing to meet Dr Singh, but was still waiting for a communication from the PMO. "We would be in New Delhi on 16 April and hope that by then the PMO will have fixed our meeting with the Prime Minister," Farooq said in Srinagar. "Though the PMO had earlier communicated to us that the meeting would be held on 14 or 15 April, it would not be possible as we are leaving for Delhi on 16 April." He said the Hurriyat would urge Gen. Musharraf to persuade New Delhi to allow them to visit Pakistan and PoK for dialogues with militants and separatist leaders.

Meanwhile, the Hurriyat's hardline faction, headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, said a six-member delegation of the organisation would meet Gen. Musharraf in Delhi on 17 April. It, however, ruled out talks with the Centre.

Also today, residents of Pattan in Baramulla district observed a complete shut-down as a mark of respect to two soldiers who died fighting insurgents on 9 April.

Another report on page 5

15 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Delhi prepares for more CBMs

Nilova Roy Chaudhury & Vinod Sharma
New Delhi, April 14

A CONSUMMATE politician seems to have replaced the glib-talking commando who thought the Kashmir dispute could be resolved in a jiffy. Since Agra, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf appears to have come a long way in recognising the intricacies of mending relations and settling disputes with India.

In New Delhi, the General's interview to Reuters on the eve of his second visit to India was received with a mix of caution and optimism. His tone, body language and measured responses to penetrating queries were a welcome change from the belligerent image that had got etched in the public memory here since his failed 2001 summit with A.B. Vajpayee. On display this time was a different Musharraf. "The same one (who came to Agra) coming wouldn't be worth talking to", a well-placed source told HT.

Sources say the visit, though officially described as informal, has acquired all the trappings of a regular bilateral summit-level exchange — what with Musharraf set to hold talks with the President, the PM, Leader of the Opposition, UPA chairperson, and even Vajpayee. The possibility of a joint statement after the talks is also not being ruled out.

National security adviser M.K. Narayanan said the PM would, during talks with Musharraf, put forward a series of new CBMs, including more bus services.

In the interview, Musharraf was realistic on Kashmir in the context of his April 16 meeting with Manmohan Singh. "At the level of the leadership, at the summit level, the core issue of Kashmir needs to be addressed and moved forward", he said. "We can't solve



'I hope the talks don't end up the way Agra did'

the issue, we can't reach a conclusion, but if we make progress on it and we strike some common ground, that's what I'd like to achieve and that's the maximum one can expect. "I am fairly optimistic because I see the PM to be a sincere person and wanting to come to a resolution of this dispute".

The PR element in Musharraf's remarks was too conspicuous to be missed. Unlike in the past, he prefaced his focus on Kashmir without underplaying the significance of bilateral CBMs — the latest of which has been the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link which, in turn, could not have been possible without the cease-fire in place along the LoC and international border since November 25, 2003.

There was no immediate official response from New Delhi to Musharraf's interview.

15 APR 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

'READY TO DISCUSS ALL WITH PERVEZ'

Talks with a purpose: PM

SNS-3 PTI

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD, April 12. — The Prime Minister today said India was "willing to discuss everything" with President Musharraf during his visit to India later this week to watch the last India-Pakistan ODI and to hold informal talks.

After the defence investiture ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan this evening, Dr Manmohan Singh expressed the hope that the talks would be purposeful. Asked if J&K would be brought up by the General, he said that "nothing is ruled out".

He felt the effect of the recent confidence-building measures on the basis of the composite dialogue could be on the agenda. He spoke of common security measures as well.

Pointing out that this was an informal visit, he said the General wanted to come. "We would like to build a tradition of welcoming our neighbours any time they want to come."

Asked about the possibility of further troop cuts in J&K, he said there were "prerequisites" involved. He did not elaborate.

President Musharraf has said that Pakistan would not make one-sided

No takers for visas

ISLAMABAD, April 12. — Two weeks after India opened the Wagah border for walk-in visas for Pakistani citizens aged above 65 and below 12, not a single person has so far utilised the offer. Indian officials here said the poor response was due to Pakistani officials turning away many visa seekers from crossing the border. — PTI

concessions on Kashmir and both the countries would have to be flexible to resolve the problem.

At a meeting with leaders of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir last night, he ruled out accepting the LoC as the permanent border. He emphasised that no solution of Kashmir would be acceptable without consultation with the Kashmiri leadership on both sides of the LOC.

There were positive signals from the Indian leadership on efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue. He described the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service as an appreciable confidence-building measure, but added it was not a substitute for the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

More reports on page 5

13 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

The changing definition of Kashmir

With the start of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service and the popular mood straining for peace and development, prospects for Indo-Pak relations never looked brighter than they currently do

ASHUTOSH MISRA

IF THE attack on the district collector's office in Srinagar in January and the attack on the Jammu and Kashmir tourist office on the eve of the inauguration of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service came as a harsh reminder of Kashmir's violent history, the overall mood in the valley, for a couple of reasons, suggested otherwise. In recent months, the people of Kashmir have sent a message: Freedom can wait, but development cannot. Two developments symbolise the transformation of popular mood. First, the municipal corporation elections and the second, the operationalisation of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. The civic polls—held in all 14 districts of J&K after a span of 25 years (last time in 1980)—witnessed a large voter turnout, with women outnumbering men in the queue at polling booths in many places. It

suggests that militancy now seems to be losing steam and the common man is ready to fight for peace, basic amenities and development.

In the municipal elections, voter turnout was recorded between 30-35 per cent with disturbed areas like Qazigund in Anantnag recording 78 per cent turnout. Pulwama with 56.6 per cent, Dooru with 65.99 per cent and Jammu with 65 per cent hinted the dawn of a new phase in the troubled state. In Srinagar, killings of several candidates by terrorists and call for a boycott by them along with APHC fell on deaf ears. Ignoring their calls, people came out to vote and the turnout was around 20 per cent, which was very impressive. Rajouri and Poonch recorded 81 and 76 per cent turnout respectively.

The fact that no single party could sweep the polls speaks of the representative character of democracy in



importance is also augmented by the enthusiasm shown by PM Manmohan Singh himself, who initiated the policy of 'peace with dignity' and 'winning hearts and minds' and even went to Srinagar to flag off the bus, despite terrorist threats. Even long-time political foes Omar Abdullah and

to take bold decisions and to break from past prejudices. On the bus service, two issues caused repeated deadlocks—travel documents and domicile of the passengers. On both fronts, the two sides showed flexibility and understanding. Pakistan insisted on UN documents for travel and keeping

win-win situation for all. The bus service could well become a psychological facilitator when India and Pakistan discuss the Kashmir issue.

A lot still remains to be achieved. Many such measures have to be taken to soothe historic wounds and mend strained bilateral relations. The future would demand much greater compromises and policy shifts by both sides on Kashmir. For Pakistan, it still is the 'problem of Kashmir', i.e., Kashmir is a 'disputed territory' and an 'unfinished agenda of Partition; and for India, it is the 'problem' in Kashmir, suggesting that the accession of Kashmir to India is final and complete, and the challenge now remains in addressing cross-border terrorism, development and grievances of the people of Kashmir. The two divergent approaches leave little scope for a compromise. It is a challenging proposition, but the breakthrough in the bus service has shown that both sides possess the political will. The future of Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations has never looked as bright as it currently does.

The writer is a Research Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

If the bus service has been underscored by the criticism of parties like the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, it has given the people of not only PoK, but J&K too, a cause for celebration. The service goes to benefit the common people who are, after all, at the "core" of the core

J&K. If the Progressive Democratic Party won in Ganderal, home constituency of the Abdullahs, it lost to the National Conference in Srinagar. The Congress and PDP won in Charar-e-Sharif and in Jammu, the Congress edged past the BJP's tally of 26, with 27 seats.

If the bus service has been underscored by the criticism of parties like the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, it has given the people of not

Mehbooba Mufti have been unanimous in their support for the bus. It is sad to see some analysts in discussions on TV demeaning the importance of the bus service, by labelling the coverage by the press as unwarranted "hype". To see the bus service as just another CBM in the long list of CBMs would be a big mistake.

The decision by India and Pakistan to start the bus service holds immense promise for the troubled state. It suggests that both have the political strength

shown by the passengers to board the bus against all odds could well open a new chapter in the history of Indo-Pak relations. No wonder, it has been considered the 'Mother of all CBMs' and rightly so. It is a clear indication that people on both sides of the Chenab have been longing to meet and have been given a new lease of life. The link that would be maintained through the bus service, once every two weeks, alone has the potential of transforming Indo-Pakistan relations. Its



SIGNALLING PEACE: The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the UPA Chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, flagging off the first bus to Muzaffarabad at Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium, in Srinagar on Thursday. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

Militants attempt to thwart service

By Shujat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 7. Militants tossed a grenade at a group of people who had gathered to see the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus at Pattan, a highway town 27 km northwest of here. Four persons were injured, police said.

Militants targeted a security force patrol wounding two troopers at Chana Khan in Sopore town, off the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, police said. A bomb disposal squad defused an improvised explosive device planted near a petrol pump in the area, reports said.

Earlier, gunmen shot and wounded Sheeraz Ahmed Nainkoo at Pratapora Shopian in southern Pulwama district. Police said that in a firefight at Shariefabad on the outskirts of Srinagar between security forces and gunmen overnight, one militant was killed. Police also reported crossfiring at Chahad in Udhampur district in which a girl, Hasina was injured.

Normal life was affected in the Valley on Thursday as a result of a protest strike called by four obscure militant outfits. The four groups — al-Nasir, al-Aarifin, Farzandan-e-Millat and Save Kashmir Movement — issued a statement saying that they had constituted special squads named "shaheed daste" to target the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus in the future. It added that the bus service was against the interests of the people of Kashmir and the "freedom struggle."

Celebrations all the way from Uri to Srinagar

By Shujat Bukhari

SALAMABAD, APRIL 7. Threats by militants to derail the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service failed to deter the Government and the people from giving a rousing reception to the 30 passengers from the other side of Kashmir.

In Srinagar, if it was the illumination of all the important buildings and a grand function organised by the State Government on the banks of the Dal Lake, in the quiet village of Salamabad, the people waited for the passengers for hours.

Though the security officials prevented them from entering the Tourist Reception Centre, where a cultural programme was on, hundreds of men, women and children formed a human chain on the historic road and watched the arrival and the send-off of the passengers.

"We are happy that road is open. So far, we have only seen shelling, now we are watching life," said Muzaffar Ahmed, a resident. Uri town took wore a festive look as people lined both sides of the road and Army jawans waved small tricolours. Baramulla was no different, as people braved the heavy rains to welcome the guests.

Emotional reunion

In Srinagar, the passengers from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir arrived to a tumultuous reception at the Sher-e-Kashmir

International Conference Centre where the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, the Union Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and hundreds of people welcomed the passengers. A colourful cultural programme was organised and the passengers will be state guests for one night.

Many emotional scenes were witnessed as the passengers

from PoK met their relatives at the SKICC. "I was not born when he left Kashmir," said Syed Showkat Hussain, who received his maternal uncle.

Farida Begum, who met her children after 15 years shed tears as she said: "I am very happy."

Siddique Farooqui, a former judge of Muzaffarabad, also returned after 55 years. "It is a great time," he said.

A dream come true for J&K people: Mufti

By Luv Puri

SRINAGAR, APRIL 7. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said the opening of the Jhelum Valley Road is a dream come true for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, who have been waiting for this moment for more than five decades. He said the bus has broken down the walls of hatred.

Talking to reporters after the historic launch of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service here this morning, the Chief Minister said plying the bus is a major confidence-building measure, which speaks volumes of the trust the country has reposed in the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The people of the State

have fully supported the move aimed at bringing the people closer and building bridges between India and Pakistan.

Emphasizing the need to move ahead on the road to peace, he said there is no other option. He asked the separatists to positively respond to the offer of talks by the Centre. The Mufti said he does not see any reason why they should spurn the offer when they had held two rounds of talks with the Centre earlier. "When there is a democratic option available why should they not take it?"

The Chief Minister described Wednesday's attack by militants as a desperate act and said he was happy that it was condemned by all, both in India and Pakistan.



HONOURING THE SOIL: Passengers from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir touch the ground after crossing the Kaman Bridge, on the Line of Control, on Thursday. — AFP

Omar, Mirwaiz welcome bus service

By Our Staff Reporter

SRINAGAR, APRIL 7. The inaugural run of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus evoked a mixed response from the separatist amalgam.

The chairman of Tehreek-ul-Hurriyat, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, called it a symbolic exercise and said the "bus service is no solution to the raging Kashmir issue. We need to move beyond the symbolism to resolve the issue."

The chairman of the moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq expressed the hope that softening of the Line of Control would solve the humanitarian crisis of divided families.

The Mirwaiz has his relatives who migrated to Muzaffarabad in 1947-48 and one of his uncles, Mirwaiz Yousuf Shah, became president of the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir for a short duration. "We hope that the people on both sides of the Line of Control would come closer to each other and the artificial barriers would disappear one day," he said.

Omar Abdullah, president of the National Conference — the main opposition party in the

State — participated in the function. Earlier, he had said that his party would boycott the event if it were made hostage to "partisan politics." Mr. Abdullah not only participated in the event today, he also wished the passengers luck.

Strike call

A strike was called by the United Jihad Council, which has its headquarters in Muzaffarabad of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, and the hard-line factions of the separatist outfits. Shops and business establishments remained closed but this has been the scene for nine days, in protest against the imposition of Value Added Tax in the State.

The flagging-off ceremony had many firsts for the journalist community. The event was covered by two Delhi-based Pakistan correspondents belonging to the Associated Press of Pakistan and Radio Pakistan. This was the first time Pakistan journalists were allowed to cover an official event in the State. Incidentally one of the journalists, Qadir Beg, belonged to the Hunza area of the Northern areas, once part of the undivided State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Gun has failed, says PoK Premier

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

MUZAFFARABAD, APRIL 7. In a swipe against militant groups opposed to the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service, the Prime Minister of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, said that those who have failed to cross the Line of Control (LoC) with the power of gun have no right to scuttle efforts for a peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue.

"I appeal to everyone to realise the futility of the gun and give an opportunity for dialogue and peace. Please believe me this bus service is not our destination, rather it is a step towards our destination. Our ultimate destination is independence of the State of Jammu and Kashmir in the light of the UN Resolution and becoming part of Pakistan," Mr. Khan said at a formal function organised by his government in

honour of the passengers boarding the first bus.

The PoK Premier described the Line of Control as an artificial border and said that it would suffer the same fate as the Berlin wall. "It was the dream of Allama Iqbal to see people of Kashmir together. Today we are witnessing a small step towards that dream".

He demanded the opening of all the traditional routes

connecting the two sides of the Kashmir prior to 1947 besides making the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus a daily service. Mr. Khan wanted the two sides of Kashmir to be linked by air.

Thanking the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and Congress chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, for the bus service, he appealed to them to work towards amelioration of the "sufferings" of people of Kashmir.

Pakistan should fulfil assurances, says Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 7. The Bharatiya Janata Party president, L.K. Advani, today expressed the hope that the Government would take appropriate steps to curb violence and tension in Jammu and Kashmir and that Pakistan would "fulfil assurances given to [the former Prime Minister] Vajpayee in Islamabad [in January 2004] to curb terrorism."

Mr. Advani was commenting on the militant attack on the tourist centre in Srinagar a day ahead of the inaugural bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

He was speaking to reporters at the foundation stone laying ceremony of the Chhattisgarh Bhavan here.

Spectre of terrorism

He said the spectre of terrorism still loomed large and there was no scope for laxity in security arrangements.

Later, the party general secretary, Arun Jaitley, said it had become clear that militants had not given up their attempts to cause violence.

"Our resolve should be to frustrate this game," he said, hoping that all necessary measures for the security of the bus passengers would be taken.

Enquiry shows bias in award of scholarships during NDA rule

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, APRIL 7. A Human Resource Development Ministry enquiry has found a communal and regional bias in the award of scholarships and fellowships by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study and the Indian Council of Historical Research during the six years of the National Democratic Alliance rule.

Applications rejected

Entrusted with the task of reviewing the work at the IAS during the NDA rule, the enquiry committee noted: "Among the 92 Fellows selected from 1999-04 there was not a single Muslim scholar. All their applications were rejected without assigning any reason. Among the 92 Fellows, the Review Committee could identify only four Christians and one scholar belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC). Partisanship was patent."

The committee has contrasted this with the IAS' track record to drive home the point. "Among the 239 Fellows from 1966 to 1992, there were 22 Muslim scholars. Obviously, the then management did not discriminate scholars on the ground of religion, race, place of birth and/or descent."

At the ICHR, a regional bias was found by the review committee of D. Bandopadhyay, particularly in the award of Junior Research Fellowships (JRF). According to the committee, of the 456 JRFs awarded in the six years, Uttar Pradesh received 121 and Delhi accounted for 15 per cent. "On the other hand, West Bengal received 0.8 per cent of the JRFs," a shade better than the North-Eastern States from where not a single candidate got a JRF.

Communal bias

While in the case of the IAS, the committee noticed a communal bias in violation of the Memorandum of Association and Article 16(2) of the Constitution, a similar observation has been made vis-à-vis ICHR for ignoring most regions of the country in the award of JRFs. "The Council openly violated Rule 4(d)(ii) which mandates 'the proper representation, among the awardees, of the different regions of the country, SCs and the Scheduled Tribes, women and minorities.'"

These biases apart, the committee also found that both institutions preferred to recognise subjects and papers on ancient India with fellowships, scholarships and foreign grants.

In its report on the IAS, the committee said it would not have commented on the issue at all "had the Fellows chosen and the subjects of their study covered equitably the entire universe of research and study."

If aspects relating to ancient India and Indology had a pride of place at ICHR, the IAS under NDA showed a marked preference for themes on Indian civilisation and philosophy, subjects held dear by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

RJD to hit the road

By K. Balchand

PATNA, APRIL 7. The Rashtriya Janata Dal has decided to go on the offensive by hitting the road on April 9 to mobilise its workers and regain its sheen.

Bus to Muzaffarabad flagged off

By Harish Khare

SRINAGAR, APRIL 7. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, today flagged off two buses carrying 21 passengers on the inaugural run of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service setting in motion a process that optimists believe could transform India-Pakistan relations.

Two buses, JK01-0529 and JK02-0315, rolled out at 11 a.m. on the Jhelum Valley Road, a route that had remained closed for 52 years. Dr. Singh described the beginning of the new jour-

ney as an "answer to millions' aspirations."

The re-opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road showcases the new mood of reconciliation. Coming a day after the militants' dramatic attack on the Tourist Reception Centre, barely a stone's throw away from the venue of today's function — the Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium in the heart of Srinagar — the flag-off was a show of strength as well as a commitment to the idea of reconciliation. Apart from the Prime Minister, the Congress

president and UPA chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shanker Aiyar, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, besides the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Lt. Gen. S.K.Sinha, the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, and the Deputy Chief Minister, Mangat Ram Sharma, participated in the function. The Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, who had planned to travel to Srinagar stayed back in New Delhi to "monitor" the situa-

tion. Mr. Natwar Singh invited Omar Abdullah, president of the National Conference, to come and join the dignitaries in the VVIP enclosure. And every speaker made it a point to acknowledge Mr. Abdullah's presence, thereby enlisting his and his party's support for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus project. The bus was a major poll promise of the ruling People's Democratic Party in the State and the Opposition National Conference has been critical of the ruling coalition for "overselling" the bus.

Internal equations apart, the flag-off ceremony sent out messages to the militants and Pakistan. Dr. Singh called the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, an equal partner in the venture. Describing the event as the "first step on a long journey," the Prime Minister said that "a door has been opened" and that "India was ready to accept Pakistan's hand, and the two countries, hand in hand, can work for the welfare of their people." He noted that the most important aspect of this "bus" cooperation was that the two governments had bowed to the sentiments of their people.

Nothing symbolised better the new mood than a billboard at the venue, with photographs of Dr. Singh, Gen. Musharraf and Mr. Sayeed.

Dr. Singh hoped that the new route would encourage not just the movement of passengers but would also promote trade links for Kashmiri handicrafts and fruit for markets in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

Obviously addressing the militant constituency, Ms. Gandhi said the presence of so many people was an answer to all those who had mounted the attack on the Tourist Reception Centre. She asserted that the forces opposed to peace and reconciliation had misread the public mood and they would not succeed in slowing down the people's quest for a new beginning.

The inclement weather did prove a dampener and Wednesday's audacious attack on the Tourist Reception Centre, where the passengers were quartered, also had its impact, as did the separatists' call for a hartal.

Six months ago, the Prime Minister addressed a much bigger rally at the same venue. Today, he recalled how many of the promises he had made stood fulfilled. But the popular mood was clearly focussed less on economic issues and was much more on the promise of re-union of a divided society.

Warm welcome in PoK

UNI reports: Simultaneously, the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Prime Minister, Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan, launched the "peace vehicle" in Muzaffarabad and hailed Dr. Manmohan Singh for allowing Kashmiris on both sides to reunite.

The buses from the two sides successfully completed their inaugural runs when passengers

of the two vehicles were warmly received by cheering crowds in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

It took the passengers more than eight hours to reach their respective destinations as they were accorded receptions at various places all along the 170-km route.

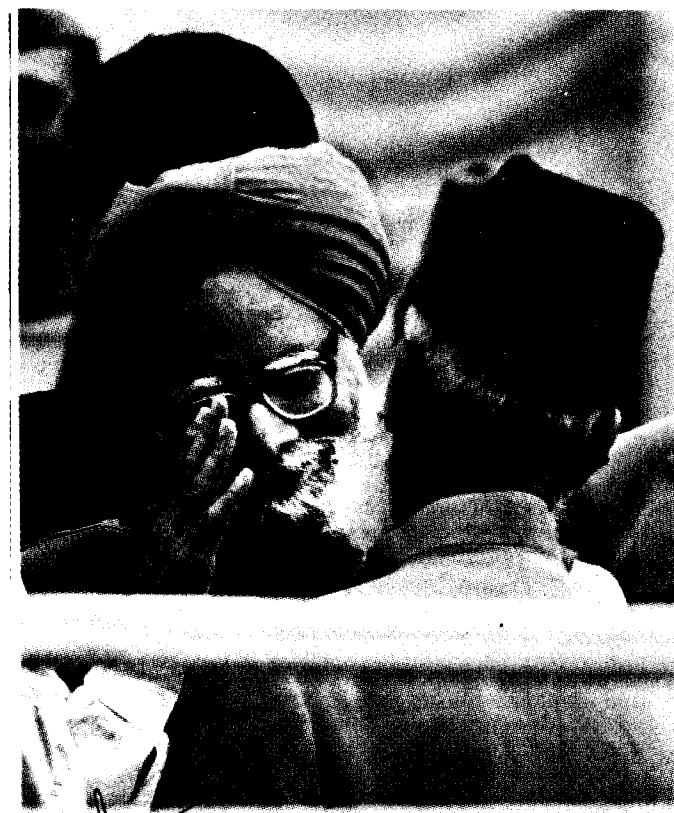
The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, welcomed the PoK passengers when they crossed the Peace Bridge to enter Indian territory.

Many passengers could not control their emotions as they wept and cried in joy after meeting their near and dear ones.

The area, which was mined and heavily guarded to check infiltration of militants, wore a festive look with the army band playing welcome song for the guests. Young Kashmiri children sang and danced enthusiastically as they welcomed their guests from across the border.

When the passengers from Srinagar stepped on the 'Lal Pul' to enter PoK, a large number of people waiting across the bridge waved and clapped in welcome. The travellers realised their dream of visiting their relatives on the other side of LoC.

Editorial on Page 10
More reports on Page 11



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh greets a passenger travelling to Muzaffarabad in Srinagar before flagging off the bus service. — AP

30 passengers, thousands of well-wishers

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

LINE OF CONTROL (PAKISTAN-OCCUPIED-KASHMIR), APRIL 7. The 30 passengers, who travelled on the first Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus, made history this afternoon, as they set foot on the Aman Setu (the peace bridge) between India and Pakistan.

Though they are a microscopic minority of the 3.2 million people of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK), they carried with them the wishes, aspirations and dreams of the overwhelming majority of people for bonding with their brethren on the Indian side.

This was evident in the enthusiastic send-off they received from people of all walks of life — first at the government reception in Muzaffarabad, the PoK capital, and subsequently, at every town and village along the 59 km route to the last inch of territory under Pakistan control.

The green bus of the PoK State Transport Corporation that ferried the passengers back and forth from Muzaffarabad and the LoC was the cynosure of all eyes and everyone wanted to be part of it. The convoy of small vehicles that followed the bus was at least three kilometre long.

It was like a big street festival to which the authorities never objected. The Government declared a public holiday and no one was complaining.

Political observers were unanimous that in decades PoK has not witnessed such spontaneity. People poured on to the streets to greet the first travellers to cross the border, legally from Chakoti, in exactly five decades. Women and children, perched at vantage points, waved merrily as the bus snaked its way through the picturesque mountain range.

Television images of Wednesday and screaming headlines in the media about the attack on the Tourist Reception Centre in Srinagar appears to have had no impact on the spirit of either the passengers or the spectators. The correspondent of the Pakistan English daily, *The News* camping in Muzaffarabad for two days, said: "Till last night, no one was talking of the bus. I never realised the intense feelings of the people for the bus link till we travelled along the bus up to LoC. Maybe, it is a statement of the people of PoK on the Tuesday incident in Srinagar."

For all the fears in their minds about the implications of Tuesday's attack, the passengers showed no signs of worry. "Come what may, I, along with my wife, am determined to make it by the first bus to Srinagar. We have waited for too long and have run out of our patience. No one can take my life if the Almighty is with me," was the reply of M.A.S. Masoodi as hordes of foreign and lo-

cal correspondents sought his views on the Srinagar attack.

A waiting list for two years

"All the 30 passengers who had booked by the first bus have reported and are all set to go. We never had any doubt about it. The demand from the citizens to travel by the bus was so high that in a couple of days we distributed 2,500 forms and 1,500 of them have returned them with the required details. Going by the current frequency of the bus at the rate of 30 passengers, the waiting list from our side is nearly two years," said Liaquat Hussain, Deputy Commissioner of Muzaffarabad (and the Designated Authority from PoK side for verification of the application forms).

The fervour in favour of the bus, in particular, and the greater contact with the other side of Kashmir could not have become possible without the approval of the Pakistan Government which has complete control over PoK. Though the Pakistan Government was conspicuous by its absence at the launch function and related activity, there was a rare demonstration of *perestroika* from the military.

For the first time in several years, 110 local and foreign journalists, including two Islamabad-based Indian correspondents, were allowed access to the last point of the LoC on its side.



ACROSS THE BRIDGE: Passengers who travelled on the first Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus, step on to Aman Setu, the peace bridge on the Line of Control, on Thursday. — AFP

বহ্নারস্তের বিড়ম্বনা

শ্রী

শ্রীনগর ও মুজফফরাবাদের মধ্যে প্রথম বাসযাত্রা অবশ্যই উপমহাদেশের দুই প্রধান প্রতিবেশী রাষ্ট্রের সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে এক ঐতিহাসিক ঘটনা। ইহার ঐতিহাসিকতা এইখানে যে কার্যত দেশবিভাগের পর হইতেই এই পথটি বন্ধ ছিল। ফলে ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে বিভাজিত দুই কাশ্মীরের জনসাধারণের মধ্যে যোগাযোগের স্বাভাবিক সড়কটি নাগালের বাহিরে চলিয়া যায়। দুই দেশের সুপ্রতিবেশীসুলভ সম্পর্ক স্থাপনে আস্থাবর্ধক যে সব ব্যবস্থা গৃহীত হইতেছে, তাহার অংশ হিসাবেই এই যাত্রার আয়োজন। তবে কাশ্মীরিদের ক্ষেত্রে এই যাত্রা চালু হওয়ার গুরুত্ব যত স্পর্শগ্রাহ্য, ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের অবশিষ্ট জনতার কাছে তুলনায় ইহার তাৎপর্য তাহার তুলনায় অনেকটাই প্রতীকী। প্রতীক মৈত্রীর, শুভেচ্ছার, মানসিক দূরত্ব ঘুচাইবার। মুজফফরাবাদ হইতে ছাড়া বাসটির গায়ে যখন 'কারবাঁ-এ-আমন' বা শান্তির কারাভান কথাগুলি দাগানো হয়, নিয়ন্ত্রণ রেখায় অবস্থিত মেরামত-করা সেতুটিকে 'আমন সেতু' আখ্যা দেওয়া হয় এবং মুজফফরাবাদের নৃত্যপার কাশ্মীরি মহিলারা গাহেন— 'দুরিয়াঁ মিট গই' (দূরত্ব ঘুচিয়া গিয়াছে), তখন প্রতীকের তাৎপর্য উপলব্ধ হয়। কাশ্মীরিদের 'স্বাধীনতা'র নামে যে-সব আরব বা আফগান জেহাদি ফিদাইন হইয়া বাসযাত্রায় অন্তর্ঘাতের হুমকি দেয় এবং তাহা কাজে করিয়া দেখাইতে কাশ্মীরি যাত্রীদের অস্থায়ী আবাস পর্যটক ভবনে আত্মঘাতী হামলা চালায়, তাহাদের নিঃসঙ্গতা ও বিচ্ছিন্নতা প্রকট হইয়া যায় বাসযাত্রাকে ঘিরিয়া দুই কাশ্মীরের জনতার স্বতঃস্ফূর্ত উচ্চাসে। সন্তুষ্ট হইলেও দুই কাশ্মীরের যাত্রীরাই যে সীমান্তপারের স্বজনবন্ধু সন্নিধানে গমন করিতে ব্যাকুল, তাহাও স্পষ্ট হইয়াছে। এখানেই জঙ্গিদের ব্যর্থতা। তাহারা যে কাশ্মীরিদের চাহিদা ও তাগিদের সহিত তাল রাখিতে পারিতেছে না, আগ্নেয়াস্ত্রের আশ্বালনে নিজেদের বিপথগামী এজেন্ডা কাশ্মীরিদের উপর চাপাইতে চাহিতেছে, ইহাও এখন স্পষ্ট। শুধু ভারত নয়, পাকিস্তানের বিদেশ মন্ত্রী এবং অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের প্রধানমন্ত্রী যে ভাষায় জঙ্গিদের এই বাসযাত্রা বানচালের অপপ্রয়াসের নিন্দা করিয়াছেন, তাহাতে ওই 'মুক্তিযোদ্ধা'দের সহানুভূতি বা সংহতি পাওয়ার সম্ভাবনাও সুদূর।

কিন্তু ভারত সরকার এই বাসযাত্রাটিকে ঘিরিয়া যে বাড়াবাড়ি ধরনের প্রচার-অভিযান চালাইয়াছে, তাহাও খুব কাণ্ডজ্ঞানের পরিচায়ক বলিয়া মনে হয় না। যাত্রা দুই দেশ হইতে একই সময়ে শুরু হইলেও এবং উভয় দেশকেই প্রস্তুতি ও নিরাপত্তা বাবদে অনেক আয়োজন করিতে হইলেও পাকিস্তান বিষয়টি লইয়া গণমাধ্যমে কোনও আলোড়ন ঘটায় নাই, অপেক্ষাকৃত নিঃশব্দে নিজের কাজটুকু সম্পন্ন করিয়াছে। ভারত কিন্তু যাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তা লইয়া, তাহাদের যাত্রার পূর্বমুহূর্ত পর্যন্ত যথাযথ হেফাজত লইয়া অনাবশ্যক বাক্যব্যয় করিয়াছে। ফলে জেহাদিদের কাছে বাসযাত্রা বানচাল করাও একটি মরণপণ লড়াইয়ের বিষয় হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। নিরাপত্তার আপাতনিশ্চিন্ত বেটনীর মধ্য হইতেও তাহারা যাত্রীদের নাম-ঠিকানা বাহির করিয়া লইয়াছে এবং সন্ত্রস্ত যাত্রীদের আরও নিশ্চিন্ত নিরাপত্তার লৌহপ্রাকারের মধ্যেও তাহারা সশস্ত্র অনুপ্রবেশের ছিদ্রপথ খুঁজিয়া লইয়াছে। ইহার ফলে বাসযাত্রার ভবিষ্যৎ নিরাপত্তা লইয়াও প্রশ্নচিহ্ন উঠিয়াছে। মুজফফরাবাদ হইতে যাত্রার সূচনা করিতে পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট, এমনকী মন্ত্রীরাও হাজির থাকেন নাই। কিন্তু শ্রীনগরের যাত্রার সূচনায় ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী, স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী, বিদেশমন্ত্রী ছাড়াও সনিয়া গাঁধীও উপস্থিত থাকিয়াছেন। অর্থাৎ পাকিস্তান যখন প্রচারের আলো এড়াইয়া চলিয়াছে, ভারত তখন গোটা ঘটনাটিকে জাতীয়, এমনকী আন্তর্জাতিক প্রচারের আলেয় টানিয়া আনিয়াছে। যদি কোনও কারণে শেষ পর্যন্ত দুই-একটি প্রতীকী যাত্রার পর নিরাপত্তার কারণে নিয়মিত যাত্রা স্থগিত করিয়া দিতে হয়, তবে তাহার হতাশাও ভারতীয় রাজনৈতিক কর্তৃপক্ষ ও সমাজকে আচ্ছন্ন করিবে। পাকিস্তান যেহেতু প্রথমবাধি গোটা আয়োজনটিকে নিচু পর্দায় বাঁধিয়াছে, তাই এ ক্ষেত্রে তাহার লোকসানও কম হইবার সম্ভাবনা। মনে হয়, অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ীর লাহোর-যাত্রার চড়া আলোকবিক্ষেপ এ ব্যাপারে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকারকে প্রভাবিত করিয়াছে। সেই যাত্রার পরেই যে কার্গিল-কাণ্ড ঘটিয়াছিল এবং পাকিস্তানে ভারতীয় সৈন্যবাহিনীর রীতিমত মুক্তসমাবেশ ঘটিয়াছিল, তাহার শিক্ষাটি বোধ করি এত দিনে বিস্মৃত।

08 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR

Battle of wills

Keep Kashmir bus wheels rolling

The magnitude of the resistance from some quarters to the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus only underscores its historic novelty and overall significance for the peace process in Kashmir. Surrendering to terrorists is not an option for Delhi, but this is going to be a battle of wills all the way, with only incremental gains possible. Delhi must have the gumption to persist with the process. Islamabad is lukewarm about the bus — it will allow only one each way a fortnight, carrying in all perhaps 50 passengers. The list of passengers that was sent to Islamabad appears to have been leaked to terrorist outfits that are offshoots of the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Hizbul Mujahideen, which have issued ominous warnings to the passengers. That two militants could have breached security at the Jammu and Kashmir Transport Complex, the well-publicized “safehouse” where passengers were being kept, and only 50 metres from where Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh were supposed to flag off the bus the next day, is shoddy work on the part of Indian authorities.

If Islamabad had a case that India wants to prevent oppressed Kashmiris on this side of the LoC from rejoining their “liberated” brothers on the other side, then it is Delhi, not Islamabad or the insurgents, who should want to bar association between Kashmiris on the two sides. Clearly the ferocity of the militant response, their ire aroused by people who do not have any links with politics but merely wish to meet their relatives, exposes their apprehension that freer association between Kashmiris on both sides would, on the contrary, nail the myths that sustain the insurgency, and thus the hollowness of their cause. All the more reason for Delhi to keep the bus service going at all costs, and negotiate more ways for Kashmiris to meet. Even if Islamabad is reluctant, it cannot be seen to be acting against what Kashmiris want, and this is a card Delhi can play. But Delhi must also arrange for security that is as foolproof as possible. If militants can get to passengers, that will discourage more from taking the bus or other ways of meeting. Kashmir is in suppressed excitement because of the bus, although it may take some time for this excitement to be visible because of fear of reprisal attacks. This is going to be a long and hard drive, but the potential rewards must keep Delhi's eyes focussed on the road.

08 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Half a century melts in a kiss and a hug

The journey home, finally

ALOKE TIKKU

Srinagar/Salamabad, April 7: Abida Ansari bent down to kiss the soil. As she stood up, her eyes glistened with unshed tears.

Another passenger, a young man from Muzaffarabad, was on his knees.

Emotions ran high as the 30 Pakistani Kashmiris walked across the Aman Setu (Peace Bridge) to the Indian side, over a military line that has divided them and their land with blood for nearly 60 years.

FROM POK



Passengers from PoK touch the ground after crossing Kaman Bridge. (AFP)

"This bus should run," said Mohammed Farooq, one of those on the bus to Srinagar. "When a person has to die, a person has to die. Life and death is in God's hands."

For Abida, who is in her 40s, it was a dream come true. Even a few months ago, the bridge she had just crossed had been heavily mined to stop people like her and the 29 oth-

ers who had taken the bus from the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Today, an army band played a welcome tune as Indian military officers queued up to greet them. Even the metal bridge, that till two days ago was called Kaman Bridge, had been given an apt new name. Abida was proud she was part of this "caravan of peace".

"I should have been here a long time back. I was born here and have a lot of relatives on this side," another passenger said. What kind of steps would he like the governments of the two countries to take? "Any step taken for peace and love is a good step.... It really does not make a difference," he said.

"I can't control my emotion. I am setting foot in my motherland," said a tearful Shahid Bahar, a lawyer from Muzaffarabad. "I am coming here for the first time to meet my blood relations." Bahar's father had crossed over in 1949. "It was my dream. It is unbelievable. Everyone is here."

The visitors were hugged and kissed by relatives they had not held for decades, or in some cases, ever. "It's for the first time that I have seen my uncle," sobbed Noreen Arif, an adviser to Pakistani Kashmir's Prime Minister, bursting into tears and hugging him as he stepped off the bridge.

"There is a risk, but I am taking the risk so that this bus is the first step towards a resolution of (the) Kashmir (dispute)," said Sharif Hus-sain Bukhari, a retired Pakistani judge returning after 55 years to see his sister and cousins.

"The Line of Control could fall like the Berlin Wall."

'LINE OF CONTROL COULD FALL LIKE BERLIN WALL'



A Kashmiri hugs a relative from PoK at the Chakoti post after crossing Kaman Bridge. (AFP)

Back to days of innocence

KAMRAN HAIDER

Muzaffarabad, April 7: Ghulam Haider Khan boarded a bus this morning and got off a time machine this afternoon.

Scores of years melted away as the 80-year-old stepped on the soil of the other Kashmir.

"I'm 80 years old but now I feel like a 12-year-old," Khan said on arriving in Azad Kashmir, which India refers to as Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. "I have not met my relatives here since 1947. It is a blessing of God that I am here today."

Khan was among the 19 passengers who crossed the Line of Control on two peace buses today. They walked across the border to board Pakistani buses to go to an immigration checkpoint before continuing their journey.

The passengers waved back to media and border authorities while standing in the middle of the bridge that had been closed since 1953.

Thousands thronged the 58-km route from Muzaffarabad to Chakoti — the town that is the last point on the Pakistani side of the Line of Control — to cheer the passengers from Srinagar. Banners with the slogan "Welcome to our brethren from Srinagar" lined the route to Chakoti, where Azad Kashmir premier Sikandar Hayat Khan received the Kashmiris travelling from India.

"I'm able to come to this part of the Valley after 40 years, thanks to the peace process and the thaw in Indo-Pak relations that enabled us to see our relatives after ages," Mohammad Azam, a resident of Srinagar, said in a voice choked with emotion.

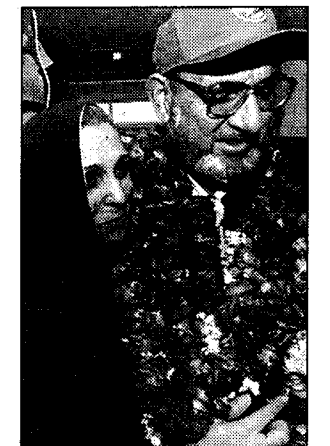
The middle-aged Haji Hus-sain Ahmed described the

journey as the "most beautiful" moment of his life, bursting with joy over meeting his siblings in Mirpur. "I'm extremely happy. It feels very good," said Mohammad Taj, who has come to meet his sister.

In Muzaffarabad, a festive atmosphere prevailed. Colourful *shamianas* were erected and nearly 2,000 people gathered to see the passengers off to Chakoti from where they would go on to Srinagar.

Hayat flagged off the bus to Srinagar amid readings from the Quran. "It is not our ultimate goal (bus service), but we

FROM SRINAGAR



A Kashmiri with a relative from PoK after crossing over. (AFP)

believe that it must help the resolution of the Kashmir dispute when people and political leaders of Kashmir on both sides meet."

Khan praised Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi for taking this "bold" decision and allowing Kashmiris of the two sides to meet after more than five decades.

The road, the history

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR, April 7. — The Jhelum Valley road on which the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus rolled out today, witnessed movement of vehicular traffic after a gap of 58 years. In October 1947, traffic on the road was disrupted in the wake of the Pakistan-backed tribal intrusion after which it remained open for very restricted vehicular movement up to 1956 before being completely closed, according to historians here.

Construction of the historic road, which takes its name from Jhelum, the main river of Kashmir, had started in 1881, they said.

Considering that around that time there was not even a single wheeled mode of transport in the land-locked valley, the project appeared a 'curious undertaking'.

The then Maharaja's government, on the advice of then British residents, entrusted construction of the road between Kohala and Baramulla in north Kashmir to a British contractor firm — Spedding Mitchel and Company that engaged European engineers and several hundred

Pathans and other labourers for the job.

The road was finally opened for traffic in September, 1890 when Maharaja Pratap Singh took the first ride from Baramulla to Kohala. However, public traffic on the road started only in 1892. The extension of the road to Srinagar was started in 1893 and completed in 1895, involving an expenditure of Rs 21,78,870, they said.

The historians said construction of the road between Baramulla and Chakoti, the first village on the PoK side, claimed 54 lives in four years due to falling of cliffs and explosions. Another 20 lives were said to have been lost due to snake bites, they added.

Following completion of the road, travel to and from Kashmir became easier, cheaper and more comfortable. Initially, *tongas* and *ikkas* (horse-pulled carts) were used as modes of transport and bullock-carts for carrying heavy goods. But after some years, lorries and cars started plying on the road. The road soon became the lifeline for the valley as over 80 per cent of imports and exports were carried through it.

The Telegraph

CALCUTTA THURSDAY 7 APRIL 2005 Re 1.00

CL

www.telegraphindia.com



BUS TRIAL BY BLAZE

**ALOKE TIKKU AND
MUKHTAR AHMAD
IN SRINAGAR**

Arms aloft, she leaped to the ground through the window, a wall of fire blazing behind her like a crimson curtain at sunset. Soon, a procession of flailing figures followed — middle-aged men and women hurling themselves out.

This is the frame that will remain frozen in the collective consciousness on the eve of the biggest civilian peace initiative in the subcontinent.

Testing the nerves of the peace-drivers, militants on Wednesday stormed a complex sheltering passengers due to travel on the bus between the divided Kashmir and ensured that the building was burnt down.

All the passengers scheduled to take Thursday's inaugural run escaped unharmed

because most were being quarantined at the rear of the complex because of recurring militant threats.

India, with little option but to carry on with the trip, declared in the evening that the programme would go ahead as scheduled. Pakistan condemned the attack in the "strongest possible" language but took its time in announcing that the bus from its side would roll on Thursday.

Indian officials admitted in private that the failure to protect the Tourist Reception Centre building — which had come to symbolise the bus service and which was thought to be one of the most secure corners in India with almost the entire world watching — will deal a severe blow to efforts to boost the confidence of future bus passengers.

The attack was in one of Srinagar's most protected areas, near the chief minister's official residence and the gov-

ernment radio and television broadcasting offices.

But the political leadership is determined to make the best of the worst scenario, announcing that Sonia Gandhi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and foreign minister Natwar Singh would all be present in Srinagar on Thursday for the flag-off.

In sharp contrast, neither Pervez Musharraf nor any other senior member of his government will be present when the reciprocal bus leaves Muzaffarabad tomorrow.

The ostensible reason for the absence is the Pakistani leaders' preoccupations with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao

but some analysts feel Islamabad has wisely chosen to keep a safe distance from the live-wire occasion in Muzaffarabad.

Against the backdrop of the terror strike, the marked difference in the approach of the two sides has raised questions whether India committed a tactical mistake by pitching the bus launch as a high-voltage spectacle.

The more high profile an event, the more it suits terror groups to mount a desperate attack — such as the one on Wednesday — and gain maximum mileage. Fortunately, the loss of civilian life in the blaze has been nil. But the security establishment's loss of face is incalculable.

The attack was launched in Srinagar around 4 pm when two motorcycle-borne assailants forced their way into the Tourist Reception Centre, guns blazing.

In the battle that followed

— hardly 150m from where the bus is to be flagged off — security forces used mortar rounds and it was during this phase that the building (in Reuters picture above) caught fire.

The complex also houses offices of the state road transport corporation, several other government departments, a branch of the State Bank of India and that of Indian Airlines.

As soon as the blaze started to spread, employees began jumping from the ground-floor windows. "God! Please don't let anyone else see such a horrible day!" wailed a survivor.

Twenty-two passengers — two others were in Baramulla in northern Kashmir at the time of the attack — and around 40 employees were evacuated. The bus has the capacity to seat 29 but some have had second thoughts.

One of the militants was killed and a search was on for the other. Unconfirmed re-

ports said one more could have been involved. "I saw two gunmen with AK-47s running from one side of the building to another," Aijaz Ahmed, a bank employee, said.

Thirteen — mostly employees and security personnel — were injured.

Two of the buses meant for the cross-border travel were just entering the transport yard when the attack occurred. One of the drivers, Ghulam

Mohammad, said: "I was trying to negotiate a turn when the firing started. We somehow managed to take the buses away."

Within little more than half-an-hour, the yellowed, two-storey brick-and-timber building was destroyed. The passengers who are scheduled to come from Muzaffarabad were supposed to be received at the same building.

Officials said all the Muzaf-

farabad-bound passengers had been shifted to a hotel.

A combine of four militant groups that had threatened to turn the bus into a "coffin" has owned up responsibility for the attack.

In the evening, the state government came up with a response to the coffin threat — it decided to name the bus Kaarwan-e-Aaman (the caravan of peace).

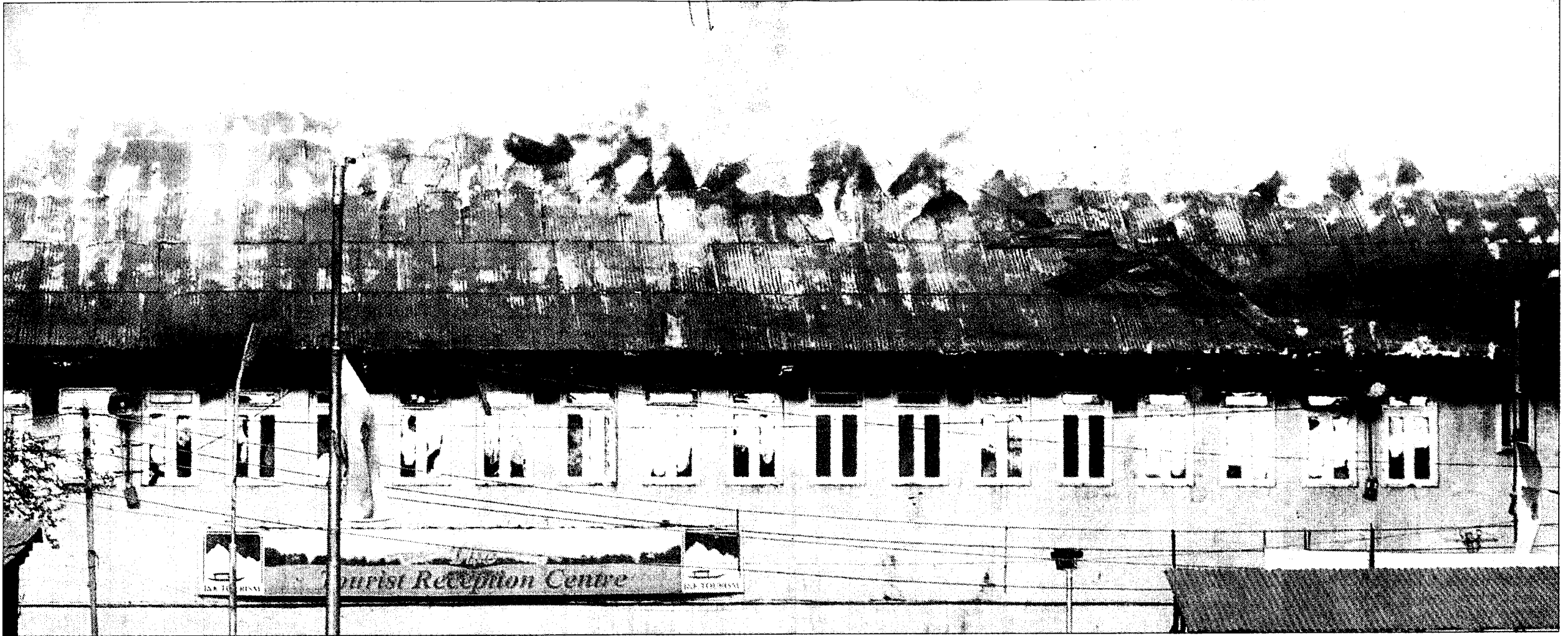
■ Target bus, Page 6

QUOTE

God! Please don't let anyone else see such a horrible day!

A SURVIVOR

শান্তির যাত্রায় সন্ত্রাসের আগুন



জঙ্গি হামলার পরে দাঁড়ানো করে জ্বলছে জম্মু-কাশ্মীর পর্যটক কেন্দ্র। বুধবার শ্রীনগরে। — রয়টার্স

ধোঁয়ায় ঢাকল শ্রীনগর, নিরাপত্তার ঘেরাটোপেই আত্মঘাতী হানা

অগ্নি রায় • শ্রীনগর

৬ এপ্রিল: বিকেল চারটে থেকে টানা আড়াই ঘণ্টা ধুকুমার লড়াই চলেছে। আর সেই লড়াইয়ের উত্তেজনায় টগবগ করে ফুটেছে শ্রীনগর শহরের প্রাণকেন্দ্র। রাত আটটায় হোটেলের ঘরে ফিরে যখন এই খবর লিখছি তখনও শহরের আকাশ কালো ধোঁয়ায় ঢাকা। শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাসযাত্রাকেন্দ্র করে যে শান্তির স্বপ্ন দেখা শুরু হয়েছিল, তাতে আক্ষরিক অর্থেই আগুন লাগিয়ে দিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা। হুমকি খোলো আনা সত্যি করে বাসযাত্রার মাত্র কয়েক ঘণ্টা আগে তারা হামলা চালিয়েছে ট্যুরিস্ট রিসেপশন সেন্টারে। যেখানে 'কজা' নিরাপত্তায় রাখা হয়েছিল প্রথম বাসযাত্রার ২৪ জন আরোহীকে।

বিকেল সাড়ে চারটে নাগাদ শ্রীনগর থেকে বারামুলা হয়ে কামান পোস্ট

পর্যন্ত বাসের 'ড্রাই-রান' সেরে ফিরছি। মৌলানা আজাদ রোডে টোকোর মুখেই গাড়ি আচমকা দাঁড়িয়ে গেল। চালক গোলাম মহম্মদের অভিজ্ঞ চোখ ভুল করেনি। আকাশ ভর্তি ঘন কালো ধোঁয়া। ধীরে ধীরে এগোতেই বোঝা গেল এমন কিছু একটা ঘটেছে যা বহু বিজ্ঞাপিত এই 'আমন' (শান্তি) স্লান করে দেওয়ার পক্ষে যথেষ্ট। বাসের পাশ কাটিয়ে শিস দিয়ে ছুটে যাচ্ছে একের পর এক জলপাইরঙা সাজোয়া গাড়ি। পৌঁছলাম পোলো ভিউ রোড, ট্যুরিস্ট রিসেপশন সেন্টার থেকে আধ কিলোমিটার দূরে। দেখা গেল গোটা বাড়িটা দাঁড়ানো করে জ্বলছে। তখনও অবিরাম বন্দুকের শব্দ।

চতুর্দিকে চূড়ান্ত বিশৃঙ্খলা। উত্তেজিত ভাবে এ ওকে শোনাচ্ছে ঘটনার বিবরণ। সব কুড়িয়ে বাড়িয়ে এক করলে যা দাঁড়ায় তা হল, বিকেল পৌনে চারটে নাগাদ দিল্লি ট্যুরিজমের একটি

বাসে স্টেট রোড ট্রান্সপোর্ট কর্পোরেশনের বাড়ির সামনে আসে দুই আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গি। বাড়িটি ট্যুরিস্ট সেন্টারের ঠিক পাশেই। একই চক্রের রয়েছে একাধিক সরকারি দফতর। দুই জঙ্গির পরনেই ছিল ট্রাফিক পুলিশের

পোশাক। সঙ্গে পেট্রোল বোমা। এক সিআরপিএফ জওয়ানের সন্দেহ হওয়ায় তাদের চ্যালেঞ্জ করেন। জঙ্গিরা না থামায় গুলি করে এক জনকে মারেন। কিন্তু অন্য জন ঢুকে পড়ে ট্যুরিস্ট সেন্টারে। বোমা মেরে জ্বালিয়ে দেয়

বাড়িটি। আগুন লাগে পাশের পরিবহণ দফতরের ভবনেও। সরকারি সূত্রেও এমনটাই ঘটেছে বলে দাবি।

যাত্রীদের তবে কী হল? ওখানেই তো থাকার কথা ছিল কালকের বাসের ২৪ জন সওয়ারির। সরকারি সূত্রে দাবি

করা হচ্ছে, সংবাদ মাধ্যমকে এমনটা জানানো হলেও আদতে যাত্রীদের ওখানে রাখাই হয়নি। তারা ছিলেন প্রায় দুশো গজ দূরে আর একটি বাড়িতে, সেখানে পৌঁছতে পারেনি জঙ্গিরা।

যাত্রীরা অক্ষত থাকলেও শান্তির

বাসযাত্রা ঘিরে যাবতীয় তোড়জোড়কে কিন্তু বড়সড় প্রশ্নের মুখে দাঁড় করিয়ে দিয়ে গেল আজকের হানাদারি। নজর এড়িয়ে মাছি পর্যন্ত গলতে পারবে না, নিরাপত্তার নাকি এমনই ব্যবস্থা ছিল ট্যুরিস্ট সেন্টারে। অথচ সেখানে দু'জন সশস্ত্র জঙ্গি ঢুকে পড়ল। শুধু তা-ই নয়, এক জঙ্গি তো প্রায় দু'ঘণ্টা সমানে লড়াই চালিয়ে গিয়েছে নিরাপত্তা রক্ষীদের সঙ্গে। রাজ্য পুলিশের ডিজি গোপাল শর্মা অবশ্য নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থায় ঘাটতির অভিযোগ অস্বীকার করে বলেন, যে মরতে চায়, সে তো যে কোনও জায়গাতেই ঢুকে যেতে পারে।

একটি সূত্রের মতে, বাড়ি দু'টিতে জঙ্গিরা আগুন ধরায়নি। তাদের বার করে আনতে সেনারাই আগুন লাগায়। এই সূত্রে সংঘর্ষের অন্য বিবরণ দেওয়া হচ্ছে। বলা হচ্ছে, কাল যে বাস দু'টি নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পর্যন্ত যাবে, সেগুলি সেন্টারের কাছেই রাখা ছিল। জঙ্গিরা

প্রথমে সেই বাস দু'টিকে লক্ষ করে গুলি চালায়। প্রথমে সেনাবাহিনী ঝাঁপিয়ে পড়ে সাধারণ মানুষের নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে। তাঁদের সরিয়ে নিয়ে যাওয়ার ফাঁকেই আগুন লাগে। সেনা-জঙ্গি গুলির লড়াইয়ে আহত হন এক মহিলা-সহ ছ'জন। ডিজি রাতে জানান, দুই জঙ্গিই মারা গিয়েছে। এক জনের দেহ মেলেনি।

যে চারটি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী গোড়া থেকে বাসযাত্রা পণ্ড করার চেষ্টা চালিয়ে যাচ্ছিল, তাদের পক্ষ থেকে আজকের হামলাকে 'স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রাম' বলে বর্ণনা করা হয়েছে। আল নাসরিন, আল-আরিফিন, সেভ কাশ্মীর মুভমেন্ট ও ফারজানদিন-ই-মিলাতের জটনৈক মুখপাত্র সমির আবদুল্লা নামে পরিচয় দিয়ে স্থানীয় খবরের কাগজের অফিসে ফোন করেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, দু'জনের এই ফিদায়ের বাহিনী সরকারের অপপ্রয়াস রুখতে এই কাজ করেছে।

আজ বাস চলবেই, হামলার কাছে নতি স্বীকার নয়

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৬ এপ্রিল: শ্রীনগরে জঙ্গি হামলা সত্ত্বেও আগামিকাল নির্ধারিত সূচি অনুসারেই মুজফ্ফরাবাদের বাস ছাড়বে বলে জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। জঙ্গিদের হামলার জবাবে সরকারের দৃঢ় প্রত্যয়ের বার্তা দিতে মনমোহন তো যাচ্ছেনই, কালকের অনুষ্ঠানে যোগ দেবেন বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ও স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলও। পূর্বনির্ধারিত সূচি অনুযায়ী শ্রীনগরের অনুষ্ঠানে যাবেন কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধীও। শের-ই-কাশ্মীর স্টেডিয়াম থেকেই ছাড়বে কারওয়ান-

ই-আমন নামের এই শান্তির বাস। আজকের ঘটনাকে "অত্যন্ত দুর্ভাগ্যজনক" আখ্যা দিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন, পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তি ও আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া কোনও ভাবেই ব্যাহত হবে না। পাকিস্তানও আজকের ঘটনার তীব্র নিন্দা করেছে। পাক বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের মুখপাত্র জলিল আকবাস জিলানি বলেছেন, এই বাস চালু হয়েছে তাঁদের জন্য, যাঁদের পরিবার দেশভাগের সময়ে বিভক্ত হয়ে গিয়েছে। এটা একটা মানবিক ব্যাপার। এই ভাবে নিরীহ লোকদের আক্রমণ করা অন্যায্য। ট্যুরিস্ট সেন্টারে জঙ্গি হামলার

নিন্দা করেছে আমেরিকাও। মার্কিন বিদেশ দফতরের মুখপাত্র রিচার্ড বাউচার বলেন, "ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রয়াসকে বিনষ্ট করার ঘৃণ্যতম প্রয়াস।"

জঙ্গি-হামলার পরেই জম্মু-কাশ্মীর সরকার কোনও ঝুঁকি না নিয়ে বাস-যাত্রীদের একটি গোপন জায়গায় নিয়ে চলে গিয়েছে। দুপুরে শ্রীনগরে আঞ্চলিক পর্যটন কেন্দ্রে দুই জঙ্গির হামলার প্রেক্ষিতে বিকেল থেকে রাজধানীতে চূড়ান্ত ব্যস্ততা শুরু হয়ে যায়। শ্রীনগরের অন্য গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভবনের

এর পর ছয়ের পাতায়

EXPLOSIONS ON BUS ROUTE INJURE SEVEN

Blasts target peace road

Kavita Suri in Srinagar

April 5. — With less than 48 hours to go for the resumption of the historic peace bus service from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad, terrorists today launched attacks on the highway, detonating a powerful Improvised Explosive Device injuring seven persons. Security forces defused another IED on the road, averting another major tragedy.

Following the attacks, the scheduled second dry run of the bus, cancelled yesterday, came to be called off again. These attacks were preceded by threats a few days ago from four militant groups eyeing the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road.

Terrorists renewed their threat against the bus service today. They claimed that they had the addresses and names of the two drivers. They added that the drivers and the passengers would "writhe in bloody pain" if they tried to cross the Line of Control. The groups — Al Nasireen, Save Kashmir Movement, Al Arifeen and Farzandan-e-Millat — said in a joint statement issued at Srinagar: "We have collected the complete bio-data of both drivers. They are warned not to play with their lives by driving these buses." Asking the passengers to take the Wagah route to meet their relatives and not to cross the LoC, the gro-

ups said that if they boarded the bus it would harm the "Kashmir cause".

Earlier, militants triggered an IED blast at Hanjaveera-Pattan on the Muzaffarabad road when a security convoy was passing through it. Seven injured civilians were taken to hospital. Terrorists planted another IED on the Muzaffarabad road, but it was detected and defused.

Security forces have intensified their operations against militants. Three ultras were shot at Haeff-Sugan while two more were killed in Kralpora-Srinagar.

In Delhi, however, Union home ministry officials said there was no cause for panic as the government was making all efforts to provide security to the bus passengers. The MEA official spokesperson, Mr Navtej Sarna, echoed Dr Manmohan Singh's statement that ensuring security of the passengers and their safe return was the solemn duty of both countries. Mr Sarna said visas had been issued to Pakistani journalists to witness the inaugural run of the bus service on 7 April.

The moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference described the reopening of the Muzaffarabad road as "a small step towards the solution of the Kashmir issue". A faction spokesman said Pakistan should set a deadline to "solve the Kashmir problem" during its forthcoming talks with Delhi.

06 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

The initiative on foreign policy is the prime minister's again

Back to square one

DIPLOMACY
K.P. NAYAR

The prime minister is asserting himself on matters of governance in a way few people expected him to do. Manmohan Singh passed a crucial test of his authority last week, when V.K. Duggal became the new Union home secretary, a job whose diplomatic dimension has expanded in 15 years because of terrorism, and more so, since the September 11 attacks against the United States of America.

For those unfamiliar with the internecine battles within the civil service, the appointment of a bureaucrat — albeit one heading the home ministry — may appear routine. In reality, it amounts to much more. Successive prime ministers — including Atal Bihari Vajpayee and P.V. Narasimha Rao, to mention two recent examples — have successfully sought to have IAS officers, whose personal loyalty to them is beyond question, appointed to the most powerful civil service job in North Block.

The irony, in the present prime minister's case, was that his situation was quite the reverse. Singh had no favourite candidate for the job, but others did. And they were banking on two factors to stage what would have amounted to a coup on Raisina Hill and set the stage for a take-over of the home ministry: one, that the prime minister lacks a political base of his own, and second, that he has kept out of politicking in his public life. So, as the March 31 deadline for the superannuation of outgoing home secretary, Dhirendra Singh, approached, a campaign of epic proportions was put together in New Delhi's corridors of power to make the post of home secretary a tenure assignment. The idea was that, like the cabinet secretary and the CBI chief, the home secretary replacing Dhirendra Singh would be in office for two years.

The candidate on whose behalf this campaign was mounted is the current secretary for information and broadcasting, Naveen Chawla. Chawla retires at the end of July. In order to anoint the campaign with a veneer of principle, its promoters proposed that the defence secretary's post should also have a two-year tenure. But they sought to exclude Ajai Vikram Singh, the incumbent, although he has built a formidable reputation for himself in his present job. In New Delhi, the outcome of the campaign was watched closely because Chawla's proximity to the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, is well known. Chawla's wife, Rupika, an art historian, has been a friend of the Congress president for a long time. This is not to suggest that Sonia Gandhi, in any way, took an interest in the campaign.

But the episode was important because there is a surfeit of men

and women in New Delhi these days who claim proximity to Sonia Gandhi and insist that they are acting on her behalf. According to sources close to the prime minister, he does not even check with 10, Janpath about the veracity of these claims because so many of them have been found to be falsely coming into the prime minister's office every day. Instead, he relies on Prithviraj Chavan, the minister of state, and joint secretary, Pulok Chatterjee, to convey anything to him from the Congress president. It is to the tremendous credit of Manmohan Singh

that he stood up to those who orchestrated the lobbying *Blitzkrieg* to make Chawla home secretary and give him a two-year tenure, thereby putting off his superannuation. Chawla's competence to be home secretary is not the issue here. But the motives of those who were behind the campaign certainly are.

tary is no longer relevant. What is important is that Manmohan Singh ensured that this was not to be — even at the risk of refusing to accommodate someone, whose family friendship with 10, Janpath was common knowledge in New Delhi.

In this process of asserting himself, the prime minister is bringing into the process of governance some principles of coalition government, especially lessons in building alliances and making compromises. The appointment of M.K. Narayanan as national security adviser in succession to J.N. Dixit was a



Test of authority

Of all the ministries in the United Progressive Alliance government, the home ministry is the most dysfunctional. Headed by a gentleman minister, but sorely lacking in any vision, it has stumbled from one fiasco to another, putting the nation's security, reputation and credibility at risk. Shivraj Patil has allowed charlatans in his party of emergency vintage to hijack crises like Goa and Jharkhand. These men and women who brought discredit to Indian democracy had hoped that by bringing Chawla into North Block, they could consolidate their control over the home ministry's vast coercive apparatus. Whether Chawla would have been beholden to them or gone along with their plans if he had become home secre-

compromise. It is well-known — especially to those editorial writers in New Delhi who were accosted by Natwar Singh in the days after Dixit's death with entreaties to write in favour of abolishing the post of national security adviser — that the external affairs minister was hell-bent on preventing another fountainhead of foreign policy from emerging in the prime minister's office. Manmohan Singh realized that the least troublesome way out of this imbroglio was to give the job to Narayanan, even if it meant displeasing the IFS lobby, which had come to view the national security adviser's job as its preserve. The prime minister made another compromise last week and made peace with the IFS lobby by appointing Vijay Nambiar, a diplomat of impeccable credentials, as deputy national security adviser.

For a ringside view of the prime minister's skills in managing diverse pulls and pressures and yet seeing through policies with clarity and vision, one need not, however, look beyond recent developments in

the Research and Analysis Wing, India's external spy agency. RAW was in danger of being made redundant only a few weeks ago. The appointment of Hormis Tharakan, who has a credible record of service with the agency as RAW's new chief, helped salvage the agency in more ways than one.

Having upset carefully laid plans by those who wanted to see RAW buried or made an adjunct of the Intelligence Bureau, Singh had to agree to compromises. The most significant of these involved the cabinet secretary, B.K. Chaturvedi. Ashok Chaturvedi, who is related to the cabinet secretary, has been made RAW's deputy chief, although he had earlier been overlooked for promotion. The cabinet secretary declined to recuse himself from the committee which promoted his relative. According to the civil service grapevine in New Delhi, at least two government secretaries expressed themselves against restoring Ashok Chaturvedi's seniority, but the cabinet secretary dismissed their opinion.

But it is in the ministry of external affairs that Manmohan Singh's assertiveness has been most evident recently. Three days after General Pervez Musharraf expressed his interest in visiting India to watch cricket, the prime minister was unhappy that the minister for external affairs had failed to react to the General's initiative. It was, however, typical of Manmohan Singh that instead of pulling up South Block for this lapse, the PMO simply went ahead and announced that Musharraf was welcome in India. This has since been followed up by an expanded role for S.K. Lambah in the PMO on dealing with Pakistan. Lambah, a former envoy to Islamabad and India's one-time point man on post-Taliban Afghanistan, has already been given sensitive back-channel work in the run-up to Musharraf's forthcoming visit to New Delhi. He is expected to eventually fulfil the role played by Dixit in India's dealings with Pakistan.

Nambiar's appointment as deputy national security adviser similarly brings China back into the ambit of the PMO. It is one of the worst-kept secrets in New Delhi's diplomatic circles that the prime minister now relies more on K.S. Bajpai, former ambassador to Washington, for advice on Indo-US relations than on anyone in his own government. All of which suggests that Indian foreign policy is back to square one. After a brief period following Dixit's death, when the PMO conceded ground on external affairs to MEA, the initiative on foreign policy is back with the prime minister the way it has been from Nehru to Vajpayee, with a few exceptions that did little credit to India's image or standing.

Dry run hits security bump

SNS & PTI

SRINAGAR, April 4. — Security concerns today compelled the J&K government to conduct a partial dry run of the peace bus. The run from Srinagar to Uri was cancelled; the bus plied instead from Kaman post on the LoC to Srinagar. The first dry run was conducted successfully on 18 March.

The buses, under heavy security cover, returned to Srinagar in the evening, according to official sources.

Thirteen passengers, booked for the inaugural on 7 April, reached here today from Jammu and were whisked away to the Tourist Reception Centre where security has been beefed up.

The authorities began sale of tickets for the first bus and opened a bank counter to provide foreign exchange.

On Thursday, the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the UPA chairperson, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, will flag off the first bus to Muzaffarabad from the Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium here.

Additional forces, including reserves and those attached to training companies, have been deployed throughout the state in view of the terrorist threat, said Mr Himant Kumar Lohia, DIG, central Kashmir. As a precautionary measure, at least 300 people, including a number of released militants, have been arrested.

Threats uncalled for, says Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, April 4. — With India asserting that the security of passengers travelling on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service lay squarely on Pakistan, Islamabad today termed the threats by militant groups as "uncalled for" as only "genuine Kashmiris" would be undertaking the journey. "We hope that since the travellers are genuine Kashmiris who want to meet their loved ones in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (PoK), no harm is done to them. I would like to go further than that to say that such threats are uncalled for and are not required," Pakistan foreign office spokesman Mr Jalil Abbas Jilani said here. The bus will not face security problem in PoK, he said and claimed that it was "the most peaceful place" with a "very low" crime rate. — PTI

Officials refused to disclose the exact number of passengers who are scheduled to travel on the inaugural run. Passengers are still arriving at the Tourist Reception Centre and only some have been issued tickets and travel documents.

"I think the exact number of passengers to travel on the first bus will be known only tomorrow. Of course, it cannot exceed 30," an official said.

Four militant outfits have warned intending passengers not to play with their lives by boarding the bus.

05 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

লক্ষ্য দু'দেশের যোগাযোগ বৃদ্ধি নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায় নিরাপত্তা শিথিলেও রাজি দিল্লি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

৩ এপ্রিল: জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের মানচিত্রকে কয়েক টুকরো করার পাকিস্তানি প্রস্তাব মেনে নেবে না ভারত। বদলে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফকে ভারতের প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ বলবেন, নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার নিরাপত্তাকে আরও শিথিল করতে ভারত প্রস্তুত। শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস পরিষেবার মাধ্যমে এই কাজ শুরু হয়েছে। সীমান্ত নিয়ে রক্ষণশীলতা বর্জন করে যদি দু'দেশের মধ্যে আরও বেশি মানুষের আসা-যাওয়া শুরু হয়, দু'দেশের মধ্যে ব্যবসা বাণিজ্য বাড়ানো যায়, তবে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানের দিগন্ত উন্মোচিত হতে পারে।

মুশারফ এ দেশে এলে কী ধরনের কাশ্মীর-সূত্র নিয়ে আলোচনা হতে পারে, তা নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, মুশারফের কাছেই প্রধানমন্ত্রী সমাধানসূত্র জানতে চাইবেন। মুশারফ নিজেই আলোচনা চেয়েছেন। কাজেই প্রস্তাবটি তাঁকেই দিতে হবে। মুশারফ কী প্রস্তাব দিতে পারেন, তা নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় ও বিদেশমন্ত্রক এখনই হোমওয়ার্ক শুরু করেছে। এর আগে মুশারফ কাশ্মীরকে সাতটি ভাগ করার প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলেন। সে প্রস্তাব ভারত খারিজ করেছিল।

আর একটি প্রস্তাব পাকিস্তানের পক্ষ থেকে আছে। তা হল চন্দ্রভাগা নদীকে সীমান্ত হিসাবে স্বীকার করে নেওয়া। তা কার্যকর হলে ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে নতুন মানচিত্র গঠন করতে হবে। তা মানতে নারাজ ভারত। স্পেন ও ফ্রান্সের মধ্যে ব্যবহৃত আন্ডেরা সূত্র নিয়েও দু'দেশের মধ্যে আলোচনা হয়েছিল। ভারত তাতেও নারাজ।

নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখাকে আন্তর্জাতিক সীমান্ত করার প্রস্তাব নিয়ে ব্যাক চ্যানেল কূটনীতির স্তরে আলোচনা হয়েছিল। কিন্তু তাতে পাকিস্তান বর্তমান নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার সঙ্গে আরও এলাকা যোগ করতে উৎসাহী। এর মধ্যে জম্মুর ডোডা এলাকার অংশও রয়েছে। যে প্রস্তাব ভারতের পক্ষে মানা সম্ভব নয়।

এই অবস্থায় দুই শীর্ষ নেতার মধ্যে বৈঠক হলেও সমাধানসূত্র বের হওয়াটা প্রত্যাশিত নয়। গত সেপ্টেম্বরে নিউ ইয়র্কে মুশারফ একটা কথা সাফ জানিয়েছিলেন। তা হল, মনমোহন ছাড়া কারও সঙ্গে তিনি কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনা করতে রাজি নন। সে কারণে ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার মূল দায়িত্বটা মনমোহনই তুলে নিয়েছেন। তিনি আপাতত যে যে প্রস্তাব পেশ করতে পারেন। সে গুলি হল:

● সীমান্তকে আরও খুলে দেওয়া। মানুষ ও বাণিজ্যের আদানপ্রদান বাড়ানো। পাক মুসলিম লিগ নেতা শুজাত হুসেনের সঙ্গে বৈঠকে মনমোহন বলেছিলেন, সীমান্তের ভূগোল বদলানো যায় না। কিন্তু বিশ্বায়ন সীমান্তকে অনেকটাই অপ্রাসঙ্গিক করে দিয়েছে।

● কাশ্মীরে অনেক বেশি স্বায়ত্তশাসন দেওয়ার কথা ভাবছে কেন্দ্র। ১৯৫৩ সালের আগে যে স্বায়ত্তশাসন কাশ্মীরে ছিল তা ফিরিয়ে দেওয়ার দাবি জানিয়েছেন ফারুক আবদুল্লাহ।

কেন্দ্র প্রতিরক্ষা ও বিদেশ এই দু'টি বিষয় বাদ দিয়ে অন্য ক্ষেত্রে তা দেওয়ার কথা ভাবছে।

● হরিয়ত নেতাদের সঙ্গে কেন্দ্র বৈঠকে রাজি। কিন্তু তারাও ছত্রভঙ্গ।

● কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আস্থাবর্ধক পদক্ষেপ বাড়ানো যেতে পারে। মুনাবাও-খোকরাপার রেল সংযোগের জটিলতা কাটানোর চেষ্টা হতে পারে।

মুশারফ দিল্লি আসছেন ১৬ তারিখ। থাকবেন দু'রাত্রি। ১৮ এপ্রিল ইসলামাবাদ ফিরে যাওয়ার আগে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে দু'দেশের মধ্যে সমাধানসূত্র বেরিয়ে যাবে এমনটা দু'দেশই আশা করছেন না। কিন্তু এ বার এই বৈঠক করতে ইউপিএ সরকার যথেষ্ট উৎসাহী। তা প্রধানমন্ত্রীই স্পষ্ট করেছেন।

সরকার গঠনের পরেই বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ ইসলামাবাদে গিয়ে কঠোর মনোভাব নিয়েছিলেন। পাকিস্তানেই ধারণা তৈরি হয়েছিল যে, বাজপেয়ী জমানায় কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনা যত দ্রুত এগোচ্ছিল, এই সরকার সেই গতিতে এগোতে চাইছে না। কিন্তু এখন সরকার এই ধারণা বদলাতে সক্রিয়। সম্প্রতি নটবরও ইসলামাবাদে গিয়ে ধারণা বদলাতে সচেষ্ট ছিলেন।

মনমোহন বলেন, “১৬ অথবা ১৭ দু'জনে আলোচনায় বসব। উনি যা আলোচনা করবেন আমি তাতেই রাজি।” জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এম কে নারায়ণন বলেন, “প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে মুশারফের বৈঠক স্থির হয়েছে। বিভিন্ন স্তরে আরও বৈঠক হতে পারে।”

প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় জানিয়েছে, মুশারফের বিশেষ পরামর্শদাতা তারিক আজিজের সঙ্গে সরকারি মধ্যস্থতাকারী প্রাক্তন রাষ্ট্রদূত সতীশ লাম্বার বৈঠক হতে পারে। নারায়ণনের সঙ্গেও তারিক আজিজের বৈঠক হতে পারে। এই আলোচনায় কাশ্মীরই যে প্রধান বিষয় হয়ে উঠবে সে বিষয়েও সন্দেহ নেই।

কাশ্মীরই যে তাঁর সফরের প্রধান বিষয়, তা ফের উল্লেখ করে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট আজ ইসলামাবাদে জানিয়েছেন, ভারতে এসে তিনি মনমোহনের সঙ্গে কাশ্মীর নিয়েই আলোচনা করবেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য, যুদ্ধের মাধ্যমে সমস্যার সমাধান হবে না। সমাধান হবে আলোচনার মাধ্যমে। কাশ্মীরের মানুষও তাই চায়।

এর আগে আগরা শীর্ষ বৈঠকেও মুশারফ কাশ্মীরকেই প্রধান বিষয় বলে অভিহিত করেছিলেন। কাশ্মীরি নেতাদের সঙ্গে আলোচনায় বসার জন্য ইসলামাবাদ দিল্লিকে অনেকবার অনুরোধ করেছে। কাশ্মীরি নেতারা অভিযোগ তুলেছেন, দিল্লি পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে কথা বলছে। কিন্তু কাশ্মীরের মাধ্যমে বলছে না। কাশ্মীরিদের বাদ দিয়ে সমস্যার সমাধান হতে পারে না। তাই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয় সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, হরিয়ত নেতারা মুশারফের সঙ্গে ফের চা চক্রে মিলিত হলে আপত্তি নেই। তবে পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার আগে তাঁরা দিল্লির সঙ্গে বৈঠকে বসুন। হরিয়ত নেতারা উৎসাহ দেখাচ্ছেন না।

● বাসযাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তার দায় পাকিস্তানেরও...পৃ: ৫

Foolproof security for bus passengers: Centre

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. As the countdown for the proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus has begun, security and intelligence agencies have started reviewing the security measures being taken to provide a safe journey to passengers. The historic bus service is scheduled to be flagged off by the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in Srinagar on April 7.

Coordinated by the Union Home Ministry, the security measures for the inaugural bus service came up for a quick review at a high-level meeting held by the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil. The meeting reviewed the arrangements, particularly in the wake of the threats issued by some militant outfits. Mr. Patil said India would not be cowed down by such threats and assured foolproof security to the bus passengers.

Officials said a "dry run" of the bus would be conducted on Sunday from Srinagar to the Kamman Bridge. All measures, including road opening parties, aerial surveillance, deployment of security forces along the route and armed escorts would be taken to ensure the safety and security of the passengers.

Well-placed sources said quick reaction teams of the Army would be deployed at strategic locations and extra vigil would be kept along the newly-repaired bridges and culverts. As such, the route which passes through Pattan, Baramulla and Uri has even otherwise "heavy deployment" of the Army, the Border Security Force and the Central Reserve Police Force.

Official sources called the threats a manifestation of "des-

peration and frustration" as the hardliners and fundamental elements were getting sidelined and increasingly being seen as "killjoys" by the people in Jammu and Kashmir. The spirit of the people was high as more and more members of the divided families are expected to

line up for the India-Pakistan bus ride.

"Threats are a desperate attempt, it is a do or die situation for the militant outfits which used to feel elated after giving a bandh or boycott call in the Kashmir Valley. But the situation has changed as the peace

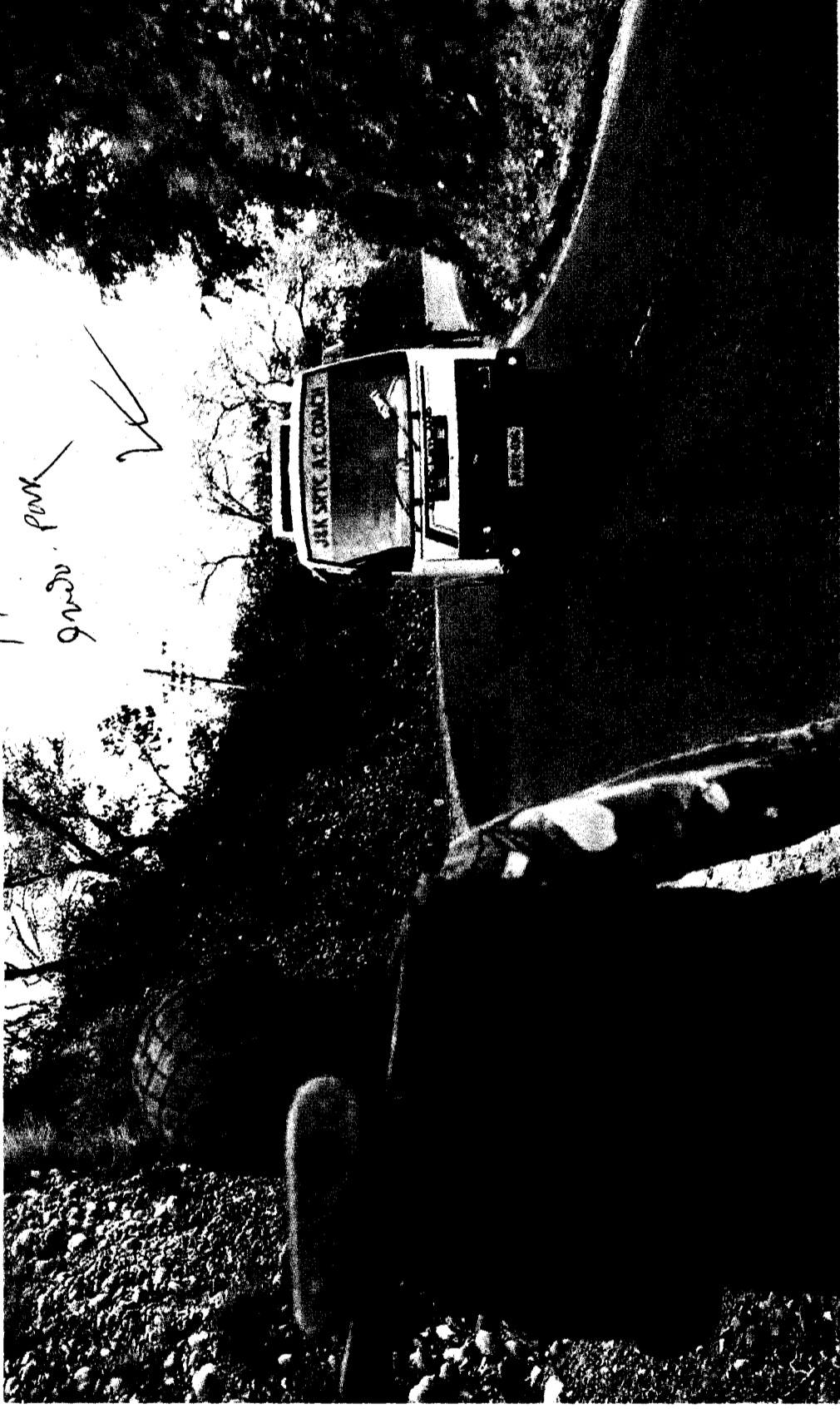
process is progressing well," an official said. The Union Home Ministry has asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to give individual assurances of safety to all 29 passengers travelling in the bus on April 7.

Sources said all measures had been taken to foil any at-

tempts by militant outfits such as the Al Arifeen, the Al Nasireen and the Farzandan-e-Milat which have warned the people not to travel by the bus and threatened to turn it into a "coffin." Though the denial of permission by the Pakistan Government to political leaders

such as Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti to travel by the bus may have provided a great relief to the security agencies, there is no question of lowering the guard.

Sources said the Army and the Jammu and Kashmir Government had put up hoardings



BANDOBUST FOR BUS: One of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad buses set to roll on April 7 passes on its way to Srinagar from Jammu on Saturday. — AP

Ready to discuss all issues: PM

NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, tonight said that India favoured a "freer flow" of ideas and people with Pakistan.

He was speaking to reporters at the airport after returning from "very successful" visit to Mauritius.

Asked about Pakistan's refusal to permit Kashmiri political leaders to travel by the inaugural Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on April 7, the Prime Minister said, "our approach is that there should be a freer flow of people and ideas to resolve all issues between the two countries. Our effort will be to persuade Pakistan to encourage people-to-people contact in the widest possible sense of the term."

To a question on what would he discuss with the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, when he (Gen. Musharraf) visits India to watch the India-Pakistan one-day international on April 17, the Prime Minister said: "I have said on more than one occasion that we are willing to discuss all issues which have a vital bearing on our relations with Pakistan." — UNI

and billboards welcoming the passengers from the other side of the Line of Control conveying the message of goodwill and a call for everlasting friendship between the two neighbouring countries.

কাশ্মীর-বাসের যাত্রীকে ফোনে হুমকি জঙ্গিদের

জম্মু, ১ এপ্রিল: দুই কাশ্মীরের শব্দে বাস সংযোগ শুরু হওয়ায় ফিরে দু'পায়ের মানুষের উত্তেজনা যত বাড়ছে, শান্তি-উদ্যোগ বানচাল করে দিতে জঙ্গি তৎপরতাও তত বাড়ছে।

ছ'দিন পরে শ্রীনগর থেকে মুজফ্ফরাবাদ যাওয়ার প্রথম বাসের যাত্রী হবেন, এমন এক প্রাক্তন ডেপুটি কমিশনারকে হত্যার হুমকি দিয়েছে আল-নাসরিন। আরও তিনটি জঙ্গি সংগঠনের সঙ্গে এই আল-নাসরিনই দিন দুয়েক আগে প্রথম বাসটি উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার হুমকি দিয়েছিল। যাত্রীদের নাম-ঠিকানা তাদের হাতে এসেছে বলেও জানিয়েছিল। শ্রীনগর-বারামুলা জাতীয় সড়কে উদ্ধার হয়েছে ফুটারে লুকোনো ১১৭ কেজি বিস্ফোরক।

এ দিকে, বাসযাত্রী বানচাল করে দেওয়ার জঙ্গি হুমকির কথা উল্লেখ

করে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি খালিদদের কথায়, “ভয় দেখিয়েছে নাসিরকে নিয়ে ৭ এপ্রিলে শ্রীনগর-মহম্মদ সঙ্গীদ আজ বলেছেন, যাত্রীদের আল-নাসরিন। ওরা বলেছে, মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাসে চড়ার কথা নিরাপত্তায় ক্রটি রাখা হবে না। জঙ্গি মুজফ্ফরাবাদে গিয়ে আত্মীয়দের সঙ্গে খালিদদের। জঙ্গি হুমকির পরেও দমে হামলার ভয়ে পিছিয়ে না-গিয়ে দেখা করার দরকার নেই।”

জঙ্গি না-গিয়ে খালিদ বলেছেন, “এত দিনের বিস্ফোরকের পরে আত্মীয়দের সঙ্গে আমাদের দেখা করা সঙ্গ আমাদের দেখা করা কেউ আটকাতে পারবে না।.... জঙ্গিরা মুখে স্বাধীনতার কথা বলে। অথচ স্বাধীনতার দু'ধারে বিস্ফিন্ন পরিবারগুলোকে বিস্ফিন্নই রাখতে চায়।”

শ্রীনগর-বারামুলা জাতীয় সড়কে আরামপুর-শ্রীনগর ও আরামপুর-হাইগাম অংশে ৪টি ফুটার থেকে ১১৭ কেজি বিস্ফোরক উদ্ধার হয়েছে। প্রথম বাস উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার জন্যই ওই পি টি আই

নয়াদিল্লি, ১ এপ্রিল: প্রথম বাসের সঙ্গেই অন্য একটি বাসে জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের ৮ জন রাজনৈতিক নেতাও পাকিস্তান যান, ইসলামাবাদ তা চাইছে না। এমন অনুরোধ খরিজ করে দিয়েছে পাক-সরকার। বিদেশ মন্ত্রকের পক্ষ থেকে জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের উপমুখ্যমন্ত্রী মঞ্জুত রাম শর্মা, ন্যাশনাল কমান্ডারদের ওমর আবদুল্লা, আবদুল রহিম, পি টি পি-র মেহবুবা মুফতি-সহ ৮ জন রাজনৈতিক নেতার নাম পাকিস্তান সরকারের কাছে পাঠানো হয়েছিল। ৭ এপ্রিলে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মুজফ্ফরাবাদ-শ্রীনগর বাসটির উদ্বোধন করার পর ওই বাসটির সঙ্গেই অন্য একটি বাসে এদের মুজফ্ফরাবাদ যেতে দেওয়ার অনুমতি চেয়েছিল ফেলার কথা বলেছে তারা। ভারত সরকার।

বিস্ফোরক রাখা হয়েছিল বলে বি এস এফের সন্দেহ। বড্ডবস্ত্রের কথা জেনে জাতীয় সড়কে বি এস এফ অনেকগুলি নজরদারি চৌকি বসিয়েছে। বিধানসভায় মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি আজ বলেন, এক জন যাত্রীকেই এখনও পর্যন্ত ইংল্যান্ড থেকে ফোনে ভয় দেখানো হয়েছে বলে তিনি খবর পেয়েছেন। কিন্তু সেই যাত্রী ফোনেই জবাব দিয়েছেন, তাঁর সিদ্ধান্ত বদলাবে না। টিভি-তে আর এক মহিলা বলেছেন, মুজফ্ফরাবাদে মেয়ের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে যাওয়ার পথে মৃত্যু এলেও তিনি পিছপা হবেন না। মানুষের এই সঙ্কল্পকে সাধুবাদ জানিয়ে মুফতি বলেন, নিরাপত্তায় টিলে দেওয়া হচ্ছে না। বাসের ৪০ জনের যাত্রী তালিকা থেকে পাকিস্তান ২৯ জনের নাম চূড়ান্ত করেছে বলেও তিনি জানান। পিটিআই

০২ ১৩ ২০০৫

ANADABAZAR PATEJKA

FORMER PAKISTAN PM IN AJMER FOR THANKSGIVING

Prayer & peace on Benazir lips

ALOKE TIKKU

Ajmer, April 1: Benazir Bhutto, it would appear, wants to upstage Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf but not now and not in India.

She is here to offer thanksgiving prayers at Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti's dargah for husband Asif Ali Zardari's release in November after "eight torturous years" in jail.

She is here also to seek the Sufi saint's blessing for restoration of democracy in Pakistan and for lasting peace with India.

"I have come two weeks before him (the Pakistan President)... If I try to stay, people will say that she wants to stay to upstage Musharraf," said the former Pakistan Prime Minister.

Musharraf is expected in mid-April, on Delhi's invitation, to watch the last India-Pakistan one-day in the ongoing series on April 17.

Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

have since made it clear that cricket and "weather" would not be all they would discuss at their meeting.

Benazir, 52, said she could not have delayed her visit as she wanted Zardari to be with her on her fourth pilgrimage to Ajmer. She had prayed for his release on her two previous visits, the last in November 2003.

On Zardari's return home on April 16, he will be busy upstaging Musharraf on Benazir's behalf. He has promised party workers in Lahore a mass movement for restoration of democracy. Benazir said preparations were on in Lahore to mobilise a massive reception for her husband "that will be attended by one million people".

She, too, will follow but only after evaluating the federal as well as the provincial governments' response to Zardari's activities. Benazir has earlier voiced the suspicion that her husband's "political liberty" might be at risk if she joins

him there. Benazir, now largely based in Dubai, has been in touch with the Musharraf regime but has denied striking a deal.

Islamabad, however, was not the only topic of interest to her at an impromptu interaction with journalists at the dargah. She also spoke about peace, in Pakistan and with India.

"I hope the cricket and bus diplomacy works out well and the confidence building measures increase," Benazir said.

Dressed in a black salwar suit with golden embroidery, she wanted bus services expanded further and roads across the border in Gujarat and Punjab opened. Zardari, she said, wanted the road across Rajasthan opened, too.

So where did democracy fit into all this?

"Now, it depends on an individual, the peace process should be institutionalised... We are demanding elections this year to be able to take the peace process forward," she said.



Benazir and Zardari at the Ajmer dargah. Pictures by Prem Singh

ia on ial es la. er- to ffi- he he he he he as vel ers — sh- ted me ns ere ney be- be- s — K. r to 'ity s is set

Pak denies Omar, Mehbooba ride

Mubashir Zaidi
Islamabad, April 1

PAKISTAN HAS refused to consider a request by leading Jammu and Kashmir politicians to travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on April 7, according to a top-level functionary in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The request had been forwarded by the Indian government on Thursday.

Twelve J&K politicians, including Omar Abdullah (NC) and Mehbooba Mufti (PDP), had wanted to travel on the inaugural bus.

The PoK government objected to the inclusion of these politicians and instead wanted representatives of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to come to PoK. Since the list forwarded to it did not include the name of any APHC leader, the PoK government refused permission.



First LoC crossing

Taking no chances

Centre has asked J&K govt to provide security to 29 passengers who'll take the PoK bus on April 7. Some militant groups have threatened to blow up the bus

Real threat

On Thursday, a Jammu resident scheduled to travel on the April 7 bus received a call from Al Mansoorian terrorists, ordering him and his wife to cancel their programme **P3**

Foreign office spokesman Jalil Abbas Jilani said the lists exchanged by the two sides did not contain the names of J&K leaders. "Subsequently, however, a suggestion about the inclusion of certain political personalities was made," he said. "As we had stated at the time of announcing the bus service, the

main purpose is to reduce the hardship of the Kashmiris who have been longing to re-establish contacts with their loved ones across the LoC. It is, therefore, primarily a humanitarian measure. As it is, some people are trying to make the bus service controversial. We do not want to compound the controversy."

02 APR 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

জঙ্গির তালিকা পাওয়ায় যাত্রী-নিরাপত্তা নিয়ে প্রশ্ন

শ্রীনগর ও মুজফ্ফরাবাদ, ৩১ মার্চ: দুই কান্দীরের মধ্যে বাসযাত্রাকে নিরাপদ করতে বৈঠকে বসেছেন জম্মু-কান্দীরের দীর্ঘস্থায়ী পুলিশকর্তারা। কিন্তু প্রশ্ন উঠেছে অন্য জায়গায়। কীভাবে মুজফ্ফরাবাদগামী বাসের সম্ভাব্য যাত্রীদের নাম চলে গেল জঙ্গিরের হাতে, সেই নিয়ে আজ তোলপাড় কান্দীরের রাজনৈতিক মহল। রাজ্যের প্রধান বিরোধী দল ন্যাশনাল কনফারেন্স থেকে শুরু করে সিপিআই পর্যন্ত সকলেই এই নিয়ে সরব। তাঁদের বক্তব্য, এই গোপন রিপোর্ট ফাঁস হয়ে যাওয়া সরকারি গলদ তো বটেই। তার থেকেও বড় কথা, এর ফলে সম্ভাব্য যাত্রীরা হয়ে পড়বেন জঙ্গিরের আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য।

বাসযাত্রার আগেই তাঁদের প্রাণ সংশয় হতে পারে। এত বড় গলদ কী ভাবে ঘটেছে, তার তদন্তও দাবি করেছেন কেউ কেউ। এর মধ্যে জঙ্গির কান্দীরে তাণ্ডব চালিয়েই যাচ্ছে। খোদ শ্রীনগরেরই কেন্দ্রস্থলে আজ সকাল ১০টায় খানিয়ার থানা লক্ষ্য করে গ্রেনেড ছোড়ে তারা। এই ঘটনায় পাঁচ জন সিআরপিএফ জওয়ান জবম হয়েছেন। পাক সমর্থনপুষ্ট লস্কর-ই-তাইবার ঘনিষ্ঠ জঙ্গি সংগঠন আল-মানসুরিয়ান এই হামলার দায় নিয়েছে। উল্লেখ্য, কাল যে জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীগুলি বাস উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার হুমকি দিয়েছে, সেখানে আছে লস্কর মদন্তপুষ্ট আর এক সংগঠন আল-নাসরিন। আজ ভোরে অন্তর্নাসে

রাজ্যের কৃষিমন্ত্রী আবদুল আজিজ জারগারের পৈত্রিক বাড়িতেও হামলা চলায় জঙ্গিরা। কান্দীরের এই পরিস্থিতিতে সেনাপ্রধান জে জে সিংহকেও পড়তে হয়েছে বাসযাত্রার নিরাপত্তা সংক্রান্ত প্রশ্নের মুখে। নয়াদিল্লিতে সাংবাদিকদের প্রশ্নের জবাবে তিনি অবশ্য বলেছেন, “যাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তা দিতে যা যা প্রয়োজন, আমরা করব।” শ্রীনগর থেকে কামান পোস্ট ১২০ কিলোমিটার। কামান পোস্টের কাছেই নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পার হয়ে পাক অধিকৃত কান্দীরে প্রবেশ করবে বাস। সেই পর্যন্ত বাসযাত্রাকে নিশ্চিত করতে এর মধ্যেই সামরিক হেলিকপ্টারের টহলদারি, গোয়েন্দা কুকুর দিয়ে তন্নাসি-সহ বেশ

কিছু ব্যবস্থা নেবে বলে নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী ঠিকই করে রেখেছে। জঙ্গিরের হুমকিতে নড়চড়ৎ বসেছে সেনাবাহিনী থেকে কান্দীর পুলিশ মহল। সেনাপ্রধান বলেছেন, “শ্রীনগর ও মুজফ্ফরাবাদের মধ্যে বাস পরিষেবা কেনও সাধারণ ঘটনা নয়। এটি ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে প্রধান আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা। সুতরাং বাসযাত্রাকে সফল করতে আমরা কসুর করব না।” আল-নাসরিন বা আল-আরিকিনের মতো জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীগুলিতে ৯০ ভাগ সদস্যই বাসে চাপবেন, তার একটি সম্ভাব্য সমর্থন সত্ত্বেও এই বাসযাত্রায় তারা বাধা হতে চাইছে কেন? জবাবে সেনাপ্রধান বলেন, “ওরা যে কারও

অধীনে নয়, সেটাই প্রমাণ করতে চাইছে।” জঙ্গিরের হুমকির উপরেও যেটা সকলকে ভাবাচ্ছে তা হল, তাদের হাতে সম্ভাব্য যাত্রীদের তালিকা কী ভাবে গেল? ন্যাশনাল কনফারেন্সের নেতা ওমর আবদুল্লা আজ এই প্রশ্ন তুলে বলেছেন, “এটা গোয়েন্দা দফতরের বিবৃতি ব্যর্থতা।” সিপিআইয়ের জম্মু শাখার সম্পাদক কানোয়াল দেব দাবি করেছেন, “কী ভাবে এটা ঘটল, সরকার সেই তদন্ত করুক।” ৭ এপ্রিল করা শ্রীনগর থেকে বাসে চাপবেন, তার একটি সম্ভাব্য তালিকা পাকিস্তানের কাছে ছাড়পত্রের জন্য পাঠানো হয়েছিল। আজ সেই ৪০ জন থেকে চূড়ান্ত ২৯ জনকে বেছে পাকিস্তান তালিকা ফেরত পাঠিয়েছে।

বাসে মোট ৩০ জন যেতে পারবেন। কিন্তু মেহরুবা সইদ বা ওমর আবদুল্লা মতো রাজনৈতিক নেতারা ঐতিহাসিক এই বাসযাত্রায় সঙ্গী হতে পারবেন কি না, তা নিয়ে মুখ খোলেনি মুজফ্ফরাবাদ জেলা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেটের দফতর। এ দিকে দুই কান্দীরের মানুষ কিন্তু যাবতীয় জঙ্গি হুমকিকে তুচ্ছ করে পারিজনদের সঙ্গে সাক্ষাতে উদগ্রীব। মুজফ্ফরাবাদের বাসিন্দা ৬০ বছরের ফতিমা বাট বলেছেন, “ও পারে আমার মেয়ে, নাতি-নাতনিরা রয়েছে। আমি ওখানে যাবই। তাতে যদি মরে যাই, দুঃখ নেই।” শ্রীনগরের নাজির আহমেদ যাবতীয় দোষ জঙ্গিরের যাড়ে চাপিয়ে বলেছেন, “ওরাই আতঙ্কিত করে রেখেছে।” — পি টি আই, রয়টার্স

Goodbye glacier?

Mischievous oversimplification

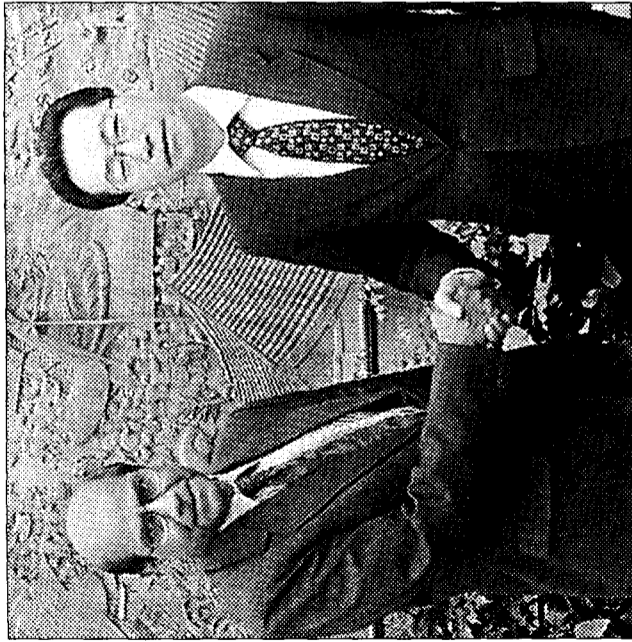
An infection is spreading in Islamabad. In typical Musharraf style, Pakistan's Foreign Minister avers that impediments to a troop withdrawal from the Siachen sector are Indian creations. "It is not coming from us, we are prepared to do it tomorrow. There was already an agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan, let's implement it tomorrow" Khurshid Kasuri says with seeming-sincerity and seeks to address the heart by adding "it's other people's kids dying there". Before analysing the accuracy of his contention it is important to note where he pontificated thus — a television channel, talking to India through the media, a la his boss. And why that particular channel gives the Pak leadership so much air-time raises queries unless it believes that complex problems are resolved through sound-bytes, a belief that Musharraf, and now Kasuri, seem to hold dear to their hearts. At least to the extent of making conciliatory-sounding statements in the run-up to any bilateral meeting, and then blaming India when quick-fix solutions are not accepted. Recall that at the Agra summit Musharraf picked up pen and paper and tried to draft a joint-statement single-handed!

For once our External Affairs Ministry did not fall into the trap. Its refusal to react beyond pointing to Siachen being part of the composite dialogue wrote off Kasuri's offer with the contempt it merited. The Pak minister was only half-correct in talking about a previous agreement — in the mid-90s the defence secretaries had come close to an accord but it was not acceptable to the Indian government at large, and never formalized. Essentially because Pakistan refused to endorse an agreed AGPL (actual ground position line) which must serve as the basis for any troop pull back, total demilitarization is a phased process. Without getting bogged down in the nitty-gritty, and asserting that the armies are wasting money and lives for purposeless prestige in the standoff over Siachen, it has to be stressed that a solution requires homework, trust and detailed documentation. Had there been no haste in drawing the Line of Control after the 1971 War, the Siachen sector, and to an extent the adjoining bit of the Kargil sector, would have been better demarcated. Leaving no scope for disputes like the one over the world's highest battlefield. So while Kasuri may appear generous about a pull-out "tomorrow", sagacity demands that every step down the glacier be in accordance with a comprehensive, certified blueprint. Which cannot be drawn up overnight, and certainly not under the focus of a TV camera. That's where mischief enters the picture.

THE STATESMAN

'Practical action needed for better ties'

Wang - Xinhua
 2/23



Foreign secretary Shyam Saran and Chinese vice-foreign minister Wu Dawei before the 15th round of the joint working group talks on the boundary question in Beijing on Wednesday. PTI

Agencies
 Beijing, March 30

INDIA AND China on Wednesday held a crucial round of talks aimed at finding a "mutually acceptable" solution to the vexed boundary issue, as a senior Chinese official said the two countries should take "practical" actions and seize the upcoming visit by Premier Wen Jiabao to further develop the bilateral partnership.

"The two countries should seize the opportunity to assure the success of Premier Wen's upcoming visit in order to push forward the Sino-Indian constructive partnership of cooperation with practical actions", state councillor Tang Jiaxuan said during a meeting here with foreign secretary Shyam Saran, who is here for the crucial round of India-China border talks.

Tang praised the efforts made by the Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Sino-Indian border issue. The JWG, meeting here for the 15th round, "aims to safeguard peace across the boundary", he said.

Tang said he believed the two countries would find a fair, reasonable and acceptable solution to the boundary question through equal consultation with mutual understanding and accommodation. Tang said better Sino-Indian relations would also contribute more to peace, stability and prosperity in Asia and the world, the official Xinhua news agency reported.

Saran said the Indian government and people were eagerly awaited his visit would be fruitful and further promote ties between the two countries. Earlier, Saran held negotiations with Chinese vice-foreign minister Wu Dawei.

The three-day talks of the Sino-Indian joint working group on the boundary question is scheduled to end on Thursday. Xinhua quoted sources with Chinese foreign ministry as saying. Details on the talks are not available, but sources said the discussions would cover political parameters and guiding principles for the settlement of the India-China boundary question.

INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE

India and China began a new round of talks on Wednesday to work on a solution to their decades-old border dispute

Aksai Chin
 India disputes Chinese rule over 38,000 sq km of barren land Beijing seized from the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1962

Arunachal Pradesh
 China claims 90,000 sq km of territory ruled by India

Source: University of Texas Libraries

REUTERS

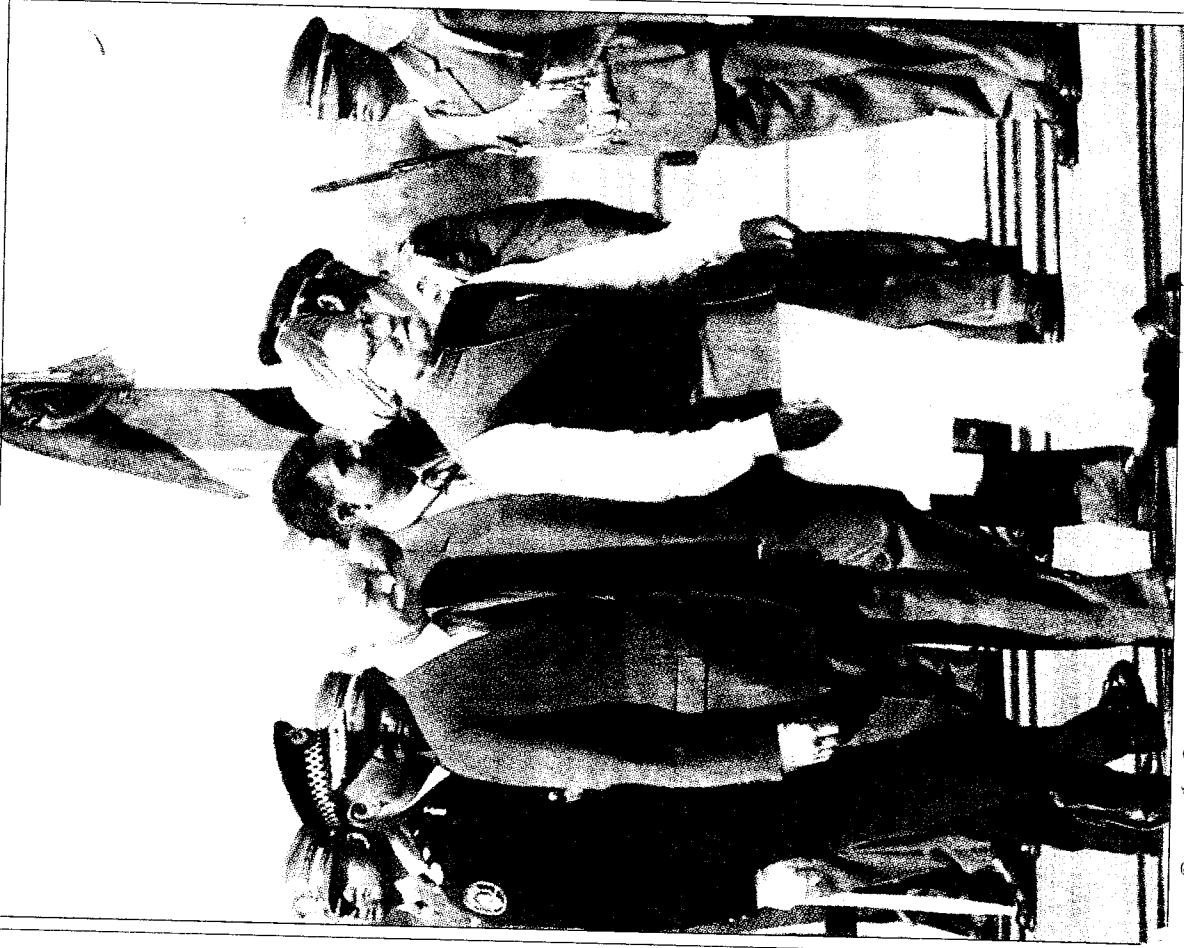
Patil to visit Sikkim

UNION HOME minister Shivraj Patil will be visiting Sikkim on a three-day tour, his first after assuming charge at the Centre, on April 2. Major security concerns, including deployment of Central paramilitary forces in Sikkim are likely to come up for discussion during Patil's interaction with the state government. The home minister will also discuss with the state government preparations for the proposed resumption of border trade with China through Nathula. PTI, Gangtok

The talks would also focus on measures to strengthen the constructive and cooperative partnership between the two countries, taking into account the overall global and strategic perspective of the bilateral relationship, and other issues of mutual interest and concern, Xinhua said.

Tang noted China and India would witness the 55th anniversary of establishing diplomatic ties this

year. The Indian delegation also includes Indian ambassador to China Nalin Surie and joint secretary (East Asia) Ashok Kantha, besides other senior officials of the ministry of external affairs.



‘ধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে গার্ড অফ অনার। বুধবার মরিশাসের পোর্ট লুই বিমানবন্দরে। — পি টি আই

মুশারফ এলে আলোচনা হবে কাশ্মীর নিয়েও

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • পোর্ট লুই (মরিশাস)

৩০ মার্চ: শ্রীনগর থেকে ৭ এপ্রিল বাস যাচ্ছে মুজফ্ফরাবাদে। পারভেজ মুশারফ ১৬ এপ্রিল দিল্লিতে ক্রিকেট ম্যাচ দেখতে আসছেন। দু’দেশের মধ্যে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া চলাচ্ছে।

টিক এমন একটা সময়ে পাকিস্তানকে এফ-১৬ যুদ্ধবিমান দেওয়ার কথা ঘোষণা করেছে আমেরিকা।

ভারতের রাজনীতির পারদও ক্রমশ চড়ছে।

এই পরিস্থিতিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের কি বলা উচিত ছিল যে, এফ-১৬ নিলে তিনি দিল্লিতে মুশারফের সঙ্গে দেখাই করবেন না। অনেক দিন পরে বিশেষ সফরে আসার পথে এমন কাজ তো প্রধানমন্ত্রী করলেনই না, উর্ফে নাটকীয় ভাবে জানিয়ে দিলেন, শুধু ক্রিকেট কুটনীতি কেন, মুশারফের সঙ্গে কাশ্মীর নিয়েও আলোচনা করতে তিনি প্রস্তুত। মনমোহনের কথায়, “দু’জন রাজনীতিক যখন আলোচনা করবেন, তখন তো দেশের আবহাওয়া নিয়ে কথা বলবেন না।”

উত্তেজনাকে উৎসে দেওয়া নয়, তাকে প্রশমিত করাই প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাজ। এমনটাই মনে করেন মনমোহন। তাই তিনি বললেন, অনেক কষ্টে দু’দেশের মধ্যে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে। সেই প্রক্রিয়ায় বিঘ্ন যাতে না ঘটে, সেটাই তিনি দেখতে চান। যেমন একই ভাবে এফ-১৬ নিয়ে আমেরিকার হুমিকা সম্পর্কে ‘অসন্তোষ’ আজ স্পষ্ট জানিয়ে দিলেন। ভারত-মার্কিন সম্পর্কে যে কোনও বিঘ্ন ঘটতে চান না, তা-ও বর্ধিয়ে দিয়েছেন তিনি। বলছেন, ওদের মনে কী আছে, সেটা বুঝতে হবে।

পাকিস্তানকে এফ-১৬ দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্তের কথা জানাতে ক’দিন আগে মনমোহনকে ফোন করেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট জর্জ বৃশ। সে দিনই বৃশকে সরাসরি তার অসন্তোষের কথা জানান প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আবার এ-ও বলেন, মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট নির্বাচনের সময় সমীক্ষা করে দেখা যায় যে, ভারতে কেরির চেয়ে বৃশ বেশি জনপ্রিয়। মনমোহন বৃশকে বলেছিলেন আমেরিকার বাইরে ভারত, তিব্বতিপাক আর পোল্যান্ডে সবচেয়ে বেশি জনপ্রিয় ছিলেন মার্কিন প্রেসিডেন্ট। মনমোহন তাঁকে ভারতে আসার জন্য আমন্ত্রণও জানান।

এফ-১৬ নিয়ে ফুর্কি প্রধানমন্ত্রী ও কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রিসভা। সরব কংগ্রেস। বিরোধিতায় সামিল বিজেপিও। মনমোহনও বৃশকে বলেছিলেন, এফ-১৬ আন্তর্জাতিক সন্ত্রাস রোধের জন্য লাগে না। আমেরিকা এই ব্রহ্মায় ভ্রাতৃত্বকে এফ-১৬ (ফ্যানকন) এবং এফ-১৮ দিতে চাইছে। কিন্তু আমরা কি নিতে প্রস্তুত? কেন্দ্র বুঝতে পারছে, আমেরিকা ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার কথা বললেও আসলে অস্ত্র দৌড়কেই উৎসে দিচ্ছে। আমরা কী করব? মনমোহন বললেন, “ওরা যুদ্ধবিমান নিতে বলছে। কিন্তু আমরা গেল কি না, সেটা জানানোর আগে বোঝা দরকার ওরা আসলে টিক কী দিতে চাইছে।”

বিমানে মনমোহনের পাশে বসেছিলেন জাতীয় নিরাপত্তা উপদেষ্টা এম কে নারায়ণন। তিনি বললেন, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রক বিষয়টি খতিয়ে দেখছে। আগে ওরা বলুক আমেরিকা যা দিতে চাইছে, তা আমাদের দরকার কি না। এ সব নিয়ে কল মন্ত্রিসভার নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক কমিটির বৈঠকও হয়েছে।

আপাতত প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সৌক্ষম চাল হল, কটুরবলীয়া যতই চোখ রাজক তিনি মুশারফের সঙ্গে কাশ্মীর নিয়েও কথা বলবেন। তাঁর মতে, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনার মানেই তো সমাধান সূত্র নিয়ে আলোচনা নয়। মুশারফের ভারত সফর সম্পর্কে আমলাতন্ত্রের একটা বড় অংশের মধ্যে শঙ্কা ছিল। তাঁরা বলছিলেন আগরা স্ট্রোকের মতো পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট আবার ভারতকে ফাঁদে ফেলতে চাইছে। সে সব যুক্তি অগ্রাহ্য করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। কাল মুশারফ-যনিষ্ঠ পাক মুসলিম লিগের প্রেসিডেন্ট শুজাত হুসেনের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেন মনমোহন। প্রাক্তন পাক প্রধানমন্ত্রী শুজাত আজ কথা বলেন, বিরোধী দলনোতা লালকৃষ্ণ আডবালীর সঙ্গে মুশারফের রাজনৈতিক দূত তারিক আজিজের সঙ্গে নারায়ণন হটলাইনে নিয়মিত যোগাযোগ রাখাছেন। তৈরি হচ্ছে মুশারফ-মনমোহন বোঝাপড়ার পথনির্দেশিকা।

শুধু পাকিস্তান নয়, চিনের প্রধানমন্ত্রীর ভারত সফরের আগে দু’দেশের সীমান্ত বিতর্ক নিষ্পত্তির সম্ভাবনা আছে বলেও আজ ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। তিনি বলেন, যৌথ ওয়ার্ল্ডিং গ্রুপ যে খসড়া সমাধান তৈরি করেছে, তার পথ ধরেই দু’দেশ এগোচ্ছে। আজ বেজিং ভারতের বিদেশসচিব শ্যাং সাংরানের সঙ্গে চিনের উপ-বিদেশমন্ত্রী উ দাওয়েইয়ের সীমান্ত-সমস্যা প্রসঙ্গে বৈঠক হয়েছে।

আমেরিকা, চিন ও পাকিস্তান— তিন দেশের সঙ্গে সম্পর্কের ক্ষেত্রে ভারত যে সর্কীরতার গণ্ডী ছাড়তে চায়, আজ সেটাই বোধগত হয়েছে প্রধানমন্ত্রী।

উড়িয়ে দেব প্রথম বাসটাই বলল জঙ্গির

সাঁফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৩০ মার্চ: বাসযাত্রা নিয়ে দুই কাশ্মীরে উচ্ছ্বাস যখন তুঙ্গে, তখনই প্রথম বাসটি উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার হুমকি দিল জঙ্গির।

যে চারটি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী একত্রিত হয়ে শ্রীনগরের একটি সংবাদপত্র দফতরে এই হুমকি দিয়ে বিবৃতি পাঠিয়েছে, সেই দলে রয়েছে লঙ্কর-ই-তইবার সহযোগী আল-নাসরিনও। বিবৃতিতে তারা বলেছে, ৭ এপ্রিল শ্রীনগর থেকে প্রথম যে বাসটি পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের রাজধানী মুজফ্ফরাবাদে যাচ্ছে, সেটি একটি ‘কবিন’ হাড়া কিছুই নয়। যাত্রাপথেই তারা বাসটির উপরে হামলা চালাবে। তাই কোনও কাশ্মীরি যেন বাসটিতে না চাপেন। উঠলেই প্রাণ সংশয়। যাত্রীদের নামের তালিকাও আগাম হাতে পেয়ে গিয়েছে বলে তারা দাবি করেছে।

কাশ্মীরে বিএসএফ ইতিমধ্যে টহলদারি বাড়িয়েছে। জঙ্গিদের এই হুমকিকে একেবারে উড়িয়ে দিতে চাইছে না দিল্লিও। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী খেচে স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী সকলেই বলছেন, শান্তির এই সুযোগ হারাতে তারা নারাজ তারা। তাই সম্ভাব্য সব নকম বিপদের কথা মাথায় রেখেই সতর্কতা নেওয়া হচ্ছে। নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা নিয়ে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রক, কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক ও কাশ্মীর সরকারের মধ্যে একাধিক বৈঠক হয়েছে। একটি গাইডলাইন বা নির্দেশিকাও তৈরি করা হয়েছে। নির্দেশিকাতে থাকছে নিশ্চিত নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা। কয়েকদিন আগেই কাজে নামবে পুলিশ কুকুর। থাকবে ‘কুকু’ রিঅ্যাকশন টিমও।

প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রবল মুখেপাওয়া বললেন, “ওরা যে চুপ করে বসে থাকবে না এটা সবাই জানে। সে কথা মাথায় রেখেই যাত্রীয় সতর্কতা নেওয়া হচ্ছে।” তবুও আশঙ্কা কি থেকেই যাবে না? প্রবলবাবুর বক্তব্য, “আশঙ্কা থাকবে না সে কথা এখনই বল কী করে? তবে এটুকু বলতে পারি নিরাপত্তা নিশ্চিত করতে জম্মু-কাশ্মীর সরকারের সঙ্গে হাতে হাতে মিলিয়ে কেন্দ্রীয় নিরাপত্তা বাহিনী কাজ করে যাচ্ছে।” কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল বলেছেন, “বাসযাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তা যাতে কোনও বাঘাত না হয় তার ব্যবস্থা করা হচ্ছে। আমরা সব কিছু করাছি শান্তির জন্যই। তাই কোনও অবস্থাতেই হাল ছেড়ে দেওয়া হবে না।”

নেনাওয়ালীর সদর দফতরের দেওয়ালে ভারত-পাক সীমান্তের একটি মানচিত্র টাঙানো। বাসের যাত্রাপথ সবুজ টেপ দিয়ে চিহ্নিত করে দেখানো হয়েছে পাটান, সোপোর, বারামুলা, উরির মতো জায়গাগুলিকে। দায়িত্বপ্রাপ্ত এক নীর্থ পর্যায়ের অফিসার জানানলেন, নিরাপত্তা-পরিকল্পনা শেষ। যে সব ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হচ্ছে তার একটি রূপরেখাও তিনি দিলেন।

টিক হয়েছে, প্রথমত, বাসের মাথার উপরে টহল দেবে একটি সামরিক হেলিকপ্টার। সশস্ত্র ফৌজি নিয়ে বাসের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সেক্সেই এগোবে সেটি। দ্বিতীয়ত, শ্রীনগর থেকে উরি পর্যন্ত প্রায় ১১০ কিলোমিটার রাস্তায় যাতে বিনা অনুমতিতে কেউ সে দিন চুকতে পারবে না। দু’দিন দিন আগে থেকেই স্রিকার-ডগ দিয়ে পরীক্ষা করা হবে গোটা রাস্তা। ল্যাড-মাইন খুঁজে বের করতেও ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। তৃতীয়ত, কৃষক রিঅ্যাকশন টিম এবং পুলিশ কুকুর হাড়াও প্রতি ২ কিলোমিটার অন্তর সেনা, সি আর পি এফ এবং স্থানীয় পুলিশ শোভাযাত্রা থাকবে। মেডিক্যাল ভ্যানও থাকবে। সার্কেলপি: পুলিশ এবং সি আর পি এফ-এর পক্ষ থেকে স্থানীয় গ্রামবাসীদের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত সংযোগ রাখা হচ্ছে।

জঙ্গিরা এত নিরাপত্তা ঘেরা মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাসযাত্রাকে ‘ভারতের যত্নস্ব’ বলেই উল্লেখ করেছে তাদের বিবৃতিতে। তারা বলেছে, “কাশ্মীরিদের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রাম ভেঙে দেওয়ার ছক কষেছে ভারত। শুধু এই বাস দিয়েই কাশ্মীরিদের সন্তুষ্ট রাখতে চায় তারা। ভারত আসলে কাশ্মীরকে পাকপাকি ভাবে নিজেদের কজায় রাখতে চায়। তাই এই যত্নস্ব।” বাসযাত্রার প্রতিবাদে ৭ এপ্রিল ধর্মঘট ডাকতে কাশ্মীরিদের কাছে অর্জি জানিয়েছে তারা।

লঙ্কর ঘনিষ্ঠ আল-নাসরিনের বাস উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার হুমকির তাৎপর্য অনেকটাই। লঙ্কর পাকিস্তানের সমর্থনপূর্ণ জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী। তাদের সহযোগীরা এমন একটি উদ্যোগে নাশকতার হুমকি দিচ্ছে, যার সঙ্গে পাকিস্তান সব দিক থেকেই গভীর ভাবেই জড়িত। বস্তুত, দুই দেশের চেঁচাতেই পাঁচ দশকে প্রথমবার কাশ্মীরের দুই প্রান্তের বাসিন্দাদের পুনর্মিলনের সুযোগ দেখা দিয়েছে। কাশ্মীর-বরফ গলাতে এটি বড় পদক্ষেপ বলেও মনে করছেন অনেকে। আন্তর্জাতিক কূটনীতিকদের কাছে এই বাসযাত্রার গুরুত্ব তাই যথেষ্ট। এই সময় আল-নাসরিন হুমকি দেওয়ায় অস্থিভে পড়তে পারে পাকিস্তানও।

হুমকির বিবৃতিতে আল-নাসরিন হাড়াও রয়েছে আল-জারিফিন, এর পর সাতের পাতায়

বলল জঙ্গিরা

প্রথম পাজার পর

ফরজাদান-ই-মিল্লাত ও 'সেভ কাশ্মীর মুভমেন্ট'-এর নাম। তবে এদের মধ্যে আল-নাসরিনের আঘাত করার ক্ষমতা বেশি। লঙ্করের সঙ্গে তাদের গোপন যোগাযোগই এর প্রধান কারণ।

কাশ্মীরে সম্প্রতি আল-নাসরিন ধীরে ধীরে তাদের নাশকতামূলক কাজ বাড়াতে শুরু করেছে। তাই কিছু দিন আগেও স্বল্প পরিচিত আল-নাসরিন ক্রমে প্রশাসনের উদ্বেগের কারণ হয়ে গিয়েছে। এমনকী, নভেম্বরে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সইদের বাড়িতে হামলা চালিয়েছে তারা। রাজ্যের প্রামোদয়ন মন্ত্রী পিরজাদা মহম্মদ সইদও অল্পের জন্য প্রাণে বেঁচেছেন জঙ্গিদের হামলা থেকে। কোকেরনাগে নিজের নির্বাচনী কেন্দ্রে যাচ্ছিলেন তিনি। সে সময় তাঁর কনভয় লক্ষ করে গুলি করে তারা।

প্রতি ঘটনার পর আল-নাসরিনের পক্ষে সংবাদপত্র দফতরে ফোন করে জানিয়েছে, এ কাজ তাদেরই। এ বারও তিন জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে তারাই মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার ছমকি দিয়েছে ও বিবৃতি পাঠিয়েছে সংবাদপত্র দফতরে।

যদিও তাদের এই ছমকিতে বিরক্ত কাশ্মীরের মানুষ। তারা বলছে, এত দিন পর বিচ্ছিন্ন পরিজনদের সঙ্গে মিলনের সুযোগ দেখা দিয়েছে। এখন এই ধরনের ছমকি দেওয়া ঠিক নয়। তারাও নিরুদ্বেগ বাসযাত্রারই পক্ষে। এই নিয়ে উৎসাহ এতটা যে, প্রথম যাত্রায় সাধারণ মানুষের সঙ্গী হতে আবেদনপত্র জমা দিয়েছেন মেহবুবা সঈদ, ওমর আবদুল্লা এবং রাজ্যের উপ-মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মঙ্গতরাম শর্মা। জঙ্গি ছমকির পরে এ বার তাঁদের আবেদন যদি গ্রাহ্য হয়, তবে বাসযাত্রা ঘিরে নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থা আরও কঠোর হবে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। ও পার কাশ্মীরে অভিযোগ উঠেছে, প্রশাসনিক কর্তারা নাম বাছাই করার ক্ষেত্রে স্বজনপোষণ করছেন। যাঁদের প্রয়োজন, তাঁদের বাদ দিয়ে নাম উঠছে কর্তাদের পরিজনদের।

31 MAR 2005

Militants warn against travelling on bus

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MARCH 30. Four militant organisations today urged the people not to board the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus. They also assailed the Pakistan Government for going ahead with the bus diplomacy.

In a joint statement faxed to newspaper offices here, the pro-Pakistan Al-Nasireen (The Helpers), Save Kashmir Movement, Al-Arifeen (The Pious) and Farzandan-e-Millat (Sons of the Community) said that an extraordinary meeting of the "supreme commanders" of all the four outfits was held in Srinagar to discuss the proposed bus service.

"They agreed that the bus service was in no way in the interest of [the] ongoing jihad in Kashmir," the statement said. "It was a deep conspiracy by [the] Indian Government and is a lethal weapon to cause damage to the very foundation of [the] freedom struggle."

The first two groups are the major militant movements responsible for a number of *fit-dayeen* (suicide) attacks in Kashmir, but the others are little known. "This is friendly advice to passengers that they should not board this coffin to Muzaffarabad," the statement signed by the commanders of the organisations said. It also carried a list of 40 prospective passengers who will travel during the inaugural ride on April 7.

Acknowledging Pakistan's role in "helping Kashmiris in their genuine struggle," the



Major Vikram Sankhla handing over the list of prospective passengers of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service to the Deputy Commissioner of Muzaffarabad, Liaqat Ali, at Kaman Post, the last point of the Line of Control in the Indian side on Wednesday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

statement criticised the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf for supporting the bus diplomacy thus "helping India to fulfill its desire."

It also termed the stand taken by the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, on the bus service as "pro-Indian" but complimented Syed Ali Geelani, head of the Hurriyat's rival faction, for taking a "truthful, just and genuine stand against the bus service."

"But we appeal [to] Mr. Geelani not to issue any statement which causes damage to [the] ideology of accession to Pakistan in Kashmir," the commanders said.

Musharraf visit

977
886
2913
Watch out for googlies!

Only the very naïve will believe that when General Musharraf visits Delhi to watch a cricket match, his scheduled confabulations with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be confined to the captaincy skills of Inzamam ul Haq and Sourav Ganguly. It is known that the general believes in jumping over intermediate levels and talking directly to the Indian leadership. This approach may have advantages, as it can jump-start negotiations mired in a bureaucratic process. But the dangers are greater, as the failed Agra summit in 2001 showed.

The danger is clear. Since Musharraf says that the “core dispute” must be resolved before there can be progress, he will have to, at some point, divulge the prescription he has for such a resolution. This will, in all likelihood, be a version of the Owen-Dixon plan, or the “Chenab” formula, or some such scheme that would involve a significant redrawing of boundaries. Mapmaking, of course, is anathema to the Indian side, and such proposals are dead in the water. But disagreement at top levels would amount to a loss of face for the party making the proposal. This could have negative repercussions for the peace process itself — something like this is precisely what happened at Agra.

It may have been much better to have issues thrashed out at intermediate levels, with political direction from the top, after which leaders could have met for a formal ratification. But Delhi could not very well refuse after Musharraf made his intentions known. What it can do is downplay the import of the visit by keeping up the cricket fig leaf, to suggest this is an informal meeting between leaders, instead of a formal summit. Agra was marked by complacency and lack of preparation on the Indian side. Delhi has to keep its guard up and look out for googlies bowled by the redoubtable general. A repeat of Agra must be avoided, and Delhi should be able to present a wish list to Musharraf instead of having him monopolize proceedings.

It is commendable that the general sent many members of his family ahead of him, and took a certain risk by allowing the opening up of old memories. But he is an ex-commando who takes calculated risks, and South Block must not turn mushy at his new-found cricket diplomacy, pun fully intended. At the risk of sounding contradictory, it must also be ready to lend an ear to what the general has in mind these days. A lot has happened since Agra, the chief developments being that terror is not a “normal” tool of international diplomacy any more, and Musharraf himself has been a target of terror. He may be thinking differently on certain issues and Delhi would not be wise to exclude the possibility. What it can count on is that Musharraf is under pressure at home, far more than when he came to Agra, and has to show some success from his Indian visit.

THE STATESMAN

29 MAR 2005

'CLOSE TIES POSSIBLE, NOT REUNIFICATION'

Kargil is past, let us talk Kashmir: Pervez

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, March 27. — India and Pakistan should adopt a “positive” attitude towards the Kargil war and resolve the Kashmir issue to prevent repetition of Kargil-type incidents, President General Pervez Musharraf has said.

In a detailed reply to an e-mail query sent by an Indian to his presidential website seeking his views on the reunification of India and Pakistan, as well as his “silence” on Kargil war, Gen. Musharraf said that reunification was not possible but the two countries could establish close ties if the Kashmir issue was resolved. “Reunification is not possible. Pakistan was created as a separate homeland based on the demand of the Muslims of the sub-continent.”

Denying that he was shy of speaking about Kargil, Gen. Musharraf said: “I do not want to enter into a debate on who won and who lost. Neither your people will accept (this) nor ours, we will end up debating it.”

Claiming that India had “misquoted” its casualty figures, which according to him were “very high,”

Gen. Musharraf said the reports in media spoke of several “prob-

Nuke shopping in the USA

WASHINGTON, March 27. — A Pakistani businessman has been barred from doing business with US companies after federal investigators found that he had improperly bought hi-tech components here that could be used in nuclear weapons. Humayun Khan, who has close ties with Pakistan's military, violated export regulations by trying to route US-made oscilloscopes and switches to Pakistan via South Africa, circumventing federal nuclear non-proliferation regulations, a report said. The exports came to light last year after the arrest of one Asher Karni, an Israeli living in South Africa, in Denver, the *New York Times* reported. However, it was only on 31 January that the US commerce department prohibited the involvement of Khan and his company, Pakland PME Corporation, in any export from the USA for 180 days. Export of hi-tech devices to Pakistan requires clearance from the US commerce department. The order said Khan was also involved in unauthorised US exports to a military supplier, Al-Technique Corporation of Pakistan, a company on a federal non-proliferation watch list. Khan could not be reached for comment yesterday, but in an interview with the *Times* last year about the Karni case, he denied taking part in any smuggling of US technology to Pakistan. He said his company made deliveries mostly to colleges and high school chemistry laboratories, but he also occasionally bought equipment for Pakistan's military. — PTI

lems” faced by the Indian Army during the Kargil conflict.

Gen. Musharraf said the two countries should see the Kargil conflict in its entirety. “I would like to say, you must never see Kargil alone. See Kargil in the entire complexity of the dispute of Kashmir in Kashmir. We had three wars,” he said, claiming Kargil was the result of several “intrusions” by India after

the Shimla Accord.

“Let us take an optimistic and positive attitude towards it (Kargil). Stop discussing who won and who lost. What is the future? Resolve disputes so that Siachen, Kargil, Marpora and Chorbatala do not happen again. Let us resolve the dispute of Kashmir. Then I am sure it will not happen again,” he said.

Pranab denies arms race: page 4

THE STATESMAN

28 MAR 2005

Glacial peace

India should agree to the demilitarisation of Siachen

India
Pakistan

PAKISTAN has reiterated its readiness to withdraw its troops from the Siachen Glacier. India should rapidly capitalise on this offer and agree to the demilitarisation of Siachen. India has been procrastinating on implementing an agreement between the countries on this matter. It has been reluctant to implement a withdrawal that does not recognise and authenticate the Actual Ground Position Line. But India's reservations on this score are overstated. If we are serious about resolving issues between India and Pakistan, then there is no better issue than Siachen. No populations are involved. Neither side has anything to gain in this arid glaciated terrain. The cost in human lives and resources to both sides is out of proportion with the importance of the territory. There is no tactical or strategic purpose being served that could not be achieved by other means. And if there are any violations of the agreement, India reserves the right to defend itself. On Siachen, the ball is firmly in India's court.

There is also a political reason for taking Pakistan's offer seriously. General Musharraf, with his usual political shrewdness, is putting greater pressure on the peace process. Confidence Building Measures alone cannot sustain the process for too long. There has to be some progress on a concrete issue that divides the two countries. It is unlikely

20-8
20/3

that in the near future either India or Pakistan will radically change their stated positions on Kashmir. It is, therefore, even more important to demonstrate that we can make progress on at least some of the minor contentious issues. If the hardened lines on Siachen cannot melt, it is unlikely that the peace process will achieve enduring results elsewhere. India also has to recognise that it will, at some point, have to offer Pakistan something tangible. The difficulty with the peace process is this: what would India be willing to concede that would not compromise its core interests and position, yet at the same time be significant enough to convince the Pakistanis that they have got something out of the talks? This question is extraordinarily difficult to answer, because both sides have little room for manoeuvre at the moment. But a successfully implemented agreement on Siachen will at least be the first step in assuring both sides that they are at least capable of keeping any promises they make.

Withdrawal from Siachen will not resolve the issues between the two sides. But a failure to make progress on the issue will almost certainly ensure that there is no further progress. To ensure that there is no possible political fallout from this withdrawal, all political parties can evolve a consensus. But the glacier of blood can now be converted into the glacier of peace.

মুশারফকে ক্রিকেটেই বেঁধে রাখতে চায় দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ মার্চ: নিজেদের সংবাদমাধ্যমে প্রথমে বলেছিলেন, ক্রিকেট দেখতে আসাই তাঁর এক মাত্র লক্ষ্য। অন্য কোথাও নয়, দিল্লিতেই যাঁতে তাঁর সেই সফর নির্দিষ্ট হয়, সেই কূটনৈতিক প্রয়াসও তিনি অব্যাহত রেখেছিলেন।

এখন সেই সফরের দিন যত ঘনিজে আসছে, পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের স্বর ততোই কাশ্মীর-কেন্দ্রিক হয়ে পড়ছে।

এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে নয়াদিল্লিরও জ্র কুণ্ঠিত হচ্ছে। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কার্যালয় সূত্রের খবর, কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনার মতো পরিস্থিতি যাতে তৈরি না-হয়, তা নিশ্চিত করতে সব রকমের সতর্কতা বজায় রাখছে ভারত। এবং মুশারফের সফরের ফলে আসন্ন শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস সংযোগের মতো আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার গুরুত্ব যাতে না-কমে, তারও সচেতন চেষ্টা শুরু হয়েছে। স্থির হয়েছে, বাস যাত্রাকে

সর্বোচ্চ গুরুত্ব দিতে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং ইউপিএ চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গাঁধী দু'জনেই তাতে সামিল হবেন। বাস যাত্রার সূচনায় মনমোহনের সঙ্গে থাকবেন সনিয়া, তার পরে দু'জনেই শ্রীনগরে জনসভা করবেন।

এ দিকে, মুশারফের সফর ঘিরে কূটনীতিতে নতুন মাত্রা এনে দিয়েছে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরির মন্তব্য। তাঁর কথায়, পাকিস্তান সিয়াচেন থেকে সেনা সরাতে প্রস্তুত। একটি বেসরকারি চ্যানেলকে কাসুরি বলেছেন, সিয়াচেনের অসহনীয় আবহাওয়ায় অহেতুক লোক মারা যাচ্ছে। ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের সরকারের মধ্যে এ নিয়ে চুক্তি হয়ে রয়েছে, চাইলে কালই পাকিস্তান তা বাস্তবায়িত করতে রাজি। ভারত অবশ্য কাসুরির এই বক্তব্যকে আমল না-দিয়ে বলেছে, সিয়াচেনে পাক সেনার উপস্থিতি নিয়ে ইসলামাবাদকে আগে

সত্য কবুল করতে হবে।

মুশারফ দিল্লি আসুন, গোড়াতেই এই বিষয়টি নিয়ে মতৈক্য হয়নি সরকারের মধ্যে। সরকারের একটি অংশের আশঙ্কা ছিল, মুশারফ ভারতে এলে তাঁর বিচরণ শুধু ক্রিকেটেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকবে না। আগরা শীর্ষ সম্মেলনের মতো উত্তপ্ত একটি পরিমণ্ডল তৈরি হবে। বিভিন্ন আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা এবং ভারত-পাক শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া চলাকালীন যা একান্তই আবঞ্জনীয়। তাই অনেক টালবাহানার শেষে তাঁকে আমন্ত্রণ জানানোর পরে তড়িঘড়ি প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সচিবালয়ের কর্তা জানিয়ে দেন, এই সফর দ্বিপাক্ষিক কোনও বিষয় নিয়ে নয়। নেহাতই ক্রিকেটীয়। কাশ্মীর-সহ কোনও রকম দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয় নিয়েই আলোচনা হবে না। প্রধানমন্ত্রী পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের সম্মানে যে ভোজ দেবেন, তা একান্তই অকূটনৈতিক।

কিন্তু সাউথ ব্লক ক্রমেই টের

পাচ্ছে, পাকিস্তানের রাষ্ট্রপ্রধান আসবেন আর সচিন-ইনজামাম নিয়ে কথা বলে চলে যাবেন, এমনটা হওয়ার নয়। বিশেষত, মুশারফ যখন ইসলামাবাদে বসে বলছেন, “শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস সংযোগের বিষয়টি অবশ্যই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থাও চলতে থাকুক। কিন্তু সত্যিকারের সমস্যাগুলি না-ছোঁওয়া হলে শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া অর্থহীন।”

প্রাক্তন উপ-প্রধানমন্ত্রী, পাক-বিরোধী কটর নেতা হিসাবে পরিচিত লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণীর সঙ্গে মুশারফের দেখা করতে চাওয়ার বিষয়টিকেও নজরে রেখেছে বিদেশ মন্ত্রক। আডবাণী নিজেও তাঁর প্রস্তাবিত পাক সফর পিছিয়ে দিয়েছেন, দিল্লিতেই মুশারফের সঙ্গে দেখা করার জন্য। কূটনৈতিক শিবিরের মত, এক সময়ের প্রবল প্রতিপক্ষের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে ভারত সরকারের উপরে চাপ কিছুটা বাড়িয়ে নিতে চাইছেন মুশারফ।

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA 25 MAR 2005

Pak willing, India mum: Kasuri on Siachen

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 24. — Pakistan has claimed it wants to pull out of the world's highest battlefield, the Siachen Glacier, but India has refused to comment on the declaration. In an interview with NDTV, the Pakistan foreign minister, Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, said Pakistan was willing to pull out of the glacier. He said Pakistan was always ready to pull out from the area based on earlier agreement between the two neighbours.

The resistance was not coming from Pakistan. "It is not coming from us, we are prepared to do it tomorrow. There was already an agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan, let's implement it tomorrow," he said.

MEA spokesperson Mr Navtej Sarna said Siachen was an issue in the composite dialogue, which is under discussion between the defence secretaries of the two sides. "As you know, the first round of the composite dialogue has already been held. So, I would refrain from any other comment," he added.

'Bus important CBM'

NEW DELHI, March 24. — Terming the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link as a "very important confidence building measure (CBM)", India today hoped "intended purpose" would be served through the launch of the service on 7 April.

The service will be flagged off by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Mrs Sonia Gandhi in Srinagar. "It is a very important CBM," External Affairs Ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna told reporters about the launch of the much-awaited bus service. — PTI

Mr Kasuri said in the interview that the continuing military presence at Siachen "shows a degree of callousness on the part of the leadership". "You know it's other people's kids who are dying there. We have shown concerns, we are prepared for that," said the Pakistani foreign minister. He described the action of President Gen. Pervez Musharraf to start the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service — "the second most important CBM since we started talking — as "courageous". "It is important because once Kashmiris start

meeting and exchanging stories, they will start thinking about a possible solution to the Kashmir issue," said Mr Kasuri.

India pointed out that the bus service between the two divided parts of Kashmir had been proposed as far back as October 2002. "We are certainly hopeful that it will serve the purpose that it is intended to," said the official spokesperson.

Currently, there are two problems in Siachen. The Line of Control ends abruptly at Point 9842 and two countries cannot agree on which way the line

should go — north or north-east.

Besides, there is the issue of lack of trust. India holds the commanding heights and there is always a fear that once both sides move out of the glacier, Pakistani troops will return and take over the positions Indian soldiers held. This would put them at a tactical advantage. Secondly, the road-heads to the Pakistan army positions in the glacier are much closer. This means that even after a pull-out, it will be much easier for the Pakistanis to occupy their places if there is a requirement.

40 10 11/12

A NEW BONHOMIE

g... ✓

THE RELATIONS BETWEEN India and Pakistan are currently marked by a new and welcome state of bonhomie. A few thousand visitors have crossed the Wagah border to watch the ongoing Test series. Many of them have been invited to stay with Indian families. The Pakistan President's mother, son, and brother had lunch at Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's house during a short break from a leisurely tour of the places where members of the Musharraf family had lived and studied before Partition. President Pervez Musharraf will soon come to Delhi to watch a One Day International and he and Dr. Singh are expected to discuss serious issues even as they try to control emotions set off by the performances of their favourite teams. Political leaders of the federal units adjoining the international border, especially the Chief Ministers of the two Punjabs, Amarinder Singh and Pervez Elahi, have done much to boost the spirit of *detente*. Chief Ministers Singh and Elahi appear to be chafing at the bit as they try to prod their Central Governments swiftly to bring down the barriers to trade and investment. A late March visit to India by a Pakistani delegation of industrialists led by Shujaat Hussain, a major figure in the political and economic life of his country, will be watched with much interest.

That India and Pakistan are sincere in their intent to normalise bilateral relations is brought out by the manner in which they have dealt with ordinary working people who fell into the fissures caused by the longstanding hostility. Most of the over 500 Indians released recently from Pakistani jails are fisherfolk who strayed into Pakistan's territorial waters in pursuit of their

livelihood. It is commendable that Islamabad has recognised that they deserve humane treatment. As a part of the composite dialogue, the two Governments are exploring ways to deal with such transgressions. This is the appropriate time for the two neighbours to put in place arrangements similar to those recently instituted between India and Sri Lanka. Captain Singh must also be given credit for effectively taking up the issue of another category of vulnerable folk who violated Pakistani immigration laws as they sought to reach the West in their quest for livelihood. Many of them, duped by unscrupulous agents, ended up in Pakistani prisons. About 30 persons in this category were released recently and, hopefully, the rest will also return home soon.

As President Musharraf reminded an international audience during his Pakistan Day address on March 23, the contentious issues have not lost their salience even though confidence-building measures have been undertaken on a regular basis. While there can be no argument about the substance of this assertion, it is impossible to ignore the change in attitude that has left the people of the two countries feeling positive towards each other. India and Pakistan will move towards a resolution of the disputes between them only if they approach the issues with minds uncluttered by an unnecessary and corrosive hostility. Meanwhile, India's vast cricket-loving public will warmly congratulate Pakistan's champion cricketer and captain, Inzamam-ul-Haq, on the occasion of his 100th Test at Bangalore today. And may the team that plays better win or square the three-Test series.



GATEWAY TO FREEDOM: Indians released by Pakistan from its jails wait to cross the Wagah border and enter their homeland on Tuesday. Over 560 prisoners were received by Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh. — AFP (Report on Page 11)

Willing to discuss any issue with Musharraf, says Natwar Singh

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 22. India has stated that it was willing to discuss any issue the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, may want to discuss during his visit to New Delhi next month and asserted that there has been a distinct improvement in relations between the two neighbours in the recent past.

"Mr. Musharraf is arriving here on April 16 to witness the cricket match on April 17. Besides cricket, we would talk on any issue if he wished to. We would talk to his military, to him ... and I think the whole House wishes that relations between the two countries become strong," the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, told the Lok Sabha.

Trade ties

Responding to a discussion on the statement by the External Affairs Minister on his visits to neighbouring nations in the House, Mr. Natwar Singh said: "I do not want to get carried away. Just imagine that if there

were an Indo-Pak cricket team, we could defeat all other countries together".

He further said that if trade between the two nations went up, so would the standard of living and then entire SAARC would look different.

He said if Pakistan allowed trade to go through its territory, India could go up to Central Asia. The Minister also pointed out that the India-Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project was a case in point.

The Minister also assured that there was no room for apprehensions on the travel formalities on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus route. He said travel to Jammu and Kashmir and within the State by persons across the Line of Control would be on the basis of a document stamped by the Government of India and would not involve accepting or recognising any document issued by the other side.

Train link

He said the work on the Muzaffarabad-Khokrapar railway line

was progressing and it could become operational by October 2. As regards, Nankana Sahib-Amritsar bus service, he said if things proceed without a hitch, it could start running by Baisakhi.

But Mr. Natwar Singh emphasised that he was aware that Indo-Pak relations were accident-prone and so there was a need to be careful and cautious.

"At no stage, have we stopped telling them that the real success of composite dialogue will be when terrorism is stopped because the structure for terrorism still continues there".

Besides Pakistan, the Minister also elaborated on New Delhi's stand in regard to Nepal. He said New Delhi has conveyed to the King that he should restart the process for democracy in Nepal, as soon as possible, and it required the release of all political leaders.

On the question of military aid to Nepal, he said, the matter was under constant review. He also gave an overview of developments in Afghanistan.

568 Indian prisoners taste freedom

SNS & PTI

CHANDIGARH, March 22. — Five hundred and sixty-eight Indian prisoners walked to freedom to India today, days after Gen. Pervez Musharraf promised their release in an effort to strengthen relations with New Delhi. The prisoners had been released from a Karachi jail on Sunday but could not cross the Wagah border yesterday due to bad weather. They were received by, among others, Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh, at the border. The prisoners are mostly fishermen who had been arrested for reportedly entering Pakistan illegally.

The two countries arrest each other's fishermen on a regular basis, a practice the latter say is "inhuman". Of the 568, 529 are fishermen and 39 civilians.

Lakshman Shanker, a 60-year-old fisherman, said: "It was a bad experience. I saw jail for the first time." He said they did not intentionally cross into Pakistan.

THE STATESMAN

23 MAR 2005

Obsolete mindset

Affects India's stature

That political leaders are prisoners of an obsolete mindset is evident from the fuss New Delhi is making over sale of 25 US-made F-16 fighters to Pakistan. It is significant that the Indian Air Force sees no great threat since the PAF acquired an initial batch of those combat jets, we have our MiG-29, Mirage-2000 and the Sukhoi-30. The latest version of the French plane is preferred choice — over even F-16 — as we set about boosting air assets with another 126 frontline units. So in terms of both technology and numbers, 25 F-16s for Pakistan amounts to little more than a pinprick to professionals. Our ministers seem to be illiterate in these matters, without recognising that Pakistan also has military requirements, they fly off the handle and suggest that both Indo-US and Indo-Pak relations would be hostage to a couple of F-16 squadrons in the PAF livery.

India has always raised objection to being equated with Pakistan, irked by attempts to portray a triangular relationship with a major power. Yet in asserting that sales to Pakistan would cloud bilateral relations, our leaders are undermining the role India plays in international affairs, this last decade. Frozen in the cold war era, their thinking sells India short. If a few months ago we took a small step toward forcing ourselves into the big league by insisting we would handle the situation created by the Boxing Day tsunami, in crying foul over the F-16s when Condoleezza Rice came calling we took a giant leap backwards. Back to a situation in which the Pakistan factor assumes exaggerated importance. Natwar and Pranab need a refresher course in something, for which both profess no little mastery. Rather than whine at a political/ diplomatic level the Indian leadership ought to use economic muscle to make its point. Military purchases can ensure effective leverage. Did we not make it clear to the French that we would not buy their Scorpene submarines if they continued to supply Pakistan with Augustas? Maybe we could do with something similar with Lockheed Martin, keen to sell the Orion and the Hercules. It is also anxious to put the F-16 on the table, but most professionals would suffer no heartburn if the PAF feasts on 25 of them.

Large screens to bring bus ride live to Srinagar

HT Correspondent
Jammu, March 20

SRINAGAR'S MILLION residents are looking forward to a visual treat on April 7 when projection screens across the summer capital will telecast, live, the flagging-off ceremony of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

The screens are coming up at Lal Chowk, Khaniyar, Barzulla, Chhanpora, Batmaloo, Jawahar Nagar, Lalbaazar and various other places in Srinagar for the locals to witness the historic moment when the bus leaves the starting gate around 10 a.m.

Backed with uninterrupted power supply, the projection screens will bring to life images of the international event exclusively for the people of Srinagar.

The civil administration, no doubt, intends to inject a dose of festivity onto the streets of Srinagar. "We wished to have it across the Valley, but connectivity is a big problem, which we cannot overcome in such a short time", an official told *Hindustan Times*.

The rest of the Valley, as also the world, will see the big event on small screens. Doordarshan is making arrangements to telecast it live.

Meanwhile, chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed will move a resolution in the Assembly early next week welcoming the bus service as an epoch-making event in the history of South Asia.

Pak to send list today

PAKISTAN WILL hand over its list of the prospective travellers on Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service to the Indian side on Monday. Official sources said that the Indian list is already ready. It has also been duly verified by Pakistani officials. The verification of the antecedents of the Indian passengers travelling to PoK and the Pakistanis travelling to Kashmir is one of the conditions governing the resumption of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service after a gap of nearly 60 years.

মার্কিন সিদ্ধান্ত দেশের অসম্মান, বলছে বিজেপি

আমদাবাদ, ২০ মার্চ: নরেন্দ্র মোদীকে মার্কিন ভিসা নামঞ্জুরের ঘটনার ফায়দা তোলার চেষ্টা শুরু করে দিল বিজেপি। আমেরিকার সিদ্ধান্তের প্রতিবাদে আজ গুজরাতে 'স্বাভিমান সভা' করে প্রতিবাদ জানিয়েছে তারা। অন্য দিকে, এই ঘটনায় দেশের সম্মানেই আঘাত লেগেছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী, বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডুর মতো নেতারা।

গুজরাতে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীকে মার্কিন ভিসা না-দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্তের প্রতিবাদে আমদাবাদে 'স্বাভিমান সভা'য় যোগ দিয়েছিলেন বিজেপি সভাপতি লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী এবং এনডিএ-র আস্থায়ক জর্জ ফার্নান্ডেজ। সভায় মোদী তাঁর অভিজ্ঞতার সঙ্গে মহাত্মা গান্ধীর অভিজ্ঞতার তুলনা টেনেছেন। তিনি বলেছেন, দক্ষিণ আফ্রিকায় ব্রিটিশেরা যে ভাবে ট্রেনের প্রথম শ্রেণির কামরায় গান্ধীকে উঠতে দেয়নি, সেই ভাবেই আমেরিকা তাঁকে ভিসা দেয়নি। শিবসেনা নেতা মনোহর জে.শী ভারতে সমস্ত মার্কিন কনস্যুলেট বন্ধ করে দেওয়ার ডাক দেন।

'স্বাভিমান সভা'য় যাওয়ার আগে

গান্ধীনগরে আডবাণী বলেন, মোদীকে ভিসা না-দেওয়া ভারতের সার্বভৌমত্বে আঘাতের সামিল। তবে মোদীর পাশে দাঁড়ানোর প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের প্রশংসা করেছেন আডবাণী বলেন।

ভারত ও আমেরিকার দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কেও এই ঘটনা প্রভাব ফেলবে বলে মনে করছেন আডবাণী। তিনি জানিয়েছেন, সম্প্রতি দিল্লি এসে মার্কিন বিদেশসচিব কন্ডোলিজা রাইস বলেছিলেন যে, আমেরিকায় কোনও কোনও মহল মোদীর সফরের বিরোধী। আডবাণীর কথায়, "রাইস সম্ভবত জানতেন, কী হতে চলেছে।" হায়দরাবাদে বিজেপি-র প্রাক্তন সভাপতি বেঙ্কাইয়া নয়ডুও আডবাণীর সুরে বলেছেন, মার্কিন সিদ্ধান্ত ভারতীয় নাগরিকদেরই অসম্মান।

মার্কিন সফর বাতিল হাওয়ার পরে মোদীর প্রস্তাবিত ব্রিটিশ সফর ঘিরেও অশান্তি ঘনাচ্ছে। লন্ডনে আগামী শনিবার 'ভাইব্রান্ট গুজরাত' শীর্ষক একটি অনুষ্ঠানে যোগ দেওয়ার কথা মোদীর। সেই সময়ে বিক্ষোভ দেখানোর কর্মসূচি ঘোষণা করেছে দু'টি স্বেচ্ছাসেবী সংগঠন। — পি টি আই

Pak President's mother moved by AMU reception

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Aligarh: Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's mother Begum Zarin Musharraf on Friday told a gathering of students at the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) women's college that she was "overwhelmed" by the reception she had received on campus. She declared that she felt all the more honoured by the reception as AMU had played a major and historic role in the spread of education in the sub-continent.

Zarin, who was on a journey down memory lane at her late husband's alma mater, showed a flair for diplomacy which professionals attain only through training. Reaching out to the youth of the country, she said she would pray for them as also for peace and prosperity in the sub-continent.

Fighting hard to hold back tears, a visibly moved Begum Zarin told newsmen that "one day — insha Allah — I would like to come back again for a second visit to



Zarin Musharraf during her visit to the Sir Syed Ahmed Mazar in Aligarh on Friday

this institution where my late husband had spent some of the most memorable days of his life".

Earlier in the morning, in the presence of a large crowd of cheering students, the octogenarian lady visited the university mosque, accompanied by her grandson Bilal Musharraf and her elder son

Javed Musharraf, brother of Gen Pervez Musharraf. She placed a wreath on the mazar of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, the founder of AMU. She also visited the Macdonel hostel where her late husband lived during his days at the AMU in the 1930s.

In reply to a question during an informal chat with a newsmen, Bilal Musharraf said it would be great if he could one day send his own children to the this centre of learning.

The Pakistan president's family left for New Delhi in the afternoon.

Gas line will create interdependency, linkages: Aziz

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 13. The Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, has said his country has offered an "energy corridor" to India because it believed that it will create interdependency and linkages thereby creating better atmospheres for promoting peace in the region.

He was referring to the longstanding plea made by Islamabad to New Delhi to consider joining the proposed Iran-Pakistan and Turkmenistan-Af-

ghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline while talking to team of the Pakistan Peace Coalition, which called on him.

The foundation along with its counterpart in India has planned an India-Pakistan peace-march beginning on March 23.

Scores of intellectuals and political activists are expected to join the march which will culminate in Multan on May 11. The march will touch Sonipat, Panipat, Rajpur, Ludhiana, Jalandhar, Amritsar, and Labo-

re. Mr. Aziz told the delegation that Pakistan welcomed the role of societal groups in developing and promoting peaceful relations with India and it sincerely believed that a meaningful progress could only be made if the "core issue" of Kashmir was resolved. He urged the delegation to use its good offices to create an atmosphere where "we" could use the SAARC forum to move ahead for the prosperity and progress of South Asia. Talking separately to Action Aid Pakistan delegation, which also

called on him, Mr. Aziz said societal groups and sports delegations could speed up normalisation of relations. The delegation included young cricketers from under-privileged areas of both the countries. He also distributed gifts to the children.

Mr. Aziz told them Pakistan was a peaceful country and it believed that a sustainable relationship could only be maintained only if it was based on equity and mutual respect. The people-to-people contact

would supplement the peace process. "The trust deficit must end for any genuine movement forward," he said. He sincerely desired peace and was committed to finding a peaceful and negotiated settlement of all outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

Mr. Aziz expressed the confidence that the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service would help accelerate the peace process and bring divided families together.

ক্রিকেট দেখতে মুশারফকে আমন্ত্রণ মনমোহনের

আজকালের প্রতিবেদন: দিল্লি, ১০ মার্চ— চলতি ভারত-পাকিস্তান ক্রিকেট ম্যাচ দেখার জন্য সপরিবার পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পরভেজ মুশারফকে আমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিং। আজ লোকসভায় এ কথা নিজেই জানালেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। রাষ্ট্রপতির ভাষণের জন্য ধন্যবাদজ্ঞাপক প্রস্তাব নিয়ে বিতর্কে বলতে উঠে মনমোহন জানালেন, তিনি আশা করেন মুশারফ সপরিবারে আসবেন। ক্রিকেট আর বলিউডের ছায়াছবি এই উপমহাদেশের মানুষকে যত সৌহার্দ্যে বাঁধে, তা আর কিছু পারে না। ক্রিকেটের প্রতি নিজের অনুরাগ জানিয়ে মনমোহন বললেন, সারা উপমহাদেশের মানুষ খুশির সঙ্গে তারিফ করছে শেহবাগ, আসিম কামালদের মতো তরুণ ক্রিকেটারদের। শুধু রাষ্ট্র নেতাদেরই নয়, প্রতিবেশী দেশগুলির সাধারণ মানুষ ভারতে আসুন, যেখানে ইচ্ছে যান। তিনি সেটাই চান। রসিকতা করে মনমোহন বলেন, আমরা এই লোকসভায় আলোচনা, বিতর্ক যদি ক্রিকেটারদের মতো খেলোয়াড়ি মেজাজে করতে পারতাম, কতই না ভাল হত! গত সেপ্টেম্বরে নিউ ইয়র্কে রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের সাধারণ পরিষদের বৈঠকের সময় প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফের সঙ্গে তাঁর সাক্ষাতের কথা স্মরণ করেন মনমোহন। বলেন, দু'দেশের আলোচনা এগোবে। দু'দেশের সম্প্রীতি বাড়বে।

বর্ধন, সুরজিৎ জানাবেন

মুশারফের কিছু প্রস্তাব প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে জানাবেন দুই কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির নেতা সুরজিৎ ও বর্ধন। পাকিস্তানে দুই কমিউনিস্ট নেতার

সঙ্গে মুশারফের একান্ত বৈঠক হয়। দুই কমিউনিস্ট নেতার মন জয় করে নেন মুশারফ। আজ দুই নেতা যৌথ সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে জানান, ভারত-পাকিস্তান দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্ক উন্নত করার জন্য মুশারফের দেওয়া প্রস্তাবগুলি নিয়ে তাঁরা প্রকাশ্যে আলোচনা করতে চাননি। বলেছেন, এগুলি প্রধানমন্ত্রীকেই জানাব। প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজের সঙ্গেও দীর্ঘ বৈঠক হয় তাঁদের। দু'দেশের পারস্পরিক আস্থা অর্জনের লক্ষ্যে মুশারফ তাঁর সরকারের সমস্ত দপ্তরে নির্দেশ দিয়েছেন, এ বিষয়ে যে কোনও প্রস্তাবে পাকিস্তান যেন রাজি থাকে। এর মধ্যে ক্রিকেট অবশ্যই একটি মাধ্যম। যদিও শওকত আজিজ দ্বিপাক্ষিক সম্পর্কের উন্নতিতে সিলমোহর লাগাতে চান। তাঁর আশঙ্কা শেষ পর্যন্ত আস্থা অর্জনের জোয়ার অনাস্থা ডেকে আনবে না তো? সুরজিৎের এই সফর ছিল স্মৃতিমেদুর। ওপারের পাঞ্জাবে পার্টির কাজে কাটিয়েছেন ১৯৩৬ থেকে। ছিলেন কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির পাঞ্জাব রাজ্য সম্পাদক। ৩৭ সালে তাঁর উদ্ধৃত লেখা একটি নিবন্ধ লাহোরে পুস্তিকাকারে ছেপে বের করেন তাঁর অনুগামীরা। অনেকদিন লাহোর কোর্টের কারাগারে ছিলেন সুরজিৎ। সেখানেও যান। কান মাহিওয়ালের জেলের স্মৃতিবিজড়িত এলাকাটি দেখতে। কম্মিনকালেও গুরদোয়ারায় না যাওয়া সুরজিৎ যান নানকের জন্মস্থান ও তীর্থ হিসেবে বিশ্বখ্যাত নানকানা সাহিবে। বর্ধনও যান সঙ্গে। সব দলের নেতাদের সঙ্গে নৈশভোজের আসরে দেখা হয় তাঁদের। সাংবাদিকরাও ছিলেন সেখানে।

AAJKA

11 MAR 2005

Pak keen on gas pact: Left

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 10: Pakistan has done the groundwork for the proposed gas pipeline project and is ready to sign a trilateral agreement with India and Iran when petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyar visits Islamabad on March 18, Left leaders said.

Harkishen Singh Surjeet and A.B. Bardhan, who returned from Pakistan after a nine-day tour, also highlighted the need to use the pipeline as a confidence-building measure that can lead to lasting peace between the neighbours.

The two leaders, who are scheduled to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and brief him on their trip, are likely to impress upon him the need to take advantage of the "conducive atmosphere" to bring about permanent peace with Pakistan.

The proposed gas pipeline has come to the forefront as a possible bridge in India-Pakistan relations at a time when indications suggest that the US is making all efforts to isolate Iran.

There were also reports that Washington has been trying to make the Indian and the Pakistani leaderships aware of its concern over Iran.

It is not clear yet whether the trilateral agreement will be acceptable to India, which has so far been arguing in fav-

our of separate pacts between it and Iran and another one between Islamabad and Teheran. But Pakistan's keenness shows that it has not allowed the US to influence it to go slow on the proposed project.

Although Surjeet and Bardhan met almost all the key political leaders in Pakistan, the highlight of their visit was an hour-long tête-à-tête with President Pervez Musharraf.



Surjeet,
Bardhan

"The meeting with the President was very frank. He was happy with the progress of the confidence-building measures and trade opening up, but asserted that conflict issues also have to be taken up. We cannot avoid any discussion on Kashmir," the two leaders said.

The Pakistan President also stressed on the need for India and Pakistan to display "sincerity, flexibility and courage" in trying to evolve a settlement that was acceptable to both the countries as well as Kashmiris.

The Left duo said that after the Pakistan trip, they were convinced that leaders of the two countries are capable of resolving the Kashmir conflict amicably without any "third-party" mediation by the US or any other country.

The issue of fishermen who stray into each other's waters, the Baglihar dam and strengthening people-to-people contact were also discussed at their meetings with the Pakistani leadership.

62 Indian soldiers in Pak jails

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 9: *Veer Zaara*, the love story on celluloid of an air force officer — played by Shahrukh Khan — wrongly confined in a Pakistani jail for two decades, moved hearts and minds and turned the film with its message of peace into a hit.

But the story of real Indian soldiers in Pakistani jails is still unfinished.

There are 62 Indian soldiers in Pakistani jails and Delhi has sought their release, defence minister Pranab Mukherjee said in Parliament today.

Pakistan has not acknowledged the presence of the prisoners of war in its custody but the matter was raised by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the visit of his Pakistan counterpart Shaukat Aziz to New Delhi in November, Mukherjee said in a written reply.

"The government through diplomatic channels has been consistently taking up the issue of early release and repatriation of the Indian prisoners of war," the minister said.

Of the 62, 54 have been described as "PoWs". The other eight are believed to have accidentally crossed the Line of Control in Kashmir or the international boundary. The figure of 54 PoWs has often been raised by an organisation called the Missing Defence Personnel Relatives Association.

Gas pipeline pact unconditional, says Pak minister

Reuters
Karachi, March 8

9/3

HT-11

INDIA HAS agreed unconditionally to join a proposed \$4 billion pipeline project to carry gas from Iran, through Pakistan, to India, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Tuesday. India's petroleum minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, would hold talks with Pakistan in Islamabad, he said.

"We asked them to join the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline unconditionally," Aziz told reporters in Karachi. "And 10 days ago India accepted our proposal ... It will be a pipeline for peace."

Analysts have said the planned pipeline, which could be completed by 2011, would help improve relations between the nuclear-armed neighbours that have fought three wars since their independence from Britain in 1947.

Aziz said on Tuesday that Pakistan, which hopes to earn millions of dollars in transit fees from the project, has guaranteed India safe supplies of natural gas. The security of the pipeline and an unhindered supply of gas are India's main concerns.

Aiyar had told Parliament earlier this month that energy-hungry India would impose tough conditions on Iran, which had the world's second-biggest proven gas reserves after Russia at the end of 2003, for guaranteed supplies of natural gas.

India has also said previously it would only agree to the pipeline being built if economic ties with Pakistan improved.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

09 MAR 2005

Cricket's only their bahana to see India

By Nina Martyris/TNN

Chandigarh: You could have mistaken them for an earnest group of undertakers, standing around in their black suits holding long single-stemmed roses, except that the air was far from funereal. The students of the local hotel management institute had been roped in to lend a touch of professional hospitality to the open-air reception organised by the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) to welcome the busloads of Pakistani fans who rolled into Chandigarh a little after dusk on Sunday night.

When the tired Lahoris stepped out into the arms of the PCA officials and the media's waiting jaws, they were strung with marigolds, handed a rose each, and showered with questions. Despite six hours on the road in buses whose suspensions were as bumpy as the relations between the two countries, they were perceptibly thrilled by the welcome and the fact that a special reception had been organised for them. A few were candid enough to say that they had not dreamt that the welcome would be so warm. Khalida Mehmood, a housewife who is here with her busi-



PAKRAMAN-II, PAGES 21 & 22

nessman husband, spoke for most of the 1,700 fans who arrived last night when she said, "Cricket is just a *bahana* (reason). We are here to see India."

The reception thankfully did away with long-winded welcome speeches and other rituals. Instead, there was food, water, helplines and a counter which provided helpful information on hotel accommodation.

"It's great that hotels aren't overcharging, given the demand," said Mansur Ali Khan, a young businessman who was named after the Nawab of Pataudi. As part of his charm offensive, Mansur was dressed in a dark saffron kurta ("India's colour"), but confessed that he had a green one in his suitcase which he would wear to the

match. "Of course, if India plays better than Pakistan, I will change," he grinned.

Kuljeet Singh, who drove one of the 21 buses from Wagah, remarked on how his passengers spoke Punjabi like him, and said that bhangra in the aisles had broken the tedium of the journey. Very few families have come across—most of the fans are affluent young men like Ummair Tofeeq who said that he would be "chilling on all things Indian".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

08 MAR 2005

08

Natwar tries bus link to break ice

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

A MIDST slogan-shouting over the Jharkhand controversy, External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh today said in the Rajya Sabha that the government has adopted a procedure without prejudice to India's earlier stated position on the Sringar-Muzaffarabad bus-service.

Making an eight-page *suo motu* statement in the Rajya Sabha which was later adjourned over the Jharkhand issue, Singh said, the display of mutual flexibility has enabled India and Pakistan to respond to humanitarian considerations, particularly the opportunity for divided families to meet each other with relative ease and convenience.

However, he sought to underline that the government has made it clear to Pakistan that the peace process was critically dependent on the fulfilment of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's commitment to stop terrorism emanating from his country.

4 sittings, no business: Rs 2 cr a day

SANTWANA
BHATTACHARYA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 4

EVER since P. Chidambaram presented his 2005-06 budget, Parliament has been in a limbo. The last four sittings, including today, were adjourned following Opposition-led uproar over the Jharkhand governor's decision to make Shibu Soren CM. Count that a straight loss of nearly Rs 2 crore per day.

If on the first day (after the Budget presentation), both Houses were adjourned over Goa Governor S.C. Jamir's role in the fall of the Parrikar government, Jharkhand held up proceedings for the next three days. Nonetheless, Parliament has been spending Rs 1.93 crore



per day in the assumption that the Houses would function for at least six hours. And the hourly expenditure every day — adjourned or otherwise — Rs 32.16 lakh.

"We cannot make arrangements on the assumption that the sitting would wind up earlier than the usual six hours," parliamentary officials said, adding the expenditure goes up if the sitting continues beyond six hours. Both Houses have been adjourned till Tuesday for Shivraj after MPs decided to take an extra day off on Monday for a continuous holiday, ostensibly to visit their constituencies. Instead, Parliament would meet on Saturday to make up for the day lost. The Houses will next reconvene on Wednesday.

Between 2004 and 2005, the Parliament lost Rs 52 crore and 161.56 hours due to stalling of transaction. The year before, the rough estimates of expenditure incurred by the Lok Sabha is Rs 244.67 crore in 86 sittings, expenses of the Rajya Sabha adds up to Rs 82.24 crore over 85 sittings.

In attempt to draw a response from the protesting BJP-led opposition, Singh said, the proposal for the bus-link was first announced on October 22, 2003, by Yashwanth Sinha, the then External Affairs Minister.

However, the opposition was in no mood to respond despite that fact that the issue was close to the heart of

Leader of the Opposition Jaswant Singh, who has been continuously expressing his concern over the move outside Parliament.

Singh also clarified in the Upper House that all Indian and Pakistani nationals would be permitted to use this route across the Line of Control.

"Each side will designate its authority for receiving application forms for travel and for issue of travel permits at the checkpoint," he said, adding that on the Indian side, the designated authority is the regional passport officer in Srinagar.

He said the two countries have also agreed to start bus services between Lahore and Amritsar, including religious places such as Nankana Sahib. On the Baghlihar hydel project in Kashmir, he said India pointed out to Pakistan that the project was "fully in consonance" with the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960, "to which we remain committed".

On the Kathmandu situation, he said the Sashastra Seema Bal has been asked to step up vigilance and patrolling along the Indo-Nepal border.

President's Rule after Rane wins trust vote

Statesman News Service *SM*

NEW DELHI/PANAJI, March 4. — The Centre today decided to impose President's Rule in Goa, keeping the Assembly in suspended animation. The decision was taken at an emergency Union Cabinet meeting this evening after Congress chief minister Mr Pratapsinh Rane won a controversial trust vote.

The shaky Congress government won the trial of strength with the help of the pro-tem Speaker's casting vote after he restrained an Opposition UGDP MLA from voting. Three hours later, the Cabinet took up the issue suo motu without waiting for a recommendation from the Governor.

"What has happened in the Assembly of Goa today is not acceptable to the Centre. It was not proper not to allow one member to vote and then get the confidence motion passed with a casting vote given by the Speaker. This is exactly what was done by the previous government. If that is wrong, this is also wrong," Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil said after the meeting.

The President approved the Centre's decision tonight.

The Cabinet decision came close on the heels of the controversy surrounding Jharkhand Governor Syed Sibtey Razi installing Mr Sibusoren as chief minister. It has already kicked up a political storm with the Opposition BJP accusing the Centre and Congress chief Mrs Sonia Gandhi for their complicity in the matter.

In a cautious response, the BJP said imposition of President's Rule was the only alternative in the present circumstances but expressed hope that the Assembly was kept in suspended animation only to be dissolved with Parliament approval, and not as a ploy for "horse trading".

BJP leader Mr Pramod Mahajan said: "I hope the Assembly has been kept in suspended animation as Supreme Court had asked the government in the Bommai case to take prior permission of Parliament before dissolving the House." He added: "I have objections if it is a ploy for getting more and more MLAs to their side to form a government."

Another report on page 4

THE STATESMAN

05 MAR 2005

পাইপলাইন চুক্তির শর্ত দিল্লিতে পাঠাচ্ছে ঢাকা

নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, ঢাকা, ৩ মার্চ: মায়ানমার থেকে বাংলাদেশ হয়ে ভারতে গ্যাস আনার জন্য প্রস্তাবিত ত্রিদেশীয় পাইপলাইন নির্মাণ চুক্তিতে সই করার তিনটি শর্ত দিয়ে একটি প্রস্তাবপত্র নয়াদিল্লির কাছে পাঠানোর প্রস্তুতি নিচ্ছে ঢাকা। এই তিনটি শর্ত হল: এক, ভারতের ভিতর দিয়ে নেপাল ও ভূটান থেকে জলবিদ্যুৎ আনতে দিতে হবে বাংলাদেশকে; দুই, নেপাল ও ভূটানের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের বাণিজ্যিক লেনদেনের জন্য জায়গা দিতে হবে ভারতকে; তিন, ভারত-বাংলাদেশ বাণিজ্য-ঘাটতি কমাতে হবে লক্ষণীয় ভাবে।

বাংলাদেশের শক্তি ও খনিজ সম্পদ সংক্রান্ত দফতরের প্রতিমন্ত্রী মোশারফ হোসেন বৃহস্পতিবার ঢাকায় জানান, ওই তিনটি শর্ত সম্বলিত প্রস্তাবপত্র ভারত সরকারের কাছে পাঠানে হবে। বস্তুত ভারতও গত ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি ইয়াঙ্গনে ত্রিপাক্ষিক প্রযুক্তি-বাণিজ্য সংক্রান্ত কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে আনুষ্ঠানিক ভাবে ওই প্রস্তাবপত্র পাঠানোর জন্য বাংলাদেশকে অনুরোধ জানিয়েছে। মোশারফ বলেন, “আমরা চাই প্রস্তাবিত গ্যাস-পাইপলাইন চুক্তিতে সই করার আগে নয়াদিল্লি উল্লিখিত তিনটি শর্ত মেনে নিক।” ইয়াঙ্গনে ওই ত্রিপাক্ষিক বৈঠকে চুক্তির খসড়াও তেরি হয়ে গিয়েছে বলে তিনি জানান।

মোশারফ জানান, ইয়াঙ্গনের বৈঠকে ভারত দাবি করে যে, নেপাল-ভূটানের সঙ্গে বাংলাদেশের বাণিজ্য চালানোর জন্য ভারত একটি করিডর বা বাণিজ্যপথ ইতিমধ্যেই খুলে দিয়েছে। এটি ব্যবহার করায় বাংলাদেশের কী সমস্যা হচ্ছে, তাও জানতে চান ভারতের প্রতিনিধিরা। ওই করিডর খুলে দেওয়ার সিদ্ধান্ত ভারত ইতিমধ্যে কার্যকর করেছে কি না, বাংলাদেশ বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রক তা যাচাই করে দেখবে। পাশাপাশি ভারতের সঙ্গে বাণিজ্য ঘাটতি এবং শুষ্ক ও শুষ্ক-বহির্ভূত বাধানিষেধ কমানোর উপায় জানিয়ে নয়াদিল্লির কাছে প্রস্তাবও পাঠাবে বাংলাদেশ।

মায়ানমার-বাংলাদেশ-ভারত গ্যাস-পাইপলাইন কোন কোন অঞ্চল দিয়ে যাবে, সেই রুট বা পথ স্থির করার জন্য একটি আন্তর্জাতিক উপদেষ্টা সংস্থাকে নিয়োগ করতে তিন দেশই রাজি হয়েছে বলে মোশারফ জানান।

Pervez meets Indian Left, 200 prisoners to be freed

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, March 1. — In an impromptu decision during a meeting with India's top Left leaders here, President Musharraf today ordered the immediate release of 200 Indian civilian prisoners languishing in Pakistan's jails either for economic offences or for not carrying proper documents.

"Release them" was the order issued by the General when the visiting CPI-M general secretary, Mr Harkishan Singh Surjeet, and CPI leader Mr AB Bardhan broached the subject during their hour-long meeting. The decision was spontaneous, Mr Bardhan said.

According to Delhi's estimate, over 1,400 Indians, including 54 PoWs, are lodged in Pakistan's jails. Islamabad has, however, denied the presence of PoWs.

The Left leaders said they were impressed by what they called President Musharraf's honesty and sincerity to address all bilateral issues. "He is very frank and honestly answered all our queries," Mr Surjeet said.

Mr Bardhan said he and Mr Surjeet noted the President's commitment to resolve all issues with India. "We found him sincere, flexible and courageous," he said.

"I don't want to be known in history as a man who failed," Mr Bardhan quoted President Musharraf as saying. "The General wants to resolve the issues in his as well as 91-year-old Surjeet's lifetime. He has the courage of a leader and not a General," he said.

Another topic that figured in the discussions was the need to release 800 Indian fishermen along with their trawlers and boats. At present, Pakistan is releasing the prisoners in stages, but their boats are being impounded. President Musharraf has agreed to look into the request to release the vessels.

The General feared that Baglihar would become a fait accompli if work was allowed to be continued. However, the Left leaders told him that "once you stop it" it would be "stopped for all time".

Photograph on page 5

THE STATESMAN

02 MAR 2005

PM opens more roads to Pak

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Feb. 27. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today said that talks were on between New Delhi and Islamabad on the re-opening of the Suchetgarh-Sialkot road in the Jammu sector, the second road link between the state and the neighbouring country.

"Talks are underway with Pakistan over the reopening of the Jammu-Suchetgarh-Sialkot road and if there is any progress in this regard, we will inform you," Dr Singh said while addressing the media here this evening after reviewing rescue operations in the avalanche-hit areas of the state.

Dr Singh also said that the Uri-Muzaffarabad road would be re-opened as per schedule on 7 April. Asked whether the re-opening of this road would be postponed in view of the closure of the Jammu-Srinagar national highway, he said: "There is no such proposal at present. Putting off the opening will result in operational difficulties." The highway would be reopened within the next three days.

Announcing a compen-



Dr Manmohan Singh gives a patient hearing to a Srinagar resident during his visit to avalanche-hit areas of the state on Sunday. — PTI

sation of Rs 1 lakh from the Prime Minister's relief fund to the next of the kin of those killed in the avalanches, he said another Rs 50,000 had already been promised.

Dr Singh said a high-level Central team will visit

the state on Monday to take stock of the situation in the wake of the tragedy.

On whether the state government had acted promptly, he said: "There was snowfall and an element of surprise. We will learn from

experience and prepare for the future.

Centre reviews J&K situation

The Centre reviewed the security situation in J&K following a spate of recent militant activities last week,

adds SNS from New Delhi. Other than Dr Singh, the meeting was attended by Union home secretary Mr Dhirendra Singh, Centre's pointsman for J&K Mr NN Vohra and IB director Mr ENS Narasimhan.

Pak Cricket Board against more delay

SNS & PTI 29/2/05

ISLAMABAD/ CHENNAI/ KOLKATA, Feb. 23. — The Pakistan Cricket Board today expressed concern over the possibility of the series against India being postponed further due to a telecast row.

In such an eventuality it would be difficult for its team to tour at a later date due to prior commitments, a top PCB official said. He hinted that the visitors could seek compensation from BCCI if the tour to India did not go ahead as per schedule.

According to a report from Chennai, Madras High Court will pass orders for interim arrangements for telecast tomorrow. "The PCB is perturbed to learn from Indian news reports that the Indo-Pak series could be postponed if a High Court decision did not permit the BCCI to decide on TV rights for the series," it said in a press release.

"PCB feels that cricket fans on both sides are eagerly awaiting the series and that another postponement would be highly disappointing for the public. It would also lead to severe loss of revenue for both the Boards and dislocation in logistics for a post-

poned tour. *Indi Pak*

"Further postponement of the tour would be difficult because Pakistan would be touring the West Indies in early May. PCB hopes that the TV rights issue would be resolved expeditiously so that the tour can proceed on schedule."

ESPN-Star Sports has sent a proposal to the BCCI president, Mr Ranbir Singh Mahendra. It has offered production services to BCCI in exchange for telecast rights and is ready to provide Prasar Bharati with "the right to telecast the matches on terms acceptable to the BCCI."

The letter states: "In the event that the suggestions are acceptable to the BCCI, we suggest that ESS and the BCCI jointly approach the honourable court and recommend that it authorises the implementation of this solution." A similar letter has also been sent by Zee Telefilms Ltd.

Both companies have argued that they would provide the services at little monetary benefits.

Former BCCI chief Mr Jagmohan Dalmiya said: "Nothing can be said before the Madras High Court judgment is passed."

More reports on page 12



THE STATESMAN

24 FEB 2005

Peace pipeline meet

IMTIAZ GUL

9/22/05
Islamabad, Feb. 21: Indian and Pakistani ministers are set to meet on March 15 and 16 to discuss the transnational gas pipeline project from Iran.

The meeting is expected to take place on the margins of a conference of Saarc energy ministers.

Pakistan's petroleum minister Amanullah Jadoon told **The Telegraph** that an invitation has been extended to his Indian counterpart Mani Shankar Aiyar. "The talks with Aiyar will be held in mid-March and there is a standing invitation to him to these discussions," Jadoon said.

A day before his departure

9/22/05
to Iran with Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Jadoon said Tehran and Islamabad have decided to go ahead with the project. "India is welcome if it joins us," the minister said.

Last week, when foreign minister K. Natwar Singh was in Pakistan, India had agreed to consider joining the project, labelled the peace pipeline.

Experts have been expressing apprehension about possible US opposition to the pipeline because of the row over Tehran's nuclear programme. But Jadoon said he did not foresee any such opposition.

Iran push in Delhi

The pipeline figured in talks between Iranian foreign min-

22/2/05
ister Kamal Kharrazi and the Indian leadership, reports our special correspondent in New Delhi.

"The Indian government has created an encouraging atmosphere for pushing ahead with this highly important project which, no doubt, would have a positive impact on regional convergence," the visiting foreign minister told a meeting in the capital.

"We expect the project to take off soon," Kharrazi, who met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as well as Natwar Singh, said.

Targeted by the US, Iran wants New Delhi to use its influence among the developing countries to allow Tehran to pursue its atomic programme for "peaceful" purposes.

Kharrazi feels that at the review of the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty, scheduled for later this year, Iran and North Korea are likely to come under attack by the US-led bloc for their alleged violation of the treaty.

Iran would like to get India's support — though Delhi is neither a signatory to the NPT nor an observer at the review meeting — to convince the developing world to rally behind Tehran.

Passage to PoK

3/16
2/16
Bus link will give peace a chance!

It had appeared for a while that the India-Pakistan peace process had skidded to a halt, but its wheels are turning once again thanks to agreement on a Srinagar-Muzzafarabad bus service, to be initiated in April. The agreement may properly be labelled as historic, since communications on this route have snapped in 1947, when the Kashmir problem first arose between India and Pakistan. There was give-and-take on both sides. Delhi dropped its insistence on a passport and visa as the only valid legal documents, settling instead for entry permits ratified in Srinagar or Muzzafarabad. Islamabad is no longer holding out for the facility being made available to Kashmiris alone; all Indians and Pakistanis can catch the bus. Both sides have been tight-lipped about the implications of the agreement. But there is no doubt the agreement has the potential to release pent-up emotions and vanquish stereotypes of ignorance and fear.

For Indians PoK, Gilgit, Baltistan and the Northern Areas are absolutely unknown territory, and visits there should be educative. The Kashmir *jehad* is also an economic activity; its foot soldiers are poor people lured by the money available. If PoK started catering to, say, Indian tourists, economic incentives for joining the *jehad* would be curtailed. Besides, Pakistanis could verify for themselves that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir isn't as bad as is made out. Contact with long sundered kin would go a long way towards healing Kashmir's wounds. Apart from the Srinagar-Muzzafarabad bus service, both sides have decided to press ahead on other issues such as bus and rail links between Amritsar-Lahore and Munabao-Khokrapar respectively; risk reduction agreements to deal with nuclear accidents or unauthorised firing of nuclear weapons; better coordination between Indian and Pakistani coast guards and narcotics authorities, and notification of missile tests. There is no doubt that agreement here will restore the momentum of the peace process. South Block must be complimented for some confident diplomacy on its part: witness the blunt statement that if neighbouring countries see SAARC as a forum to contain India, Delhi can afford to bypass SAARC and deal directly with more dynamic parts of the world. This is a much needed difference in tone from IK Gujral's friendly neighbourhood policy, which emphasised good relations but demanded little in return. One looks forward now to the Pakistani cricket tour of India; Delhi must not stand in the way by insisting on the Pakistanis playing in Ahmedabad, if they don't want it.

Playing ball with Pakistan

THE COMING cricket series, Ahmedabad and all, the go-ahead for the Srinagar-Muzafarabad bus and the first tie-up between an Indian financial products firm with a Karachi-based Pakistani company to tap the IT potential in Pakistan are clear signs of the changing times in the difficult relationship of the two subcontinental neighbours. While politics and cricket are best kept apart, in practice it doesn't quite happen that way, and so the decisions to press on with the tour are welcome. Given the enormous climate of goodwill that last year's series in Pakistan generated, we can be sure that the coming tour will only add to the already visible pluses in our relations.

External Affairs Minister K. Natwar Singh has said that 2004 has seen the most intense Indo-Pak engagement and dialogue till now. More ordinary folk — cricket fans, schoolchildren, businessmen, artistes — have travelled back and forth more than ever before. Though the movement of officials across the border grabs the headlines, it is this 'people-centric' process that is crucial to the resolution of the more tangled issues. No government, either in Islamabad or New Delhi, will take a decision, on, say, Jam-

mu and Kashmir, without carrying their people with them, and getting 'the people' to understand each other is the first element in this equation. It is, of course, axiomatic that it is easier to make compromises for friends than for adversaries.

For this reason, the most important of Mr Singh's agreements in Islamabad related to opening of borders. While the accord on opening the Srinagar-Muzafarabad route in J&K through a special entry-permit system has hogged all the attention, the agreement on the Lahore-Amritsar bus service and the rail service through Khokarpar and Munabao are also significant. But they are only the beginning, since there are scores of other routes in J&K as well as in Punjab and Rajasthan that can also be thrown open.

Pakistan has yet to allow an opening in trade and commerce. But opening routes can be seen as a means to that end. A year after Independence, 32 per cent of Pakistani imports came from India which in turn bought 56 per cent of Pakistani exports. In 2000-01, India's imports were 0.42 per cent of Pakistan's exports and it provided just 0.13 per cent of its imports. As we begin approaching these figures again, many of our current problems will begin looking smaller.

Delhi visa bounty for Pak fans

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 20. — With the itinerary being finalised, India will issue around 10,000 visas to Pakistani nationals to facilitate their travel for the much-awaited cricket series.

The Indian High Commission here will open special windows besides organising visa camps in Karachi and Lahore to issue the travel documents to the cricket fans.

"We plan to issue cricket visas from Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi," a senior Indian diplomat said here today.

He said the High Commission will be issuing "cricket visas", which means that only those who have tickets will be given visas much on the lines of how Pakistan issued visas to Indian cricket fans during the Indian team's visit here last year. Tickets are also expected to be sold online.

The Pakistan team will not be accompanied by a security officer. "The manager and the assistant manager will liaison with the BCCI for the security arrangements to be made," Pakistan Cricket Board's media advisor Mr Abbas Zaidi was quoted as saying in *The News* today. As for Ahmedabad, the Motera Stadium has been named to host the fourth ODI on 12 April. "I have discussed the team's stay in Ahmedabad with BCCI secretary Mr SK Nair. We will follow the advice of the BCCI on Ahmedabad," PCB's senior general manager for cricket operations Mr Zakir Khan said from Lahore.



Kolkata Test on 16 March

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, Feb. 20. — The Pakistan team will arrive in India on 28 February. They will begin the tour with a three-day match against Board President's XI in Dharamshala on 3 March. Kolkata will host the second Test from 16-20 March. The first Test will be played in Mohali from 8-12 March, while Bangalore will host the third Test from 24-28 March. The fourth ODI will be played in Ahmedabad. Kochi, Vishakhapatnam, Jamshedpur, Kanpur and New Delhi will host the other ODIs. — PTI

Details on page 12

9200 18

DON'T GO TO AHMEDABAD!

There shouldn't be match in Gujarat

THE Indian cricket board's decision to accede to Pakistan's request to shift the Ahmedabad Test out of the violence-scarred city is welcome, particularly as it is our very own Eden Gardens which is the gainer. But what was farcical and unexpected was the BCCI's request for Pakistan to play an extra One-dayer in the venue that they had already rejected because of "security reasons". Pakistan has presumably accepted the One-dayer so as not to upset the India tour. They were well within their right to refuse to play even a One-dayer in Ahmedabad, and they should have. Everyone would understand the reasoning. The BCCI's attempts not to jeopardise the goodwill which would be generated by making a token stop in Ahmedabad is misplaced. No goodwill will be lost if Pakistan boycotts Gujarat altogether, particularly as the rest of India would be fully aware why it was taking the justified stand.

Had the political situation in Gujarat changed since 2002 when over 2000 Muslims were killed in a planned state-sponsored pogrom, then a Indo-Pak match in Ahmedabad or anywhere else in the state would have gone some way towards healing wounds and extending 'bhaichara'. But they have not. In fact Narendra Modi is still in charge of the state and the communal climate is still as volatile. A street cricket match or small kite-flying incident between two individuals can still turn into a full-fledged communal riot in the state, so imagine what will happen if Pakistan beats India at Ahmedabad.

It is not only the Pakistani cricketers whose safety is at stake, the security of the 10,000 Pakistani spectators who are planning on coming to India for the tour and the lives of Gujarati Muslims who live in Ahmedabad are also at risk. The BJP/VHP/Bajrang Dal have already given Gujarati Muslims a taste of what they can do three years ago, and none of them really want to have to leave their homes and take refuge in camps on the day of the match, as they still need to do whenever tension builds up nearing a festival etc. Neither has Modi changed his provocative rhetoric. During local elections in Gujarat he attacked Pakistan and called all Muslims traitors, and even as recent as earlier this month he threatened to teach "Mia Musharraf" a lesson. These speeches inspire neither confidence nor goodwill. The only way to teach a lesson to the likes of Modi is to boycott Ahmedabad completely as a venue and then let him to deal with the humiliation.

SUSPENSE OVER CRICKET TOUR ENDS

PCB nod for one-day match in Ahmedabad

19/2 HD-1

gndv faw

By B. Muralidhar Reddy
ISLAMABAD, FEB.18. The suspense over Pakistan's cricket tour of India ended today with the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) consenting to the proposals made by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) to shift the Test venue from Ahmedabad to Kolkata and play an additional sixth one-day game at Ahmedabad. The row between the two Boards on Ahmedabad as a possible Test venue had cast a shadow on the much-awaited tour.

However, the tour, which was scheduled to commence from February 25, might only be delayed by a few days. The final schedule would be announced only after the Indi-

an board resolved the TV rights issue, a delay that the PCB was willing to accommodate.

In a press release, the PCB said that it understood the BCCI's position in this regard. "The PCB understands that the tour may have to be delayed by a few days in order to firm up administrative and logistical details," said the release, issued after a top-level meeting of the Board.

"I am happy that the matter is resolved and the tour will get on smoothly. We hope a final itinerary will be announced by the BCCI later Friday. We are in constant touch with them so [that] we can agree on the dates for the tour to start because they have a lot of work to do," the PCB Chairman, Shah-aryar Khan, said after his Board

gave the green signal to the changes proposed by the BCCI.

The Board greatly appreciated the "understanding and cooperation shown by [the] BCCI by coming up with an amicable and positive response to some of [the] PCB's earlier reservations on venues."

"The PCB Chairman would like to acknowledge the statement of Natwar Singh, the Foreign Minister of India, categorically stating in Islamabad that sports should not be politicised and that the postponement of the tour was not an option.

"The two respective Boards have resolved the issue in the same spirit, demonstrating cooperation and sportsmanship," it said.

The PCB also appointed Sa-

lim Altaf, director of cricket operations of the PCB, as the manager of the team for the tour.

Asad Mustafa, the PCB's general manager of logistics, will be the assistant manager.

Shoaib Akhtar opts out

In a related development, Pakistan's fast bowler, Shoaib Akhtar, has opted out of the tour on grounds of fitness.

Known as "Rawalpindi Express", Mr. Akhtar recently returned home mid-way from the tour of Australia due to fitness problems.

The PCB fined him \$500 on Thursday on grounds of 'indiscipline'.

BCCI sending Itinerary: Page 20

We should set aside our suspicions: Natwar

By Amit Baruah

LAHORE, FEB. 17. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, said that once India and Pakistan are able to set aside their suspicions through a continuous process of confidence-building, he was sure that they would be able to tackle some of the more complex issues that plagued the bilateral relations.

Addressing journalists here this evening before leaving for New Delhi, Mr. Singh said that confidence-building measures would help create an atmosphere conducive to addressing the more difficult issues and help fulfil the promise of friendship and bilateral cooperation between India and Pakistan.

The Chief Minister of the Punjab province, Pervaiz Elahi, hosted a lunch for Mr. Singh

earlier this afternoon. Mr. Singh also met the Punjab Governor, Khalid Maqbool. Discussions centred on starting a new Lahore-Amritsar bus service, which the two sides agreed to on Wednesday in Islamabad.

India for constructive ties

"India sincerely seeks a cooperative and constructive relationship with Pakistan. For this, it is imperative for us to invest in the ongoing process of engagement and confidence building," he said.

Pointing to the change in the atmospherics in ties, Mr. Singh said India was committed to peace and friendship with Islamabad.

"These are not just words. We have worked actively to put them into practice. As you

know, only yesterday we worked out with the Government of Pakistan mutually acceptable procedures for a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

"We have also agreed to consider an energy corridor through Pakistan, subject to satisfaction of our concerns related to security and assured supplies."

All this progress was possible because of an overwhelming desire among the people for peaceful interaction. They needed to build further on this foundation, he said, adding that a conscious "people-centric" approach had to be adopted.

"We look forward to group tours [from Pakistan] very soon and are already implementing a special visa regime for Pakistani students to study in Indian educational institutions, particular-

ly the IT [information technology] sector. I believe that this is a time for us to let the people set the pace for a while," he said.

"The Governments, who are appearing somewhat more cautious and conservative, could also play a facilitating role for the natural affinities of the people to define new parameters of our relationship."

Mr. Singh said that India-Pakistan trade, regrettably, had grown slowly while New Delhi's trade with other South Asian nations had grown substantially. "Unfortunately, Pakistan's position as the link between energy sources in Central and West Asia and the growing demand in South Asia has not been leveraged ..."

"We attach great importance to economic and commercial

cooperation with Pakistan. We believe that this would help address the common challenges of poverty and imbalance in the development of the region ..."

Productive visit

Shortly after arriving in New Delhi, Mr. Singh said in a prepared statement at Palam Airport that his visit to Pakistan had been both productive and useful. The present peace process was more firmly anchored than those that had taken place in the past, he said.

According to him, there was a groundswell of goodwill driving the peace process forward. He reiterated that Pakistan must remain committed to the "solemn assurances" it had given on January 6, 2004, that terrorists would be denied the use of its territory.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2005

HD-10

A ROUTE TO PEACE

182

THE COMPOSITE DIALOGUE between India and Pakistan received further impetus during the Islamabad visit of External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh. The confidence building measures agreed upon at the February 16 talks have been on the agenda for quite some time. However, from the way New Delhi and Islamabad quibbled over details it appeared unlikely that the proposals would be operationalised any time soon. Given this background, the announcements made by Mr. Singh and Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Kurshid Mahmud Kasuri, will be heartily welcomed. The decision to start a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad; reopen Consulates in Karachi and Mumbai; launch a new bus service between Lahore and Amritsar; and re-establish rail links between Rajasthan and Sindh are humanitarian measures that have been delayed too long. The needs and desires of families divided at the time of Partition were sidelined as the two Governments pondered deeply over the strategic and legalistic implications of these arrangements. In pushing humanitarian considerations to the fore, the two Governments signalled a clear intent to normalise relations between the peoples of India and Pakistan. This affirmation of a positive approach could in time prove to be an invaluable confidence building measure on its own.

The decision to open the Line of Control for the operation of a bus service between the two parts of Kashmir appears to indicate that India and Pakistan will adopt a sober approach to the resolution of this dispute from now on. There has been a significant shift from entrenched positions. While New Delhi dropped its demand that passengers on this route must have passports and visas, Islamabad has agreed that the service should be available to all citizens of India and Pakistan, not to Kashmiris alone. With most

of the former princely State of Jammu and Kashmir, including Gilgit and Baltistan, being thrown open, the scope for interaction between the peoples of the two countries has been expanded. However, traffic between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is unlikely to be heavy at least for some time to come since many details need to be addressed. The road needs to be repaired, security arrangements need to be finalised, and demining operations may have to be carried out. While there has been agreement on the nature of travel documents to be used and on the modalities for issuing them, complications could arise when these procedures are actually put to work. As expected, it was emphasised that the opening up of the LoC for a humanitarian purpose will not prejudice the stated positions of the two countries on the Jammu and Kashmir issue. For all that, this initiative holds great promise for the long term.

While the Ministers issued separate statements that differed in emphasis and tone, too much need not be made of this. After all, each Government has to pay due regard to sensitivities on its side of the border. Pakistan could hardly be expected abruptly to drop its insistence that issues such as the future of Kashmir or troop withdrawal from the Siachen Glacier should be addressed with urgency. What needs to be highlighted is the positive development that has taken place recently. India came around and conceded that the pipeline from Iran should be treated as a stand-alone project. For its part, Pakistan appears willing to accept that its Mumbai Consulate can be accommodated on a site other than Jinnah House. Movement towards Indo-Pakistani rapprochement might appear incremental. However, steps are now being taken with such regularity as to suggest that the dialogue is gaining momentum.

THE HINDU

18 FEB 2005

✓ 'FOUNDATION OF POSITIVE SENTIMENTS IN INDO-PAK TIES'

Visit 'satisfies' Natwar

SNS & PTI

NEW DELHI, Feb. 17.— Stating that there were differences between India and Pakistan, the foreign minister, Mr Natwar Singh, today said the peace process could only be sustained in an atmosphere free from violence and terrorism.

Returning home after clinching an agreement with Pakistan on running Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, the foreign minister said a foundation of "positive sentiment and hope" had been laid in bilateral relations which was capable of yielding more results.

Mr Singh said his visit was "satisfactory" and "would go a long way to establish peace, mutual understanding and shared prosperity between the two countries".

"No doubt, we have differences... but I have underlined one thing to the Pakistani leaders that the atmosphere free from violence and terrorism is required to sustain the peace process between the two countries," Mr Singh told reporters at the airport here. He said the people of both the countries wanted peace and his visit to Pakistan was a yet another step in this direction.

"There is a grounds well of goodwill

Pervez pleased

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 17. — General Pervez Musharraf has appreciated the flexibility and statesmanship shown by India and Pakistan in agreeing to run the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Gen. Musharraf, during a meeting with Mr K Natwar Singh here yesterday, also said that the two countries could resolve all issues, including J&K, in the same spirit. The USA, UK and China today hailed the Indo-Pak agreement on running the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service as a "significant and historic breakthrough" that would make a "real difference" to the lives of Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC. — PTI

existing between India and Pakistan among people in both our countries for a relationship free from hostility and bitterness," he said.

Terror threat

A Pakistan-based militant outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammed, today threatened to disrupt the historic new bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, AP adds from Islamabad.

J&K govt to start Uri road repair on war footing

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Feb. 17. — Following the Centre's decision to throw open Uri-Muzaffarabad road from 7 April, the J&K government is speeding up repair on the historic road on war footing.

A high-level team of Border Roads Organisation (BRO), currently maintaining the Srinagar-Uri-Muzaffarabad road under Project Beacon, will reach Srinagar tomorrow to assess the situation and start work on the road.

The road has been receiving a facelift for the last one year when the process for its reopening started. "We have already constructed the bridge on this road. Work is on to complete its two lanes," Mr Ghulam Ahmad Mir, J&K minister of state for roads and bridges, said. He added that there are plans to make this a four-lane road.

THE STATESMAN

18 FEB 2005

মোদীর শহরে নয়, গ্রেমিয়ার শোয়েবরা টেস্ট খেলবেন ইডেনেই

স্টাক রিপোর্টার, কলকাতা ও নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, নয়াদিল্লি: নরেন্দ্র মোদীর শহরে শেষ পর্যন্ত টেস্ট ম্যাচ খেলাতে নামছেন না ইনজামাম উল হকেরা। তার বদলে তারা সিরিজের দ্বিতীয় টেস্ট খেলবেন ইডেনে।

প্রাথমিক ভাবে টিক আছে টেস্ট শুরু হবে ১০ বা ১১ মার্চ থেকে। শোনা যাচ্ছিল রোশেন অনুযায়ী আমদাবাদে টেস্ট না হলে ঢেমাই টেস্ট পারে। কিন্তু এ দিন রাজধানীতে বোর্ডের ওয়ার্কিং কমিটির সভায় বেশির ভাগ সদস্য দাবি তোলেন ম্যাচ কলকাতায় নিয়ে যাওয়া হোক। প্রশ্ন ওঠে, ঢেমাই থেকে যেখানে একের পর এক মামলা ধেরে আসছে বোর্ডের বিরুদ্ধে, সেখানে ভারত-পাক ম্যাচ দেওয়া হবে কেন? সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠের ভোটে এর পরেই টেস্ট আসে ভারত অধিনায়কের শহরে। ইডেনে টেস্ট হচ্ছে শুনে উচ্ছ্বসিত পাক ক্রিকেটমহলা। পাকিস্তান ক্রিকেট বোর্ডের প্রধান শাহরিয়ার খান হেনন মোবাইল ফোনে বললেন, “ইডেনে বিশ্বের সেরা ক্রিকেট সিরিজের একটি। ভাল লাগছে শুনে যে, এমন ঐতিহাসিক সিরিজের একটি টেস্ট ইডেনে হচ্ছে।”

তবে আমদাবাদকে একেবারে বর্জিত না করে পাকিস্তান টিমকে সেখানে একটি এক দিনের ম্যাচ খেলানোর চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। তার জন্য পূর্ব নির্ধারিত ওয়ান ডে-র সংখ্যা পাঁচ থেকে বাড়িয়ে ছয় করার সিদ্ধান্তও

নেওয়া হয়েছে। তবে টিভি স্বয়ং নিয়ে মামলা মাদ্রাজ হাইকোর্টে বিচারার্থীন থাকায় পাকিস্তান ক্রিকেট দলের ভারত সফর সপ্তাহখানেক পিছিয়ে যেতে পারে। টিক কবে পাকিস্তান আসছে এ দেশে তা নির্দিষ্ট করে বলতে পারছেন না বোর্ড কর্তারা। যা পরিস্থিতি তাতে সোমবারের আগে জি টিভি কনাম বোর্ডের মামলার নিষ্পত্তি হওয়ার সম্ভাবনা কম। তার পর আবার পরাজিত পক্ষ সুপ্রিম কোর্টে যেতে পারে বলে আশঙ্কা রয়েছে। বোর্ড কর্তারা সেই কারণেই সফরসূচি চূড়ান্ত করার কাজে এখনই হাত দিতে পারছেন না।

পাকিস্তান আমদাবাদে এক দিনের ম্যাচ খেলাতে রাজি কি না সূচি চূড়ান্ত করার আগে সেটাও জানা জরুরি।

পাক ক্রিকেটমহলে থেকে প্রাথমিক প্রতিক্রিয়া অবশ্য যথেষ্ট “ভারতীয় বোর্ডের এই আশাবাজক। শাহরিয়ার খান বলে দিলেন, “ভারতীয় বোর্ডের এই



সাংবাদিক বৈঠকে রণবীর সিংহ মহেন্দ্র।

পাক বোর্ড প্রধানের সঙ্গে এ দিন কথা হয় পাকিস্তান সফররত ভারতীয় বিশেষমন্ত্রী শটবর সিংহের। এ সম্পর্কে শাহরিয়ার বললেন, “বিদেশমন্ত্রী সরাসরি বলেছেন ভারত সরকার আমদাবাদ নিয়ে আর কথা বলছেন না। দুইদেশের বোর্ড মিলিত ভাবে যে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে, সেটাই

সিদ্ধান্তকে স্বাগত জানাচ্ছি। আমদাবাদে টেস্ট হচ্ছে না জেনে আমরা খুশি।” দাঙ্গার শহরে তারা ওয়ান ডে খেলাতে রাজি হবেন কি না, তা এখনই ভাঙছেন না শাহরিয়ার। বলছেন, “সরকারি ভাবে ভারতীয় বোর্ড এখনও কিছু জানায়নি। ভারতীয় বোর্ডের ফ্যাক্স আসুক, কথা দিচ্ছি কয়েক ঘণ্টার মধ্যে আমাদের সিদ্ধান্ত জানিয়ে দেব।”

দীর্ঘস্থায়ী বোর্ড কর্তারা অবশ্য জগমোহন উলমিয়ায় দৌতোর উপর আস্থা রাখছেন। বোর্ড কর্তারা আশাবাদী পাক ক্রিকেটমহলে

তার সুসম্পর্ক কাজে লাগিয়ে শাহরিয়ারদের রাজি করে ফেলবেন উলমিয়া।

পাক বোর্ড প্রধানের সঙ্গে এ দিন কথা হয় পাকিস্তান সফররত ভারতীয় বিশেষমন্ত্রী শটবর সিংহের। এ সম্পর্কে শাহরিয়ার বললেন, “বিদেশমন্ত্রী সরাসরি বলেছেন ভারত সরকার আমদাবাদ নিয়ে আর কথা বলছেন না। দুইদেশের বোর্ড মিলিত ভাবে যে সিদ্ধান্ত নেবে, সেটাই

চূড়ান্ত।” এর পর শাহরিয়ার ফোনে ধরেন ভারতীয় বোর্ডের কর্তাদের। আসলাবস্থা তখনই কেটে যায়।

আমদাবাদ নিয়ে নয়, সভা এ দিন কার্যত উত্তপ্ত হয়ে ওঠে নতুন বোর্ড প্রেসিডেন্ট রণবীর সিংহ মহেন্দ্রকে জগমোহন উলমিয়ার পাঠানো চিঠিতে। চিঠিতে উলমিয়া বলেন, বোর্ডের বিরুদ্ধে বারবারই অনৈতিকতার অভিযোগ উঠছে। একের পর এক মামলা হচ্ছে। ‘আমরা কেউ বোর্ডের কোনও কাজে এমন ভাবে যুক্ত হব না, যাতে মনে হয় নিজেদের স্বার্থ সিদ্ধির জন্য কাজ করছি। এ ব্যাপারে একটা ঘোষণাও হওয়া দরকার।’ সমস্ত বোর্ড সদস্যকে ওই ঘোষণায় সই করার আহ্বান জানান উলমিয়া। তিনি দাবি করেন, তিতি স্বস্তের মতো অর্ধকরী লেনদেনের ক্ষেত্রে আরও স্বচ্ছতা আনুক বোর্ড। যাতে কোনও ভুল

বোঝাবুঝি না হয়, তাই জনসাধারণকে সব কিছু জানতে দেওয়া হোক।

সভার শুরুতে রণবীর এই চিঠি পড়ে শোনালে আলোড়ন পড়ে যায়। বিরোধী নেতারা বলতে থাকেন তারা সই করবেন না। সি এ বি প্রতিনিধি হিসাবে জগমোহন উলমিয়া তখন বলেন, “কারা সই করল না সেটাও

নোট করা হোক।” বিরোধীরা এর পর আর কথা বাজাননি। সবাই একে একে সই করে যান।

New border lines

The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus agreement is a model for future Indo-Pak engagement

THE ambit of the composite dialogue India and Pakistan have undertaken to address is so very vast that affixing milestones can appear dismally complicated. Is it material progress on the gas pipeline and consolidation of economic cooperation that's requisite for bilateral goodwill? Or a cordial exit from the Baglihar dispute? Or must it take swift resolution of all border disputes before a working engagement can be announced? Else, it is enough just to have our ministers on talking terms to confirm the thaw? All such queries can be routed to the border. The test is simple: any pact or proposal that in any way eases border crossings marks substantial progress. Agreement between the two countries on starting a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad passes this test. It proves that through open-minded negotiation, India and Pakistan can accommodate each other's concerns with their respective notions of national interest.

There is a short-sighted tendency to separate Indo-Pak engagement into people-to-people contact and official dialogue. Events of the last decade or so have, however, shown that to sustain contact between citizens, state cooperation is critical. Moreover, this decade amply demonstrates that officialdom cannot count off its successes in isolation. It needs visible endorsement from the people. A measure of bilateral

progress lies in the amount of space cleared for the people of India and Pakistan to be enabled to expect universal rules and procedures for travel to the other's country. There was a long moment when the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service appeared to have been lost to seemingly irreconcilable postures. Pakistan was set firmly against India's insistence on passengers carrying adequately stamped passports. New Delhi, in turn, could not countenance Islamabad's case that the bus service — and by extension, opportunities for travel across the Line of Control — be open only to Kashmiris. This week both objections have been heeded, and on April 7 the first bus will roll across the LoC. It will, by all accounts, be followed by the opening of Sindh-Rajasthan rail link and a bus connection between Amritsar and Lahore.

Connectivity, however, must be anchored in opportunities for border crossings. At present, travel is permitted mostly for a purpose — to visit relatives, for pilgrimage, for business, for seminars, and so on. Tourism is viewed with suspicion. Relaxation of procedures for cricket visas has, however, shown that Indians and Pakistanis can stream across the border in large numbers without posing any security risk. It would be a pity if they had to await special occasions before being allowed across.

Nuke & narcotics in pact push

BHARAT BHUSHAN

Islamabad, Feb. 16: Political leaders in India and Pakistan need to find ways to enhance trust and cooperation between the two countries despite the differences between them, external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh concluded at the end of his meeting with Pakistani leaders here.

The differences between the two countries, Singh felt, were normal "given the history and complexity of our relationship". But these needed to be addressed productively.

His bilateral visit to Pakistan, the external affairs minister claimed, had reinforced his "determination to continue working for expanding cooperation and understanding between our two countries".

Singh's counterpart Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri also noted "with satisfaction the overall improvements in atmospherics between the two countries". The positive steps being taken by the two sides, he said, augured well for the future of bilateral ties.

Singh announced a slew of measures to increase confidence between the two countries. Besides enhanced transport links, he said the officials of the two sides had been instructed that by July this year, the following agreements had to be finalised: on pre-notification of missile tests, memorandum of understanding between Indian Coastguards and Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency and an MoU between the two narcotics control authorities.

India and Pakistan, he said, had also decided to initiate discussions on reducing the risk of nuclear accidents or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons and prevention of incidents at sea.

The two sides have also agreed to consider further measures to alleviate the suffering of civilian prisoners and apprehended fishermen.

Pakistan's foreign minister



Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Natwar Singh shake hands before their meeting in Islamabad on Wednesday. (PTI)

revealed that Delhi has agreed to lease a government-owned building and a plot of land in Mumbai for the simultaneous opening of Pakistan's consulate in Mumbai and India's consulate in Karachi.

Kasuri said the issues of Kashmir, Siachen, Sir Creek, peace and security as well as the Baglihar and Kishenganga projects were discussed.

The two countries, it was evident, have also decided to upgrade their trade and economic links. Not only has India decided to examine the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline but also ways to improve eco-

nomics ties.

A joint study group on trade and economic cooperation at the level of commerce secretaries is scheduled to meet on February 22 and 23 in Delhi.

"There is a general acceptance of the many complementarities between India and Pakistan. In not realising their benefits, both are losing out," foreign secretary Shyam Saran said after the meeting between the two ministers.

Outlining the Indian strategy for negotiating the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline, Saran said Delhi and Tehran were discussing ways of bring-

ing the gas from Iran to a point on the India-Pakistan border. "Perhaps, an overarching tripartite agreement may be needed to achieve this."

Saran argued that enhancing transport links were essential for promoting trade as also people-to-people contact.

A number of confidence-building measures to this end had been envisaged. "The Indian high commission in Islamabad is issuing 10,000 visas per month," the foreign secretary said, suggesting that this was not the kind of activity that would take place in any other Indian mission.

Valley erupts in bus cheer

OUR BUREAU

Srinagar/Jammu, Feb. 16: A power-deprived Valley, plunged in darkness, lit up with firecrackers today over the news of the imminent launch of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service.

"It is a dream come true," said Deen Mohammad, a university student in Srinagar. "The bus will reunite thousands of families. Something great is happening to blood-soaked Kashmir after a long time."

The jubilation was matched by the welcome noises the political parties made even as they tried to corner credit for the April 7 opening of the road that has been in disuse for over five decades.

Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said in winter capital Jammu that it was a "historic" step that would "heal many wounds that time and distance had wreaked on local hearts".

"It is our mission that has been realised," he said at a hurriedly convened news conference this afternoon, indicating his ruling People's Democratic Party's main plank in the last Assembly polls.

Party president Mehbooba Mufti drove home the claim. "We fought the 2002 Assembly elections here with the chief electoral plank that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road should be opened as a prelude to easing of tensions between India and Pakistan."

"It has been our firm belief that Kashmir must serve as the bridge of friendship between the two countries. Today, that dream has been

realised," she said.

In her rival camp, Farooq Abdullah attributed the idea to his father, late Sheikh Abdullah. "My late father and founder of the National Conference had requested the then Pakistan President, General Ayub Khan, in 1964 that the road must be opened to allow the divided hearts to rejoice. That has finally happened."

The positive attitude extended to the separatist camp. The moderate faction of the All Parties' Hurriyat Conference described the scheduled opening as "a small significant step towards a solution to the Kashmir problem".

"The step taken by the two governments will hopefully narrow down distances and promote closer relationship in terms of understanding each others' point of view on issues confronting people in the subcontinent," Hurriyat chief spokesman Abdul Gani Bhat said in Srinagar.

The sentiment of the common man on both sides of the border was no different. "If the two countries have been able to agree on the road opening across the Line of Control, the day is not far off when they will agree on a permanent resolution of the Kashmir dispute," said Ghulam Mohiuddin of Srinagar, whose sister lives in Abbotabad, Pakistan.

"After 15 years of separation from my dear ones, I will be able to meet them... I am just counting the days until the bus service starts and I can go home," said Muhammad Iqbal Awan of Muzaffarabad, capital of PoK, who migrated 15 years ago.

India, Pakistan agree on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link

By Amit Baruah and B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 16. In a major breakthrough, India and Pakistan today agreed to allow travel across the Line of Control (LoC) by bus between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The service, under consideration since October 2003, is expected to start from April 7.

"Travel will be by an entry permit system, once identities are verified. Application forms for travel will be available with [the] designated authorities in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad," said a joint statement issued after the talks between the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and the Pakistani leadership.

Open to all citizens

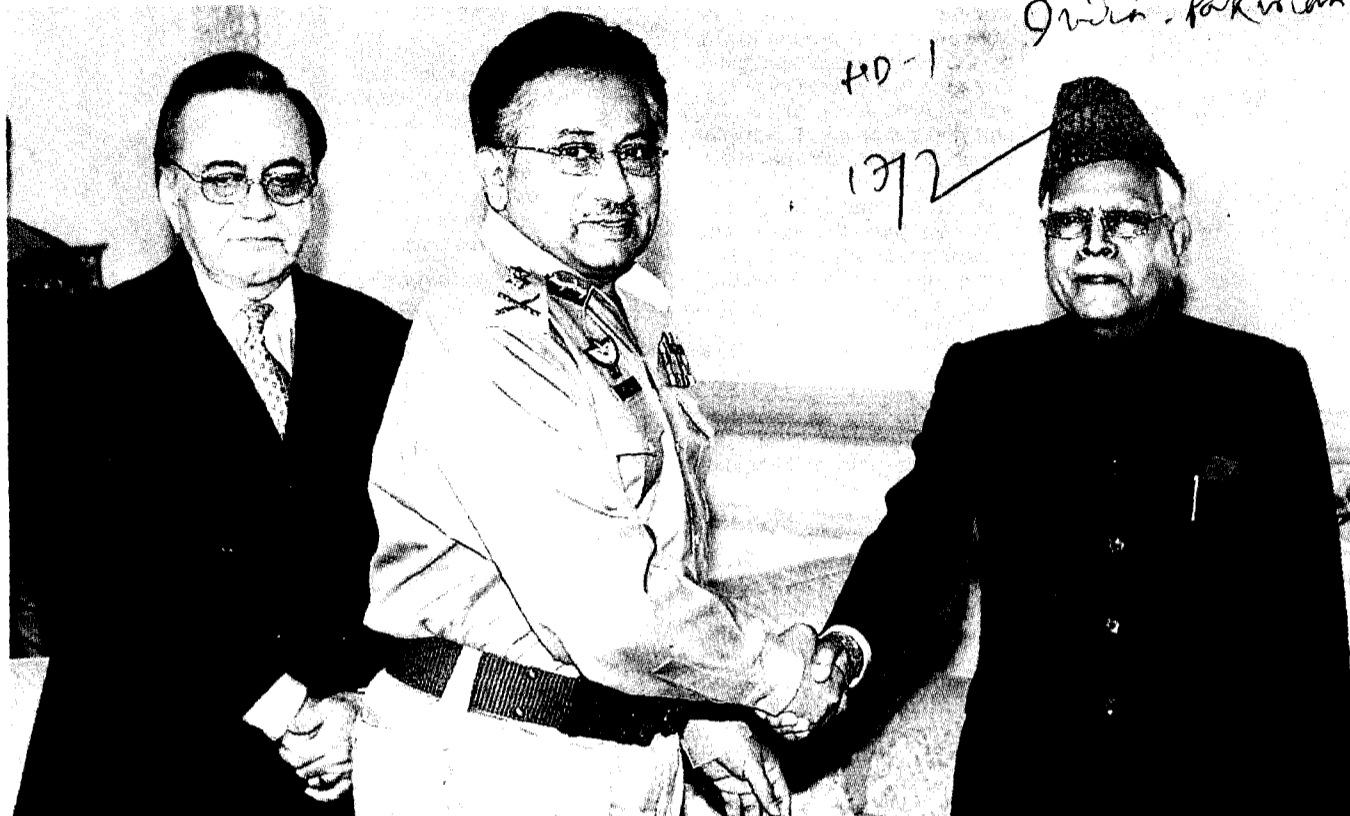
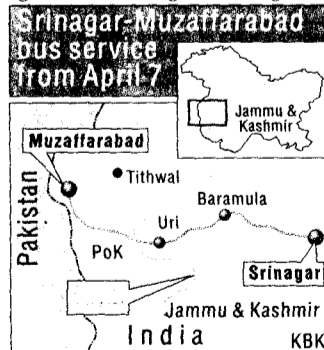
The Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons that the bus service could be used by all Indian and Pakistani citizens for travel in the whole of Jammu and Kashmir, including Baltistan and Gilgit. The frequency of the service is to be worked out.

He said all Indians would have to apply to the Regional Passport Officer, Srinagar, the designated authority, and the entry permits issued by India and Pakistan would be accepted by either side.

Route may be de-mined

Mr. Saran said that the LoC along the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route would be de-mined if necessary and all other measures to operationalise the bus service, including security concerns, would be taken up very soon. He clarified that India viewed the bus service as a humanitarian measure without prejudice to the stated positions of both countries on Jammu and Kashmir.

The much-awaited bus agreement was given the green



NEW VISTAS: External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and Foreign Minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri in Rawalpindi on Wednesday. India and Pakistan have signed many agreements taking bilateral relations to a new high. — AFP

signal after Mr. Singh met the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, at the Army House in Rawalpindi this morning. This was Mr. Singh's first official engagement after arrival here on Tuesday evening from Kabul.

Many accords

Mr. Singh and his Pakistani counterpart, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, who did not take questions at a joint press appearance, reported agreements in separate statements on a number of subjects. These include: a new Amritsar-Lahore bus service, expediting the Khokrapar-Munabao rail link and the lease of a government building and a plot of land in Mumbai to Pakistan for the simultaneous opening of the Pakistani consulate in the Maharashtra capital and the Indian consulate in Karachi.

Mr. Kasuri said that Pakistan had "noted with satisfaction" the Indian decision to consider the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline as a stand-alone project. "We hope for the early finalisation of an agreement."

On his part, Mr. Singh said

that India had agreed to look at a gas pipeline through Pakistan if its concerns on security and assured supplies were addressed.

"As you can see, we have come a long way over the past year or so ... I am convinced that cooperation between our two countries is not just a desirable objective; it is an imperative," read Mr. Singh's statement.

He said the process could be sustained only in an atmosphere "free from terrorism and violence, in the framework of implementation of [the] commitment made [by Pakistan] on January 6, 2004." Mr. Singh said that both sides had instructed

their officials to finalise agreements by July 2005 on pre-notification of missile tests, an understanding between the Indian and Pakistani Coast Guard and narcotics authorities.

Both countries also agreed to initiate discussions on agreements for nuclear risk reduction, unauthorised use of nuclear weapons, prevention of incidents at sea and alleviation of the situation of civilian prisoners and fishermen.

Rail link

According to Mr. Kasuri, the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, has instructed the authorities concerned to expedite work on the Khokrapar-Muna-

bao rail link between Sindh and Rajasthan. India wants the rail service to start in October.

"We hope that the Joint Study Group meeting at the level of Commerce Secretaries to be held in New Delhi on February 22-23 will come up with recommendations which will be mutually beneficial to both countries," he said.

Pakistan also reiterated its invitation to the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, to visit the country. Mr. Singh told Pakistani leaders that he would convey this sentiment to Dr. Singh upon return to New Delhi.

Kashmir parties, people hail decision: Page 12

Cricket series is on

By Our Special Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 16. The Pakistan cricket team's tour to India is on, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons today.

In response to a specific question, Mr. Saran said he

had no reason to believe that the cricket series would not go ahead.

Asked if the Test match would be played in Ahmedabad, Mr. Saran replied that this was a matter for the two cricket boards to sort out.

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 16. — Displaying flexibility, India and Pakistan today decided to launch a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, from 7 April for all their nationals. They also agreed to hold talks to reduce the risk of nuclear accidents and unauthorised use of weapons as part of confidence-building measures.

Travel across the Line of Control by this 170-km bus link will be by an entry permit system, once identities are verified. Application forms for travel will be available with the designated authorities in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, Pakistan foreign minister Mr Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri announced after holding wide-ranging talks with India's external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh.

"The practical procedures do not change or affect our respective positions on Jammu and Kashmir. Essentially, it is a humanitarian procedure," external affairs ministry spokesman Mr Navtej Sarna told reporters. India, which had mooted the resumption of the bus service, had so far been insisting that passport should be the document for identification, while Pakistan had been saying that the service should be open only for Kashmiris from both sides of the LoC.

In the give-and-take approach, Pakistan has accepted India's proposals for entry permits while dropping its demand that this route be only used by Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC. India on its part has not insisted on the need for passports along with the entry permits.

Mr Sarna said the arrangement would cover all parts of Jammu and Kashmir, including Baltistan and Gilgit. After the announcement, both Mr Singh and Mr Kasuri made separate statements after their meeting in the Pakistan foreign office but declined to take any questions from a battery of electronic and print media

reporters. "No doubt, we have differences between us. This is only normal given the history and complexity of our relationship."

"However, as leaders, it is incumbent upon us to find ways through which we can enhance trust and cooperation, so that the differences can be addressed more productively," Mr Singh, who also called on President Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Mr Shaikat Aziz, said.

He made it clear that the process can be sustained "only in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence, in the framework of implementation of commitment made on 6 January, 2004."

Mr Kasuri said the two sides had discussions on the "core issue" of Jammu and Kashmir, and Pakistan "impressed" upon the Indian government for its "early and final settlement" in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Kashmir.

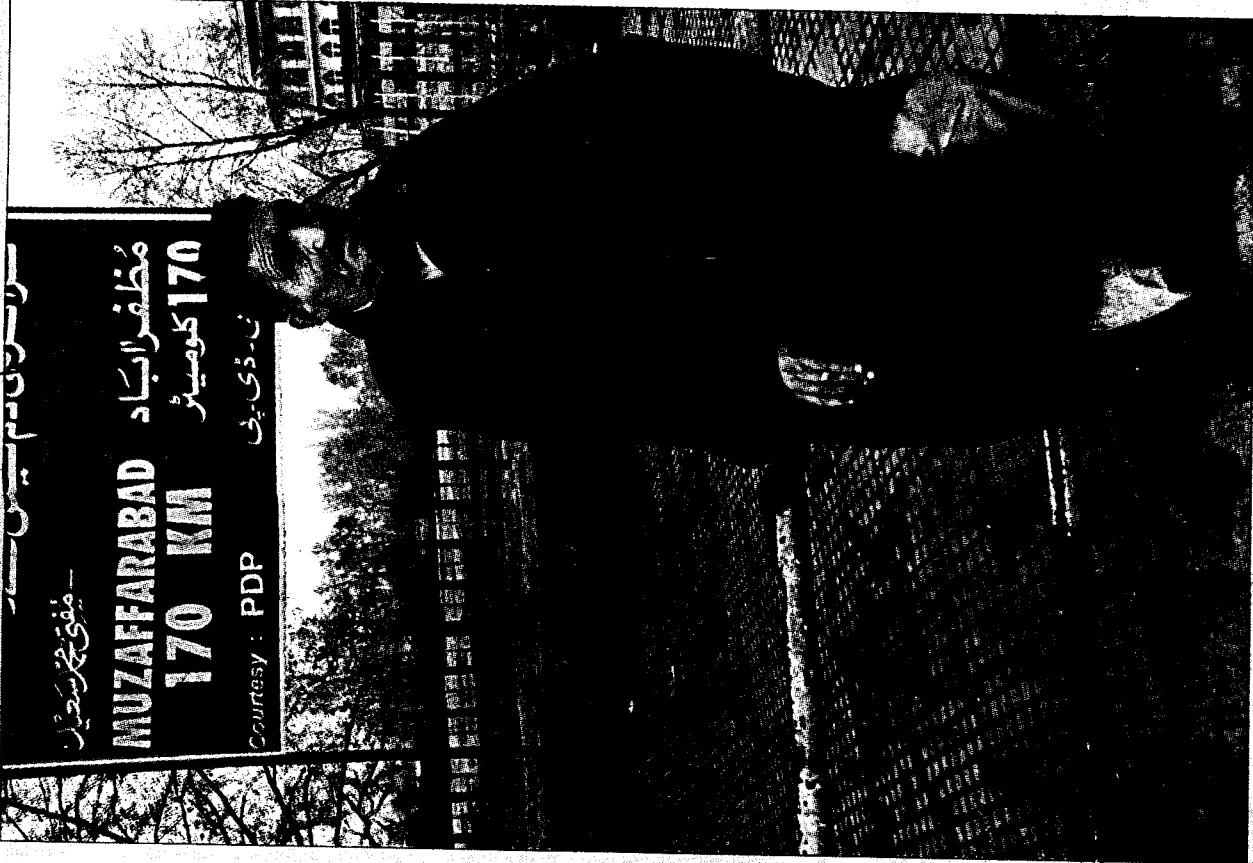
Observing that a stage has arrived in the peace process when "significant positive developments" have taken place over the past one year, he said "at the same time, it was also felt that continued appropriate political inter-action would inevitably impart further momentum to the process."

Referring to the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, he said the two sides have agreed on "mutually acceptable procedures."

Later, foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran told a press conference that neither side was trying to use or should use the procedures to change their respective positions. The arrangement was for all Pakistani and Indian nationals, including people of Jammu and Kashmir, but not of any third country.

Mr Saran said both Gen. Musharraf and Mr Aziz welcomed the "achievement" made today. Mr Singh said it has been agreed to look at a pipeline through Pakistan "subject to satisfaction of our concerns related to security and assured supplies."

Officials have been instructed that



CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MILESTONE: Can it really be achieved by travelling only 170 km, wonders the Srinagar resident on Wednesday. — AFP

in the series of meetings between now standing between Indian Coast Guards and and July, agreements are finalised on. Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency pre-notification of missile tests, MoU and another memorandum of under-

MEASURE FOR MEASURE



Musharraf greets Natwar on Wednesday.

Travel between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad will be by entry permit system for all nationals of both countries once identities are verified. Application forms will be available in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

Indians wishing to go to PoK will apply to the Regional Passport Office in Srinagar which will then hand over the list to its counterpart across the LoC. Those cleared from the Pakistani side, will then be issued entry permits to travel to PoK. Pakistanis wishing to travel to J&K will follow a similar procedure and will be issued such permits from the Indian side.

Train service between Munabaon (Rajasthan) and Kokharapur from October.

Bus service between Amritsar and Lahore and to religious places such as Nankana Sahib.

Agreements by July on pre-notification of missile tests, MoU between Indian Coast Guard and Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency and MoU between Narcotics Control authorities.

Risk of nuclear accidents and unauthorised use of N-weapons to be reduced.

standing between Narcotics Control Authorities.

More reports on pages 4 & 12

Natwar hopes to boost India-Pakistan ties

By Amit Baruah

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 15. The External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, said today that he intended to use his three-day visit to Pakistan to provide further impetus to the India-Pakistan rapprochement process.

Speaking at the airport here soon after arrival, Mr. Singh, however, stressed that the dialogue process could be sustained only in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence in the framework of the January 6, 2004 agreement.

"We are looking at additional transportation links between us," Mr. Singh, who will meet the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf; the Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, and his counterpart, Khurshid Kasuri, tomorrow, said.

"Tomorrow, I will have the opportunity to convey the greetings of Prime Minister [Manmohan Singh] to President [Musharraf] and Mr. Shaukat Aziz. In my meeting tomorrow with Foreign Minister Mahmud Kasuri, I will be reiterating India's commitment

to a tension-free, peaceful and cooperative relationship with Pakistan."

Mr. Singh said: "We have now agreed to consider a pipeline through Pakistan, subject to satisfaction of our concerns related to security and assured supplies." He claimed that substantial progress had been made in the bilateral relationship since January 2004. "The process had been imparted vigour after the new Government came to power in India in May 2004. Since then we have come a fair distance."

The Minister said he was confident of taking the process forward between India and Pakistan.

"In today's context, cooperation and cordiality between our two countries is an imperative and a desirable objective."

Mr. Singh pointed out that diplomatic and communication links had been restored to pre-December 2001 levels.

"One round of the composite dialogue has been completed, and the second round initiated in December last," he said, adding that several new sub-

jects had been added to the composite dialogue.

The Commerce Secretaries of the two countries would meet in a week's time as part of their Joint Study Group deliberations.

Several agreements were possible in the next few months, including one on pre-notification of flight tests.

Accord likely on CBMs

In a related development, the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, told presspersons that India was looking at Mr. Singh's visit as providing renewed momentum to the bilateral engagement process.

Several new confidence-building measures (CBMs) were likely to be agreed upon, he said on board a special flight from Kabul to Islamabad.

According to him, India and Pakistan would also take the opportunity to review the progress made so far in the composite dialogue process.

Mr. Saran also pointed out that Mr. Singh's meeting with Gen. Musharraf would be the first high-level contact with the Pakistani President since the General met Dr. Manmohan Singh in September 2004.

On the Baglihar dam issue, Mr. Saran said there was still room for bilateral discussions to sort out the ticklish issue.

He reiterated that in the last round of talks, considerable progress had been made between the two sides on the technical details of the project.

Pakistan's stand: Page 11

THE HINDU

16 FEB 2005

16 FEB 2005

Natwar hopeful of taking dialogue process further

Press Trust of India

Karzai to visit India on 23 Feb

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 15. — Setting a positive tone for his talks with President Pervez Musharraf and other Pakistani leaders, external affairs minister Mr K Natwar Singh today said he was "hopeful" of taking the dialogue process further but made it clear that it could be sustained only in an atmosphere free from terrorism and violence.

Mr Singh said in an arrival statement at Islamabad airport that "we are looking at additional transportation links between us".

Among other issues, the two sides would be trying to sort out stumbling blocks in the way of starting the much-awaited bus link between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad which is stuck on the type of documentation to be used by the passengers on both sides of the LoC.

The minister announced that commerce secretaries of the two countries would meet in a week's time in the framework of a Joint Study Group to explore and enhance trade and

KABUL, Feb. 15. — Afghan President Mr Hamid Karzai will visit India on 23 February, officials said. This will be his first visit to India after the 9 October presidential polls in Afghanistan which he won with an overwhelming majority. — PTI

economic cooperation.

Aid for Afghanistan

Earlier, today, on a day-long visit to Afghanistan, Mr Singh held talks with Afghan President Mr Hamid Karzai, his counterpart Mr Abdullah Abdullah, defence minister Mr Rahim Wardar and health minister Mr Syed Mohamed Amin Fatimi. He also called on 93-year-old former King Zaheer Shah.

Mr Singh gifted 49 vehicles to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and announced that India would supply 5,000 metres of summer-combat uniform cloth to it. He handed over the newly-built surgical ward of the Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health to the Afghan government.



Afghan President Mr Hamid Karzai with Mr Natwar Singh at the Presidential Palace in Kabul on Tuesday. — AFP

THE STATESMAN 16 FEB 2005

Gas pipeline project not to be linked to other issues

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, FEB. 10. The Cabinet decision yesterday not to link the proposed pipeline from Iran through Pakistan to India to progress on "other issues" between New Delhi and Islamabad is expected to clear the way for solid negotiations on the project.

Highly-placed Government sources told *The Hindu* today that the decision had put the project on a "stand alone" shelf. The pipeline would no longer be linked to issues such as Pakistan giving reverse transit to Indian goods to Iran and Central Asia as well as grant of the Most-Favoured Nation status by Pakistan to India.

The sources said that the Iran-Pakistan-India, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India and the Myanmar-Bangladesh-India pipelines could be placed in the overall context of bilateral eco-

conomic relations but not be linked to progress on other issues. According to the sources, the three projects may widen and deepen the economic relations in South Asia. They would lead to the establishment of a much-needed trust and confidence among the nations concerned.

"Evolving position"

Interestingly, the Cabinet decision comes after considerable inter-Governmental debate and described as an "evolving position."

For instance, the Petroleum Minister, Mani Shankar Aiyar, said after talks with the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, on November 24 here that the pipeline issue and the question of transit of Indian goods through Pakistan could not be looked at separately. However, on January 19, the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, said, "I see in these pipelines the ... potential to link our re-

gion and set up a new paradigm in regional cooperation and friendship."

The sources pointed out that recent high-level contacts between India and Iran as well as Pakistan and Iran had cleared the air on key issues relating to the pipeline. India, they said, was not contemplating any bilateral agreement with Pakistan, but would depend upon Iran to deliver gas to a designated point in India.

India and Pakistan will not be financially engaged in the work and the project is expected to go ahead with the participation of an international consortium.

"No contradiction"

There was, the sources said, no contradiction in going ahead with both the gas pipeline and the LNG projects with Iran. In fact, Iran had offered to offset any shortfall in gas supplies by the pipeline through the LNG route.

THE HINDU

10 FEB 2005

10 FEB 2005

Pak denies objecting to Indian in WB panel

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: Pakistan has denied reports that it sought replacement of World Bank vice-president Praful Patel from a panel to review its case in the Baglihar issue.

Pakistan's Deputy Chief of Mission in Washington Mohammad Sadiq told APP that reports to this effect, which first appeared in the Pakistani press, were not true. The Pakistani newspaper The News first reported Islamabad's objection to Patel on grounds of his Indian origin, although Sadiq sought to blame a subsequent comment on the story in TOI, terming it as "malicious and totally fabricated."

In a February 3 article, The News, the English-language newspaper of the

Jang Group, reported that "The World Bank has replaced its Indian-born official with an American for reviewing Pakistan's complaint on Baglihar dam following objections raised by the Pakistani government."

The report was based on remarks made by Shiraz Jameel Memon, Pakistan's Acting Commissioner for Indus Water, at a discussion on Baglihar dam under the aegis of Hamdard Thinkers Forum.

Menon was reported by the Pakistani paper as saying the "World Bank had appointed Praful Patel, regional vice-president, South Asia region, for reviewing Pakistan's complaint about Baglihar dam, which is being built by India on the river Chenab in held Kashmir. Pakistan raised objections about the World Bank officer and consequent-

ly an American was assigned the task to look into the matter."

But Sadiq was presumably so busy monitoring Indian papers that he overlooked the initial report in the Pakistani media, causing the misdirected denial. The TOI column by this correspondent in fact reported, based on clarifications from World Bank officials, that Praful Patel was a Ugandan national and had nothing to do with the Baglihar issue, and that Pakistan's paranoia was misplaced.

The column addressed the issue of raking up ethnicity and nationality of international officials reported in the News report, particularly since many Indian and Pakistani officials at the World Bank had served the region with distinction and without bias.

Neutral mediator for Baglihar: World Bank

India, Pakistan
57-5
917

Associated Press

ISLAMABAD, Feb. 8. — The World Bank is set to appoint a neutral expert to arbitrate in a dispute between Pakistan and India over a dam being constructed in Kashmir, the bank's president said.

In an interview broadcast today, Mr James Wolfensohn would not specify how long the arbitration process over the Baglihar Dam — which has complicated a peace process between the two nuclear rivals — would take, but said, "it's not going to be years". Pakistan contends that the dam India is building in the divi-

ded Himalayan region would deprive Punjab — Pakistan's main agricultural province — of water for irrigation, and violates a World Bank-brokered 1960 treaty on sharing water from the Indus River system.

"My guess is that at the appropriate time, not too far away, a mediator will be appointed ... to assess the facts as presented and then the process will continue and you will get an answer," Mr Wolfensohn told the private Geo television network.

Mr Wolfensohn is currently visiting Pakistan, and held talks yesterday with President Gen. Pervez Musharraf and Prime Minister Mr

Shaukat Aziz. Islamabad asked the bank last month to appoint a neutral expert to mediate, claiming talks between the nuclear-armed rivals on the dam had failed.

New Delhi said they should hold another round rather than involve a third party, and says it has offered to make design changes to the dam, which Pakistan has rejected.

Both countries, however, have played down the impact of the dam dispute on the fragile, year-long peace process between Pakistan and India, aimed at resolving five decades of enmity, including their competing territorial claims to Kashmir.

THE STATESMAN

09 FEB 2005

আমদাবাদ নিয়ে পাক অনিচ্ছা মানছে দিল্লি

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল ● নয়াদিল্লি

৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি: ভারত-পাক ক্রিকেট সিরিজে অপ্রত্যাশিত প্রভাবশালী ভূমিকা নিয়েছেন শিবশঙ্কর মেনন। পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের অত্যন্ত ঘনিষ্ঠ বলে পরিচিত পাকিস্তানে ভারতের এই রাষ্ট্রদূতের আজ পেশ করা রিপোর্টের প্রেক্ষিতে সিরিজ নিয়ে জটিলতা অনেকটাই কেটেছে। ভারত সরকার স্থির করেছে, আমদাবাদে টেস্ট খেলার ব্যাপারে তারা আর জোরাজুরি করবে না। ও দিকে পাকিস্তান প্রস্তাব দিয়েছে, তেমন হলে ঠাকরের মুহূর্তইয়ে তারা এক দিনের ম্যাচ খেলে দেবে।

মেনন আজ ভারতীয় বিদেশমন্ত্রককে যে রিপোর্ট দিয়েছেন, তাতে স্পষ্ট বলেছেন, আমদাবাদে টেস্ট খেলা পাকিস্তানের পক্ষে সত্যিই সমস্যার। এই রিপোর্টের সবচেয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অংশ হল: পাকিস্তানকে

ক্রিকেট সিরিজে এই ছাড়টুকু দেওয়া হলে, পাকিস্তানও ভারতকে ভবিষ্যতে কূটনৈতিক ক্ষেত্রে নানা ছাড় দেবে।

পাশাপাশি, আজই লাহোর থেকে সাংসদ রাজীব শুল্ক বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহকে ফোনে জানান, তাঁর দৌতা ব্যর্থ। পাকিস্তান আমদাবাদে খেলতে রাজি হচ্ছে না।

একই দিনে মেনন ও শুল্কের কাছ থেকে আমদাবাদে টেস্ট খেলা নিয়ে পাকিস্তানের নেতিবাচক মনোভাব জেনে বেসরকারি ভাবে কেন্দ্রও মেনে নিয়েছে যে, সেখানে পাক ক্রিকেট দলকে খেলানো নিয়ে তারা আর জোরাজুরি করবে না। তবে একই সঙ্গে তারা সরকারি ভাবে এমন কোনও ঘোষণাও করবে না। তারা বরং চাইছে, ঘোষণাটা করুক ভারতীয় ক্রিকেট কন্ট্রোল বোর্ড। সেই জন্যই তারা জগমোহন ডালমিয়ার সঙ্গে প্রথমে আলোচনায় বসতে চায়। মঙ্গলবার রাত

পর্যন্ত অবশ্য ডালমিয়ার সঙ্গে কেউ যোগাযোগ করেনি।

বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, মেননের রিপোর্ট পাওয়ার পর এটা অন্তত বোঝা গিয়েছে যে, পাকিস্তান আমদাবাদে টেস্ট খেলা নিয়ে নিরর্থক ঝামেলা করছে না। বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ পাকিস্তান সফরে গিয়ে ১৫ থেকে ১৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি বিভিন্ন পর্যায়ে যে বৈঠক করবেন, তাতে কাশ্মীরের পাশাপাশি থাকবে অন্যান্য দ্বিপাক্ষিক বিষয়। এর মধ্যে মার্চে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহকে পাকিস্তানে সৌজন্য সফরে যাওয়ার আমন্ত্রণও জানানো রয়েছে। সেই আবেহে এই জেদাজেদি সীমান্তের ও-পারে ঠিক সঙ্কেত বয়ে নিয়ে যাবে না বলেই ধারণা মনমোহনের সচিবালয়ের।

আমদাবাদ-ছাড়ের বিনিময়ে পাকিস্তান অবশ্য চেন্নাই বা কলকাতায় টেস্ট খেলতে আগ্রহী। আমদাবাদ ছাড়াও ক্রিকেটীয় কারণে পাক টিম

খেলতে আপত্তি জানিয়েছে ধর্মশালায়। সফরসূচি অনুযায়ী, তাদের প্রথম ম্যাচটাই ধর্মশালায়। পাক ক্রিকেটারদের বক্তব্য: সমুদ্রপৃষ্ঠ থেকে অত উঁচুতে খেলতে তাদের অসুবিধা হবে। এ ছাড়া ধর্মশালা নিয়ে নারাজ হওয়ার অন্য কোনও কারণ নেই।

প্রশ্ন হল, আমদাবাদ থেকে যদি খেলা সরিয়ে নেওয়া হয় বিজেপি সরকার সেটা কী ভাবে নেবে? মঙ্গলবার নরেন্দ্র মোদী ফোনে এই প্রতিবেদককে যা বলেছেন, তার মর্মার্থ, একেবারেই ভাল ভাবে নেবে না। মোদী বললেন, “তেমন কিছু হলে তা অত্যন্ত কাপুরুষোচিত ব্যাপার হবে।”

এই দিনই মুশারফের উদ্দেশে তিনি কী বলেছেন, ফের শুনিতে দিলেন গুজরাতের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী: মুশারফ খেল বন্ধ করনা হায় তো কাশ্মীর কা খেল বন্ধ করো। আমদাবাদ কা খেল কিউ বন্ধ কর রাহে হো?”

"Venue is for cricket boards to decide"

By Our Diplomatic
Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 7. The Government of India feels that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) should sort out the difference of opinion on playing a Test match in Ahmedabad during the coming India-Pakistan cricket series.

South Block officials told this correspondent that the Government's role was restricted to providing security for both one-day and Test matches, and

not venue selection.

The Government had not, for instance, been consulted by the BCCI on selection of Mohali or Bangalore as the other Test venues. Hence, any problem over Ahmedabad should be dealt with by the two boards.

The PCB, too, seems to feel the same way. "The PCB has all along maintained that the venues' issue should be amicably resolved between the two boards and that it was the privilege of the host country to select [the] centres for matches," it said in a statement released

by the Pakistan High Commission today.

The PCB stated that after receiving the report of Pakistan's "security team" that visited India, a request was made to the BCCI that the venue of the second Test be shifted from Ahmedabad to some other city.

"In making the request, [the] PCB wished to preserve and strengthen bilateral relations that have been enhanced at the public and Government levels after the resumption of the cricketing series between the two countries," the statement

said.

The Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, today said the Union Government should not remain a "silent spectator" to the "insult" Gujarat had suffered due to Pakistan's decision.

A State Government statement released here quoted Mr. Modi as saying during election rallies in Jharkhand that the Government should not take this "insult to Gujarati self-esteem and pride" lightly.

**BCCI official
for Lahore: Page 11**

Ahmedabad to Islamabad: No match, no series

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA/NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. — With just over two weeks remaining for the Pakistan team to arrive in India for the scheduled tour, the BCCI has yet to declare the fixtures.

And today, the issue was muddied further with Gujarat Cricket Association president

Mr Narhari Amin, a Congress leader, saying: "Our message (to PCB) is clear — either play in Ahmedabad or call off the entire series. I will raise this issue at the next BCCI meeting."

The Congress today expressed its "surprise" over the PCB decision. The AICC media department chairperson, Ms Girija Vyas said: "We are unable to make sense of the

Pakistani board's move, especially at a time when the Indo-Pak dialogue on peace is going on smoothly under a harmonious atmosphere."

Mr Amin said the GCA had yet to get an official intimation about the PCB rejecting Ahmedabad as a venue. PCB chairman Mr Shahryar Khan had yesterday cited "political reasons" for not wanting to play in

Ahmedabad. "What kind of political reasons are they citing. If it is the post-Godhra communal riots that he (Shahryar) is indicating, then I would like to know as to after how many years will they pardon Gujarat?" Mr Amin asked.

He indicated that the Pakistan government had a "personal score" to settle with Gujarat as Mr Narendra Modi, the chief

minister, had often criticised General Musharraf during his election campaigns. "Mr Modi could be the reason behind their decision as there does not seem to be another reason."

A statement from the PCB today, however, stated that security was the only reason for them requesting a change in venue. "The PCB has all along maintained that the venue issue

should be amicably resolved between the two Boards and that it was the privilege of the host country to select centres for the matches."

The BCCI, though, is trying to convince its Pakistani counterpart that Ahmedabad is a safe place to play. BCCI officials have again started to make contradictory statements.

■ See AHMEDABAD: pg 13

AHMEDABAD:

(Continued from page 1)

While Mr Rajeev Shukla, the BCCI vice president, said he was flying to Pakistan to sort things out with the PCB, the secretary, Mr SK Nair, told The Statesman that he had no knowledge of such a visit. "I am going to Pakistan and will meet Mr Shahryar Khan (PCB chairman) and government officials to resolve the issue," Mr Shukla said in Delhi today. Mr Nair, however, said that the BCCI was talking to the Union home ministry and hoped the issue would be resolved. "We don't need to send anyone to Pakistan. Their team came here and now the security aspect has to be discussed between the two governments," he added.

Asked whether the BCCI was concerned with the fact that not too much time was left and alternate venues may not get enough time for preparation, he said: "All out Test centres are in perfect order." Reminded that during India's tour to Pakistan, the PCB accommodated most of the BCCI's wishes regarding the choice of venues, Mr Nair was evasive. "We gave them our observations and they agreed," he said. India did not play a Test match in either Karachi or Peshawar — opting to play one-dayers at these two venues — citing security reasons.

The speculation doing the rounds is that in case Ahmedabad does not get to host a Test, then either Chennai or Kolkata may get the match.

Taking strong exception to Pakistan's reservations about playing at Ahmedabad, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad today jumped into the fray and urged the government not to allow the Pakistani side play any match in the country.

08 FEB 2005

THE STATESMAN

Refusing Ahmedabad

The Pakistanis are right to object

If an Indian cricket team visiting Pakistan or Bangladesh has doubts about playing at certain venues for security reasons, the BCCI is fully within its rights to voice the players' concerns and get matches shifted to safer venues. The same right must be conceded to the Pakistani Cricket Board when it does not want to play a Test at Ahmedabad. Given the inclinations and past record of the Narendra Modi government, it cannot be said that the reason is far-fetched — consider what would happen if Pakistan thrashed India at a match in Ahmedabad. The peace process between the two countries received a boost from the warm hospitality given to Indian players and tourists during the last cricket series in Pakistan; it is important to maintain that atmosphere. It is possible to protect Pakistani players in Ahmedabad, not to ensure that no ugly attacks are attempted. But what if a Pakistan victory were to provoke inflammatory communal rhetoric or worse, violence on the streets of the sort patented by the VHP, Bajrang Dal and RSS? It would sully the atmosphere in which the series is held when Delhi's emphasis is on people-to-people contact to break the diplomatic logjam with Pakistan.

Heresay as it may sound to those who wish to keep sport and politics in separate compartments, an utopian ideal in the South Asian context, it is important to be pro-active and not allow ugly situations to develop. It would be better politics to shift the Ahmedabad Test to a safer venue like Chennai. The Pakistanis have not objected to Mumbai as a match venue even though the city is liable to be held hostage by the Shiv Sena, who once dug up a Test pitch to protest a Pakistan tour. On any index of communal irascibility, Bal Thackeray's troops are several notches saner than Narendra Modi's henchmen, and the former don't control Mumbai as fully as the latter do Ahmedabad. The PCB says it has political reservations about Pakistan playing at Ahmedabad. Just as India can break off sporting and other ties when Pakistan's actions get too provocative, the Pakistanis are entitled to suggest that Ahmedabad might change its politics if it wants to play host to a Pakistani cricket team.

THE STATESMAN

08 FEB 2005

Delhi to urge Pak rethink on Ahmedabad

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD, Feb. 6.— India will ask Pakistan to reconsider their cricket team's reservations over playing in Ahmedabad which the Pakistan Cricket Board said was due to reasons political.

In the wake of PCB saying it was averse to playing there, indications were available that the Test could be shifted to Chennai. "The ministry of external affairs will take up the matter with Pakistan's foreign ministry asking them to reconsider the decision," a BCCI source said here. "The government said it is committed to providing full security and did not envisage any problem with the match being played in Ahmedabad," the source said.

PCB chairman Mr Shaharyar Khan cited "political reasons" for its reservations over playing in Ahmedabad. "Yes, we have expressed our inability and our reservations are based on political reasons," Mr Khan said in Karachi. He confirmed writing a letter to BCCI in this regard and said PCB did not even want to play a one-dayer in Ahmedabad.

BCCI president Mr Ranbir Singh Mahendra said the Board was engaged in discussions with the home ministry. The visitors also seem to be reluctant to play in Bangalore.

Gujarat government today said it could not see any "political reasons" behind PCB's move. "I cannot see any political reasons that could have made them take this decision," government spokesperson Mr IK Jadeja said. The Congress said that though the logic behind such a statement by Mr Khan was not known, it would continue to support Ahmedabad as a Test or ODI venue.

Another report on page 12

THE STATESMAN

07 FEB 2005

Baglihar: Pakistan's plea to World Bank

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 6. The World Bank president, James D. Wolfensohn, arrived here tonight on a three-day visit for an interaction with his interlocutors on the "economic performance" of Pakistan and how it is implementing its Poverty Reduction Strategy.

Pakistan has said it will use the opportunity to raise the issue of construction of the Baglihar hydroelectric project and seek an early appointment of a neutral expert to decide on its differences with India on the power project dam on the Chenab river.

The World Bank had mediated the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, which envisages distribution of six river waters flowing out of India.

Under the provisions of the treaty, the Bank has residual responsibility to settle any differences between India and Pakistan on interpretation of the treaty.

Violation of provisions

Last month Pakistan petitioned World Bank accusing India of going ahead with the construction of the dam in violation of the provisions of the treaty. Taking note of the complaint, the Bank has promised

to look into the matter under the provisions of the treaty. Several quarters in Pakistan are apprehensive that the whole process of mediation could be time-consuming and of little help as much of the work on the dam has been completed.

It is against this backdrop that Islamabad is expected to press Mr. Wolfensohn for speedy mediation.

Mr. Wolfensohn, in the course of next two days, is scheduled to meet the President, Pervez Musharraf, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Shaukat Aziz.

He will also meet the Prime Minister's Adviser on Finance,

the Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan, the Chief Minister of Punjab and representatives of civil society and the private sector. A meeting with non-government organisations working on disability, HIV/AIDS and micro-credit is also scheduled.

Since the military coup of 1999 by Gen. Musharraf, Pakistan has been following the World Bank-IMF agenda of economic reforms and the World Bank has lavished praise on Islamabad for implementing its agenda.

But within and outside Pakistan there is serious concern over growing number of people below the poverty line.

THE HINDU

07 FEB 2005

54 heartaches

The subcontinent's sub-humanity

The pictures of the families of 54 "unacknowledged" prisoners-of-war, believed to be held in Pakistan for the past 33 years, lighting candles at India Gate a few evenings ago were as painful as they were poignant. It would seem that the Indian authorities have also virtually forgotten those soldiers — in the larger sense of the term — taken captive while fighting for their country during the war in 1971.

India does not appear to have raised the issue forcefully enough during bilateral talks at various levels held at different times, and pleads a pathetic helplessness when Pakistan denies their existence. Yet the figure of 54 is what the government has itself stated on the floor of Parliament, and there is substantial evidence with the government — and the families — to back up that position. Surely by now some kind of pressure could have been applied by the government to involve internationally accredited human rights organisations to search for them, or at least to determine their fate.

It has been pretty clear that to press the PoW line will not work. For if Pakistan is to admit to their presence in any of its jails it would be acknowledging a violation of the Geneva conventions. If any of them are still alive they would be listed differently. That's what made it so easy for Pervez Musharraf to assert (at the Agra summit of 2002) "am I mad that I'll keep a prisoner for 30 years" and then promise "as a soldier" to have the matter examined afresh.

Only to declare a few weeks later that the records in Pakistani jails did not establish the presence of Indian PoWs (of 1971 vintage). Not a word has been spoken about there being no trace of individuals of their name/description. That's what hurts: technicalities and semantics have taken priority over basic humanity.

Every now and again, the remains of those killed in World War I & II, or Vietnam, are "discovered" and quickly returned to their homeland for a final resting place, but governments in India and Pakistan cannot rise above their differences, complicated though they be, to work on these 54 cases. It makes a mockery of all claims of cultural riches and glorious traditions of the peoples of the sub-continent. All too often they act less than human. Even fishermen carried by the tides across maritime boundaries are not spared the bitterness of Indo-Pak relations.

Despite all these hurdles both governments claim to be committed to the bilateral dialogue process, and back-channel diplomacy is also in place in both countries. Surely bringing some closure, if nothing more positive, to those 54 families will help inject a humane element into all the jaw-jaw.

THE STATESMAN

04 FEB 2005

Pak wants to avoid Test at Modi's Ahmedabad

Pervez fears backlash at home from hawks

Kadambari Murali
New Delhi, February 1

PAKISTAN IS unhappy with the choice of Ahmedabad as a Test venue for the upcoming series in India and is wondering how to diplomatically put the matter to the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

A top Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) official told *HT* on Tuesday that while there was no official directive, Islamabad felt that if the Pakistani team played in Ahmedabad — the scene of large-scale Hindu-Muslim riots in 2002 and perceived to be a “communally sensitive area” — it could trigger a backlash at home.

“No one wants this tour to assume any political overtones other than what’s already there,” the source said. “For Pakistan, to play in Ahmedabad would definitely amount to a political statement and the fundamentalist parties at home would have a field day.”

Incidentally, President Pervez Musharraf is the patron-in-chief of the PCB and has been taking a close interest in its affairs recently.

The problem seems to be how to put this delicate issue to the BCCI, for the PCB has always maintained that it is the



PCB patron-in-chief Pervez Musharraf is taking a keen interest in the series.

host government’s prerogative to suggest venues and handle security.

“The venues will be decided in consultation with the Indian board over the next couple of days,” said PCB director Abbas Zaidi.

It seems the PCB has unofficially conveyed that while it would like Chennai to be the alternative venue, it was ready to okay even Mumbai, home to the Shiv Sena, a long-time Pakistan-baiter.

Zaidi diplomatically declined to get involved in any controversy. He, however, did remark that “Madras was a very wonderful experience the last time we played there” and “Mumbai is a great cricketing centre”.

PCB president Shahryar Khan is understood to have recently told former BCCI president Jagmohan Dalmiya in Dubai that Pakistan would like “one or two changes to the proposed venues”. Dalmiya apparently told Khan that he understood his problem and sympathised with him but could do nothing about it.

“Neither the Indian board nor the Pakistan board can do anything. It’s beyond them,” the source said. “Everyone knows that there is a protocol to be followed in such a sensitive issue. The PCB would have to officially write to the BCCI who would then have to forward the letter to the government. It’s a decision to be taken by the home and external affairs ministries and we will toe their line.”

Dam disagreement affected talks: Aziz

Ravindra Kumar in Davos

Jan. 28. — India and Pakistan will have to show magnanimity, flexibility and courage if the dispute between the two countries is to be resolved. But, says Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, the Baglihar dam issue, involving an Indian project in Kashmir, has caused the peace process to stutter.

In an extensive and free-wheeling interaction last night with editors of the *Asia News Network*, on the fringes of the World Economic Forum here, Mr Aziz said several confidence building measures had been initiated by his country. While he did not say it in so many words, he hinted that the

Indian response had sometimes been less than enthusiastic.

Pakistan, he said, had offered the energy corridor to carry gas from Central Asia to the sub-continent and had done so de-linking it from all other trade issues. "This is born out of our conviction that inter-dependencies create peace." But, Mr Aziz said, "We have been getting mixed responses from India." Asked pointedly if he saw a qualitative change in the Indian approach after the change of guard in New Delhi, Mr Aziz said, "I have had only one meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh. I believe he also wants peace."

He will answer your question." The

two Prime Ministers are to meet at the forthcoming Saarc meeting.

"After Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee initiated the process, we have been having a composite dialogue. We had been talking to Mr Vajpayee and Mr Brajesh Mishra. After the elections, we were talking to Mr JN Dixit but unfortunately he died. Now there is a new man and the process will go on."

But the dam issue could well be a stumbling block, although as Mr Aziz said, the dispute has been referred to the World Bank for resolution. Pakistan maintains that the construction by India of a dam violates a 1960 treaty on river waters.

His country, Mr Aziz said, was

not embarked on an arms race. "Although they (India) are buying arms and the disparity (in military strength) is increasing, we believe only in credible deterrence."

Saarc, Mr Aziz said, had long been hostage to India-Pakistan relations. But in recent times, there had been progress. At the forthcoming Saarc meeting Mr Aziz will suggest that the two opposing join hands to put together an early warning system for tsunamis in place in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. He was also hopeful that with SAFTA becoming operational over the next few years, "more linkages will be built".

■ See AZIZ: page 4



We had been talking to Mr Vajpayee and Mr Brajesh Mishra. After the elections, we were talking to Mr JN Dixit but unfortunately he died. Now there is a new man and the process will go on

"India violated ceasefire"

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 24. Pakistan today alleged that the ceasefire, effective from the last week of November 2003, was violated on January 21 from the Indian side at the Mendhar sector on the Line of Control (LoC).

The Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, surprised journalists by talking about the violation as neither Pakistan nor India has mentioned the incident publicly in the last three days. According to Mr. Khan, there was "small arms fire" from the Indian side between 2.30 p.m. and 6.30 p.m. "We showed restraint and there has been no loss of property or life."

It was not immediately clear if Pakistan has officially taken up the matter with India. Mr. Khan,

however, mentioned that the Directors-General of Military Operations had been making frequent contacts and both

sides were committed to the observation of the ceasefire.

Pakistan's charge comes close on the heels of similar charges by India on the violation of the ceasefire on January 18 and 20 from the Pakistani side. Islamabad insisted that there was no violation from its side and that the incidents had originated from the other side.

Mr. Khan argued that since the incidents were on the Indian side, New Delhi should share the results of investigation into the incident. "The violation was on the Indian side and it is their responsibility to share the outcome," he said.

To a question, he termed the ceasefire a "good confidence-building measure" and said it

has been holding for 14 months. "We hope the ceasefire will be observed and will have no impact on the forthcoming talks between Prime Ministers Shaukat Aziz and Manmohan Singh on the sidelines of SAARC summit (on February 6 and 7)."

"There was no incident from our side. We have not violated and are strictly adhering to the ceasefire. We will continue to observe the ceasefire and expect India to do the same," Mr. Khan said.

He said a section of the Indian media had sought to link the incidents to the breakdown of talks on Baglihar and said that this was regrettable. However, he disagreed with the suggestion that India was trying to "wriggle out" of the dialogue process by issuing such statements. "India has given assurances that they were serious about resolving all issues that need to be resolved between the two countries," he said.

Baseless, says Delhi

By Our Diplomatic Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24. New Delhi has described as "baseless" a Pakistani allegation that its troops opened fire on positions across the Line of Control (LoC) on January 21.

The External Affairs Ministry spokesman said today that following a conversation

between the Indian and Pakistani Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMOs), New Delhi had inquired into Islamabad's claim.

"The report was found to be baseless and this was conveyed to the Pakistani DGMO," he said. On two previous occasions in the past few days, India has complained of firing by Pakistan across the LoC.

Pakistan rejects proposal on demarcation

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 24. Pakistan has rejected the Indian proposal for demarcation of five points along the Line of Control (LoC) to facilitate the reunion of divided families on the plea that it would violate the dignity of Kashmiris.

The proposal was made by the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, to his Pakistani counterpart, Riaz Khokar, at the Foreign Secretary-level talks in the last week of December.

To a question on Pakistan's response, the Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, told a news conference here that

Mr. Khokar had made clear to his Indian counterpart that any proposal, which did not take into account the dignity and honour of the Kashmiris, could not be considered.

"With barbed wires on one side, we just cannot herd them [Kashmiris] to meeting points," he said. Pakistan and India should try to start the bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar at the earliest. He maintained that Kashmir was disputed territory and as such travel on passports and visas would give it a quasi-permanent status.

On the World Bank's clarification on Pakistan's request

for arbitration on the Baglihar project, Mr. Khan said the Bank had said that it was not a guarantor under the Indus Waters Treaty. But at the same time it had outlined its role in the appointment of neutral experts and a court of arbitration, if necessary.

The World Bank had acknowledged Pakistan's reference. "They said they will act according to the Treaty," Mr. Khan said and that the Bank had also stated that it had "some residual responsibility" in the appointment of neutral experts, financing the arbitration and the formation of a court of arbitration, if

necessary.

India and Pakistan could resort to a consultation process if the former stopped work on the project and provided the construction schedule to Pakistan. "Even in the interim stage if India wants to stop work and share the status of construction, this will make the task of experts much easier," Mr. Khan said.

On reports that Pakistan had considered going to the International Court of Justice in view of the World Bank's clarification that it was not a guarantor, Mr. Khan said Pakistan had not considered that option.

Army orders probe into Shikohabad incident

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24. The Army today directed a senior official to carry out an on-the-spot investigation into the events leading to the death of five civilians at the Shikohabad railway station in Uttar Pradesh after Army personnel allegedly threw them out of a train.

All assistance was being extended by the Army to help the police investigate the incident, an official spokesperson said. The security forces personnel travelling in the compartment from where the victims were "thrown out" had been taken into police custody.

"If found guilty, the accused will be dealt with severely," the spokesperson added.

Flag meeting held to resolve tension on LoC

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 24. Field commanders of the Indian and Pakistani armies held a flag-meeting on Sunday to resolve the friction in the Mendhar sub-sector on the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir that is threatening to puncture the ceasefire agreement in force since November 2003.

This area has been at the centre of allegations and counter-allegations by both the armies.

While India says that Pakistan has violated the

ceasefire pact on two days this month by lobbing mortar shells on Indian Army posts, Pakistan alleges that India has violated the ceasefire once.

Since then both governments have not only downplayed the ceasefire violations but denied the involvement of their troops.

The flag-meeting mode was once used by both armies when there was an incident on the Line of Control in the Kashmir area.

This time round, the initiative was taken by the Directors-General of Military

Operations (DGMOs) of both countries who felt this approach was the best to defusing tension.

"We maintain there has been no violation by Indian Army troops on January 21. However, two incidents of violation on their [Pakistan's] part had taken place, as a consequence of which a flag-meeting was held in the Mendhar sector of Poonch at the battalion commander level. We want to reiterate that no ceasefire violation has taken place from our side," said Deepak Sammanwar of the Army Headquarters.

Pakistan hits Baglihar bump

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Jan. 23: Pakistan's bid to involve a "third party" in the Baglihar project notwithstanding, the World Bank has made it clear that it is just a "signatory and not a guarantor" to the Indus Water Treaty.

The clarification was issued by the World Bank soon after Pakistan formally sought its intervention last week for appointing "neutral experts" to see whether the treaty provision had been violated by India while building the project on the Chenab in Jammu and Kashmir.

The World Bank said "neutral experts" could only be appointed only when both India and Pakistan agree. If they fail

to do so, a "third party" could be called in. But even the "third party" needs the approval of both neighbours.

Moreover, both Delhi and Islamabad have to agree on the language to decide whether the troubling issue is only a "difference" that merits appointment of "neutral experts" or a "dispute" that calls for setting up a court of arbitration.

There are clear indications that the process — of finalising neutral experts or a third party — would be extremely long-drawn and time-consuming, which would leave India with ample time to complete the project by the end of next year.

Early this month, "technical teams" from both sides held

detailed discussions in Delhi. But even after the fourth day, they failed to resolve their differences.

Pakistan claims the project is in violation of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960. India refutes the Pakistani charge and its demand to suspend work on the project.

After days of posturing, Pakistan sought the World Bank's intervention on January 18, asking it to appoint "neutral experts".

The bank, however, said it would examine the request and follow "the procedures" laid down by the treaty.

"The World Bank is a signatory to the treaty for certain purposes. It is not a guarantor to the treaty," a recent press statement from the bank said.

The World Bank has also explained its role, saying "the first step under the treaty is to resolve any 'question' through the Permanent Indus Commission itself. If the 'question' is not resolved, it becomes a 'difference' and is referred to a neutral expert, to be appointed by the two countries, or by a third party agreed upon by the two countries".

It added that "in the absence of such an agreement, the appointment of the neutral experts would be made by the World Bank, in consultation with the two countries. The decision of the neutral experts on all matters within their competence shall be final and binding".

The statement further said that "if the 'differences' do

not fall within the mandate of the neutral expert, or if the neutral expert rules that the 'difference' should be treated as a 'dispute', then a court of arbitration would be established under the treaty".

The World Bank has a role in the establishment of such a court.

From the bank's statement it is clear that appointing "two neutral experts" would not be an easy task.

Both India and Pakistan would have major say in their appointments and would even have the right to express dissatisfaction over any one or both the experts. Even if the two countries agree on the "neutral experts", it could well be that the views expressed by both might not be the same.

MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2005

gud p...
HOLD YOUR FIRE NO-10 24/1

AMIDST THE HYPE surrounding the composite dialogue process between India and Pakistan that has been on since the Islamabad summit of January 2004, it is sometimes forgotten that the real breakthrough in the bilateral relationship is the ceasefire that has reigned along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir since November 2003. It bears recall that the offer to let the guns fall silent was made by Islamabad and quickly accepted by India; within days, both sides clarified that the ceasefire would be extended along the agreed ground position line (AGPL) in Siachen. The composite dialogue that began last summer might have produced no common ground under any of the eight heads but the ceasefire along the LoC and AGPL has been scrupulously observed. This has not only saved precious lives on both sides; it has also brought a measure of normality to the relationship between the armed forces of India and Pakistan. It is against this backdrop that the firing of twelve 81-mm mortar rounds from the Pakistani side of the LoC near Poonch last week is worrisome. Are the incidents really happenstance, as the two Governments seem to be maintaining officially?

The Indian side asked Pakistan for an explanation of the firing and was promised the matter would be investigated. The Pakistani Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) duly probed the incident and informed his Indian counterpart that there had been no violation of the ceasefire from his side. While New Delhi officially seems content to treat the matter as closed, the reality of the mortar firing admits of only three possibilities, none of them really palatable. The first is that the Pakistani side fired, perhaps to cover an infiltration attempt by militants across the LoC, and subsequently sought to hide this fact. The

second is that Pakistani military commanders at the local level decided to open fire, perhaps to avenge the incident a few days earlier when Indian jawans near Poonch eliminated an infiltrating militant party, and misled their own DGMO about the event. The third is that the militant groups themselves have acquired the capability to fire mortar shells, perhaps from shoulder-fired tubes.

Since there is no indication of a general shift in Pakistan's policy of not encouraging militant crossings, it is more than possible that the mortar shots were the handiwork of militants. This in itself is not alarming, since the caliber fired is still small change. What is essential, however, is to ensure that terrorist groups are not allowed to disrupt the peace process by staging incidents designed to fuel suspicion in New Delhi about Islamabad's true intentions. It is in this context that the two Governments need to work hard for concrete outcomes from the ongoing second round of composite dialogue because that is the only way to generate trust. In particular, there is no military or political reason why the old draft Siachen pullback agreement — or some up-to-date variant of it — cannot be pushed through and signed. Of the irrationalities that govern the bilateral relationship, none has proved more pointlessly deadly than the high-altitude war atop that frozen glacier, which is surely one of the world's least useful places. A ceasefire prevails in Siachen but soldiers are still dying because of the extreme conditions of deployment. If a mutual pullback is effected, neither side is likely to risk the heavy political cost that sneaking back in would inevitably entail. Sustained and deeper bilateral engagement and commitment to tangible progress in selected areas will help consolidate the ceasefire and rule out any serious setback.

2450 2/11

Fear stalks Poonch residents after fresh shells fall

By Aarti Tikoo/TNN

Poonch: Pakistan is back to its "untrustworthy neighbour" status in this border town that took the brunt of a breach of its ceasefire promise along the Line of Control (LoC) two days ago when shells rained down shattering a peaceful evening.

On Thursday, Poonch returned to its usual hustle-bustle, yet there was a sense of tension between the two communities that form its population. Exactly 240 km north west of Jammu, Poonch town has 60:40 Hindu/Sikh and Muslim population. Otherwise Poonch is a Muslim-dominated district. As guns from across the frontier dumped 15 mortar shells on Indian military targets late Tuesday, it also hit the rising hopes of a durable peace that had risen since a truce in November 2003.

Hindus and Sikhs are equating the recent violation of ceasefire with the breach by Pakistan in Kargil in 1999. Muslims too are deeply hurt by Pakistan's betrayal. "We never trusted Pakistan but Gen. Pervez Musharraf's promises and international pressures after September 11

made it like Pakistan really wanted to change. And we did condone Pakistan during the last 13 months of ceasefires," said Vijay Kumar, 29, a Poonch shopkeeper. "But the recent incidents have left us in no doubts, that Pakistan is incorrigible."



In an aggressive tone he suggests there is no other alternative except for a war. "Let it happen and resolve the matters between the two neighbours one and for all." The ominous thuds of mortar shells were heard by people in the outskirts of the town. "That very moment we realised that the Pakistan could not have waited any more to keep its deception," Raj Kumar Sharma, a local school teacher, said.

"Old habits die hard and we should not expect anything else from Pakistan," he added, observing that it was a strategic move by Pakistan.

10-10
2/2/11

✓ ✓ ✓

A MANAGEABLE CONTROVERSY

for Govt

PAKISTAN'S DECISION TO refer the Baglihar dam issue to the World Bank is regrettable since it stands in stark contrast to the positive engagement with India that has unfolded over the past many months. While the talks held between the Water Resources Secretaries of the two countries earlier in January were inconclusive, there was apparently enough scope for further discussion. India believes that a breakthrough on technical aspects was achieved during the talks. It has also asked Pakistan to suggest alternative design calculations or fact sheets that could be examined on a "two-way" basis. Either party to the Indus Water Treaty can seek the appointment of a neutral expert and the World Bank does have a role to play in this regard. However, the Treaty does not preclude a joint request by the two countries or their representatives on the Permanent Indus Commission if they are not able to sort out their differences bilaterally. In forgoing this option Pakistan appears to have created a needless controversy that can only widen the trust deficit that the two sides are trying to overcome. However, too much need not be made of this issue at this juncture. The neutral expert, whose appointment must be approved by both countries, can at most make a determination that the differences are so irreconcilable as to constitute a dispute. Even if the expert does make such a determination, the two governments can try to resolve the dispute bilaterally before a reference is made to a Court of Arbitration.

The Treaty permits India to make very limited use of the three western rivers — Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. The waters of these rivers can be utilised for domestic, agricultural, and non-consumptive purposes and for the gener-

ation of hydro-electric power subject to rigid conditions. However, the natural flow of these rivers must not be impeded. Pakistan has taken the position that the Baglihar dam on the Chenab with a height of 470 feet and a gated spillway creates a storage capacity that interferes with the flow. Underlying these objections is the longstanding concern that India could cut off the supply of water to West Punjab if it has the installed capacity to do so. New Delhi believes there is no basis for concern — even the technical adjustments needed to stop the flow will take so long to implement that there can be no question of a party being able to get away with a breach of the Treaty. India's position hardened after its bitter experience with the Tulbul navigation project. Work on this project has stalled for the past 17 years because the discussions on this issue have made no headway.

The disagreements over the western rivers are unfortunate particularly because of the detrimental effect they have on the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Legislators claim the State has lost a hefty Rs.6000 crore every year and forfeited 15,000 megawatts of power owing to the restrictions imposed by the Treaty. While their demand for an abrogation of the Treaty cannot be countenanced, the two Governments do have an obligation speedily to reconcile the differences over the western rivers that have a direct impact on the welfare of the people. The Treaty, which was welcomed by the people of the two countries when it was signed in 1960, has stood the test of time. The systems set in place under its terms have been particularly useful when downstream users need to be warned of impending floods. This history of cooperation in water use can provide a basis for sorting out the differences over technical issues.

India takes up ceasefire violation with Pakistan

New Delhi: Terming the firing from across the border in Jammu and Kashmir as "violation of ceasefire," India on Wednesday took up the issue with Pakistani authorities who said they would investigate the matter.

"The Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) spoke to his Pakistani counterpart this morning and informed him of India's concerns," Lt Gen B S Thakur, who took over as vice chief of army on Wednesday, told reporters here. Several rounds were fired at two places in Jammu and Kashmir from across the border on Tuesday evening.

Thakur said the first reaction of the Pakistani DGMO was that he was not aware of the incident. "However, when facts like the place and time of the firing were



Border Skirmish

placed before him, he promised to investigate and come back to us," the new vice army chief said.

Thakur said India considered the incident as a violation of the 13-month-long ceasefire. "But we will maintain restraint and have not retaliated. We hope the Pakistan government will consider this case with all seriousness."

He said the first mortar round was fired at Shingpati post in Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir at about 6.35 pm on Tuesday evening. Between 7.25 and 8 pm, 12 more rounds were fired at Banwat in the same sector. Thakur said 60 mm and 88 mm mortars were used in the firing.

Meanwhile, six Pakistani militants belonging to Hizb-ul-Mujahideen Pir Panchal Regiment and Lashkar-e-Toiba outfits were killed on Wednesday in separate gunbattles with the army in Rajouri and Poonch districts of Jammu and Kashmir, defence sources said.

On specific information about the presence of militants, the troops launched a cordon-and-search operation around 3.30 am on Wednesday in Budhal forest area of Rajouri district. PH

India seeks explanation from Pak

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/JAMMU, Jan. 19. — India today described yesterday's cross-border firing by Pakistan after 13 months of silence as a "violation of cease-fire", and has asked for an explanation. The Pakistani authorities have said they will investigate the matter.

The vice-chief of the Army staff, Lt-Gen BS Thakur, said the director-general, military operations, took up the violation during a phone conversation with his Pakistani counterpart today. The Pak DGMO initially said he was unaware of the incident. "However, when facts like the place and time of the firing were placed before him, he promised to investigate and come back to us," the vice-chief said.

The Army is ready to retaliate if Pakistani troops violate the cease-fire again, the GOC-in-C, Northern Command, Lt-Gen Hari Prasad, said in Srinagar.

"We have exercised restraint after Pakistan army fired between 12 and 15 mortar bombs in the Poonch sector. There has been no response from our side," Lt-Gen Prasad told the media after inaugurating a military bridge in north Kashmir. Yesterday evening, Pakistani troops resorted to unprovoked mortar shelling.

More reports on page 5

THE STATESMAN

20 JAN 2005

Pakistan promises to probe firing

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 19. After an initial denial of information, Pakistan today promised to investigate and keep India informed of the firing of mortar shells by its troops on Indian Army posts in Jammu and Kashmir on Tuesday night.

"The Director-General of Military Operations (DGMO) spoke to his Pakistani counterpart this morning and informed him about our concerns on the issue. We told him that [it] is a violation of the ceasefire. Weapons of this calibre have not been used since the ceasefire came into effect from November 2003," the Vice-Chief of the Army Staff, B.S. Thakur, said here today.

Lt. Gen. Thakur underlined the seriousness of the situation and hinted at the possibility of the involvement of middle-level Pakistani army officers. The officer declined to link the firing to the killing of five militants the previous night.

According to intelligence reports, terrorists possessed the 60 mm mortars but the Pakistani army uses the higher calibre 82 mm mortar. While the 60 mm mortar shell has a range of 500 metres, the 82 mm shell can travel 5 km.

"Initially the Pakistani Director of Military Operations

said that his troops had only heard the blasts and were not aware of what had happened. When we gave details of the exact positions from where the shells were fired, he promised to investigate and come back with details. We take it as violation of the ceasefire agreement and are exercising restraint, which is what we have done so far. We are sure the Pakistan Government will consider the issue in all seriousness."

Asked about the limit for Army restraint, he said: "We would go on a case-by-case basis when the situation flares up. There is nothing that has been quantified as a trigger-point."

Government's reaction

The Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said here today that the Pakistani firing would not derail the resolve to maintain the ceasefire along the Line of Control. "There have been some violations in the past but they have been resolved through dialogue."

He discounted the earlier apprehensions expressed by Army officials linking the mortar firing on their posts to a fierce encounter along the LoC that led to the killing of five infiltrators and the recovery of a large cache of arms the previous night.

Pakistan moves World Bank

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 18. Conceding that it was not a "good omen" for the Indo-Pakistan peace process, Pakistan today petitioned the World Bank seeking its arbitration in the dispute over the Baglihar hydropower project, being constructed over the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir.

The World Bank brokered the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, which deals with the distribution of the waters of six rivers. The Treaty provides for arbitration by neutral experts in the event of a dispute between the two countries on interpretation of the provisions.

After the failure of the last round of talks in New Delhi in the first week of January, Pakistan announced that it would go to the World Bank. However, the delay of 10 days on its part triggered hopes of backdoor diplomacy and another chance to bilateralism.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, said at a special news conference here that after having failed to resolve the differences bilaterally and exhausting all options, Islamabad had sought the World Bank's intervention under the Article 9 (2)(a) of the (1960 Indus Water) Treaty.

The project had been the bone of contention between India and Pakistan since it was conceived by New Delhi in 1992. Pakistan objected on the ground that the dam being constructed on the Chenab would adversely impact on the water flows into that country. Islamabad maintains that under the Treaty, the use of Chenab water is its exclusive privilege and a 'big dam' on the river is against

the letter and spirit of the Treaty. However, it does concede that India had rights over utilisation of the river water for consumptive (irrigation), non-consumptive (navigation) and power projects with "serious limitations."

India disputed Pakistan's contention and said that the project was well within the provisions of the Treaty and would not affect Pakistan's water rights. Despite two years of intense dialogue, there has been no meeting point on the differences.

Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Jehangir Karamat, would approach the World Bank President, James D. Wolfensohn, with the petition today itself, Mr. Khan said.

In response to pointed questions if Pakistan's decision was final, Mr. Khan listed three conditions under which Islamabad could review its decision. These are: India should immediately halt construction of the project; share technical details of the dam and work schedule and evolve a mechanism for resolution of the dispute.

'Pakistan decision on Baglihar unjustified'

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JAN. 18. India said today that Pakistan's decision to move the World Bank on the Baglihar project was not justified.

Under the terms of the Indus Waters Treaty of September 1960, the World Bank is a party to certain clauses, including the mechanisms to resolve differences between India and Pakistan.

"Our view has been that during the detailed discussions held at the level of Secretaries of Water Resources recently, there had been some convergence and we believe that through continued technical discussions, further convergence would be promoted. We do not believe that the reference to the World Bank is justified," the External Affairs Ministry spokes-

man said here today.

Official sources said India had no intention to stop construction at the Baglihar dam site as demanded by Pakistan. Pointing to the experience of the Tulbul navigation project on the Jhelum river, they said that Pakistan wanted the work to be stopped for three months; but now, it was 17 years since the work had come to a halt on Tulbul.

The sources claimed that Pakistan's main objective was to ensure that the work stopped on Baglihar. After this happened, Pakistan would show no interest in resolving Baglihar.

The Indus Waters Treaty provides Pakistan with the exclusive use of waters of the Chenab, the Jhelum and the Indus while India can use the waters of the Sutlej, the Ravi and the Beas.

9:00 PM
+10-1
19/1

Pakistan opens fire across Line of Control

● First major violation of ceasefire ● DGMOs to discuss issue today

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, JAN. 18. In the first major violation of the ceasefire agreement in force since November 2003, the Pakistan Army today fired a dozen mortar rounds across the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir tonight.

The 81-mm mortars were targeted near the border town of Poonch between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. in retaliation to the killing of five infiltrating militants in the same area, claimed Army sources.

With both the countries not wanting the situation to escalate, the two Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMOs) will try to thrash out the issue at their weekly telephonic conversation due on Wednesday.

Army officers here linked the firing to the killing of the militants on Monday night. They

see the move as one to dissuade their men from entering the mined area where the bodies of the five militants were lying. While the Army has recovered the bodies and identified the militant organisation which had sent them in, the Pakistani mortar firing has dissuaded the Army scouts from combing the area more thoroughly to pick up the clues to the modus operandi.

However, the mood here is to close the chapter through dialogue as was done in a minor skirmish about six months ago, say Army officials. At that time, the troops on both sides were in an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation over differing perceptions of the LoC. Fortuitously, the two DGMOs discussed the situation over the hotline and directed the field commanders to resolve the situation. Accord-

ingly, a flag meeting was held and the dispute resolved.

While maintaining that the Indian Army was in a state of battle readiness, Army officials here hoped that the matter would be settled at tomorrow's hotline conversation between the DGMOs.

No retaliation by India

PTI reports:

Army spokesman Deepak Sammanwar said that there was no retaliation from the Indian side. Replying to a question, he said: "Yes, it's certainly a violation of the ceasefire. It is the first time it has happened. But we are exercising full restraint on this. We are trying to assess the situation. All our patrols and ambushes have been altered," he said. Asked about the reason behind the firing from across the LoC, he said "we are yet to carry out an assessment why this has happened."

No violation: Islamabad

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 18. Pakistan tonight said that it has not violated the ceasefire effective on the Line of Control (LoC) since November 2003.

Inter-State Public Relations (ISPR) Director-General, Shaukat Sultan, maintained

that Pakistani soldiers had heard some "explosions" on the LoC but these had not emanated from any of them.

He said that Pakistan was committed to maintaining peace on the LoC and would not violate it without provocation from the other side.

Sir Creek survey over

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 17. India and Pakistan have "successfully and expeditiously" completed the joint survey of the Sir Creek area.

The Pakistan Foreign Office spokesman, Masood Khan, told a weekly news conference here that the survey, which commenced on January 5, was completed before schedule.

"The teams co-operated with each other and completed the task successfully and expeditiously. Survey officials in both the countries are now busy preparing a joint statement," he said.

Eight teams

Mr. Khan said the two countries had deployed eight teams each for the survey of the horizontal segment of the creek. Experts from both sides will examine the joint statement and discuss it in the next round of talks between the experts.

The decision to carry out the joint survey was made at the last

meeting between the two sides in the third week of December here. Sir Creek is part of the eight-point agenda of the Composite Dialogue process.

The disputed Sir Creek, which runs along Rann of Kutch in India and Sindh in Pakistan, is at the centre of a 22-year-old dispute between the two countries

Both sides believe the survey results will be very useful in resolution of the dispute related to demarcation of boundary in Sir Creek, a 60-mile-long strip of water between the Rann of Kutch (in India) and Sindh (in Pakistan).

Boundary demarcation

The demarcation of boundary has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan for several decades. Eight rounds of talks held so far have not helped resolve the differences. The history of the issue dates back to 1914, when an agreement was signed between the then Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch.

India unruffled by Pak's diplomatic offensive

India
Pak
15/1

By Indrani Bagchi
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Pakistan's diplomacy is getting aggressive. Having given US senators an earful about America's obligation to mediate in the Kashmir issue with India, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf then proceeded to pronounce his own bottomline on the peace process.

He told a TV channel that Pakistan would never accept any 'Made in India' solution to Kashmir.

The pitch for third-party mediation should not surprise India, for Pakistan did serve notice by announcing that it would drag India to the World Bank on the row over the Baglihar project. Pakistan says it wants third-party mediation on Baglihar. And India has agreed to it. New Delhi has even offered fresh talks on the project. Pakistan says only if India stops construction.

Is the peace pipe smoking itself out?

Pakistan would like the world to believe so. India doesn't — foreign minister Natwar Singh announced on Thursday that he would travel to Pakistan on February 15-17. But India isn't letting Pakistan give the peace process any sleepless nights either. As India sees it, even as the peace process continues apace, it is determined to deny Pakistan any veto power in Jammu and Kashmir's affairs.

Refusing to dignify it with a response, India will continue construction on the Baglihar project in Kashmir which will generate 450 MW electricity for the power-starved state.

India's determination to continue stems from two precedents where Kashmir has been the habitual loser. India agreed to Pakistan-dictated terms on the Salal project, which has led to very high siltation levels, affecting power generation sharply. In 1988, India acceded to Benazir Bhutto's request and stopped construction of the Tulbul project. Seventeen years later, it remains unresolved and has been intertwined with the final solution to Kashmir.

"We should not fall into the Tulbul trap," said former high commissioner to Pakistan G Parthasarathy.

India's keenness on getting the Baglihar project going is clear from an agreement that JKPDC signed this week with a nine-FI consortium for a loan of Rs 17.70 billion for Baglihar.

In 2000, Pakistan dragged India to the world court over the downing of their surveillance plane Atlantique, but India prevailed. Similarly, India believes this time round too, a World Bank ruling is likely to be favourable. India believes Pakistan's refusal to allow the project stems from a political standpoint, not a technical one. Pakistan wants a veto on anything to do with J&K, said senior officials.

Pakistan has stepped up its diplomatic offensive against India trying to coopt foreign missions to their point of view. On Wednesday, reports said Pakistan prime minister Shaukat Aziz had directed government departments to start the process of seeking third party mediation, but Islamabad has stopped short of announcing it yet.

Pakistan won't accept ^{scr ml} 'Made in India' solution

ISLAMABAD, Jan. 11. — Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said tonight: "We will not accept any solution on Kashmir with the stamp of 'Made in India' because this dispute cannot be resolved without the involvement of Kashmiris and Pakistan." He was speaking during an interview to the private Geo TV.

President Musharraf said he was still hopeful of reaching a peaceful settlement with India with regard to the Baglihar hydro-power dam issue. He said he was hopeful because a lot of things were taking place between the two countries behind the scenes.

The outcome of the secretary-level talks held in Delhi, which was "not encouraging", was discussed at a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz last night, foreign office spokesman Mr Masood Khan said. "The feedback from the meeting was... frankly not encouraging," he said. "Important decisions were taken during the meeting. We will see now how we proceed. Our firm decision on the World Bank intercession (over Baglihar) will be made public soon," Mr Khan said.



This dispute (Kashmir) can't be resolved without the involvement of Kashmiris and Pakistan

The meeting, presided over by Mr Aziz, advised the concerned departments to prepare a case to be filed with the World Bank for the appointment of independent experts, he added.

Mr Khan said earlier that even before the recent meeting of the water ministry secretaries in Delhi, Pakistan's leadership had decided to invoke Article 9(2)(A) of the 1960 Indus Water Treaty, which was brokered by the World Bank to share the waters of six rivers. The article dealt with arbitration in case of a dispute, Mr Khan said and added that "it was only a matter of timing". Mr Khan said Pakistan has begun briefing EU and other countries' diplomats about its stand on Baglihar dam being built by India over river Chenab in J&K. — PTI

Aziz visit stumps govt

J&K dam creates rift

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 11 JANUARY

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 11 JANUARY

THE sudden visit of Pakistani national security council secretary Tariq Aziz to New Delhi on Monday saw the government speaking in different voices. While the Prime Minister's establishment on Tuesday morning denied that Mr Aziz had met Manmohan Singh, the foreign office by evening went on record to state that he held meetings with the Prime Minister and the external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh.

"Mr Aziz paid a brief visit to offer condolences on the demise of national security advisor J.N. Dixit on behalf of President Pervez Musharraf. He called on the Prime Minister and the external affairs minister also," MEA spokesperson Navtej Sarna said.

The foreign office also acknowledged that the tsunami tragedy may have figured in the talks with the Prime Minister. Though the MEA spokesperson denied knowledge of details, indications were that the issue of future of Indo-Pak talks were discussed. Mr Aziz, a trusted aide of President Musharraf, had been holding back channel negotiations with Mr Dixit. The two had been credited with creating openings to continue the peace process.

FLAGGING the near total breakdown of water talks between India and Pakistan, Islamabad on Tuesday prepared to seek intervention of the World Bank in resolving the Baglihar hydro power project in Jammu and Kashmir even as India replied that it would "respond accordingly" to any such move.

NEIGHBOURS ENVY

Technical talks on the Baglihar project had collapsed last week after the two sides failed to reach common ground on contentious aspects even after three days of negotiations. Pakistan has demanded that India stop construction on the project before technical talks can proceed ahead.

Though there was no official announcement, media reports from Islamabad on Tuesday suggested that Pakistani Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz had given the go-ahead to concerned departments to make preparations for approaching the World Bank. India, however, insisted that it had not violated any of the technical aspects of the Indus Basin Water Treaty of 1960, which was the basis for the water-sharing agreement between the two countries.

9/1/05
8/11/05

Talks on Baglihar dam fail

By Amit Baruah

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. The India-Pakistan talks on construction of Baglihar dam on the Chenab river in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir broke down today and Pakistan said it would seek appointment of a "neutral expert" to address differences with India, as permitted by the Indus Waters Treaty.

The treaty was signed by India, Pakistan and the World Bank 44 years ago.

Ashfaq Mahmood, Pakistan's Water Resources Secretary, told presspersons that this "next step" would be taken as there had been no progress in the three days of talks with his Indian counterpart, V.K. Duggal. He claimed that the proposed Baglihar dam, at 470 feet, was higher than Pakistan's Tarbela dam. He, however, did not answer a question why Pakistan had not invoked appointment of a neutral expert as far as the Tulbul navigation project was concerned — an issue which has been under discussion for some 16 years between the two countries.

Mr. Mahmood said there could be no consumptive use of waters by India of the Jhelum, Chenab and Indus waters. Pointing out that there had been two rounds of discussions at the Secretary-level after the Indus Waters Commissioners failed to reconcile their differ-

ences, he said India had started and continued with the construction of the project despite objections by Pakistan.

He said that when the Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz, visited New Delhi in November last year, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, suggested there should be a final meeting to deal with the matter. That "final" meeting

had now taken place, he claimed.

An External Affairs Ministry official said India was ready to continue technical discussions with Pakistan on Baglihar.

According to him, India's position remained that the design of the project was well within the definitions contained in the Indus Waters Treaty.

Pakistan's intention was to

ensure that the Government of India could not go ahead with any project that would benefit the people of Jammu and Kashmir. All this was being done to prevent India from going ahead with the Baglihar project, he said.

India, the official said, would not stop construction of the project as demanded by Pakistan.

no - 11
8/11/05

No reopening of treaty: India

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, JAN. 7. Pakistan's insistence that it will seek the appointment of a "neutral expert" to arbitrate on the Baglihar dispute is not reflected in the agreed minutes, "but if it chooses to do it then we will state our position. India is clear that there is no deviation from the provisions of the Indus Water Treaty of 1960. A week in the seven-year history of the project was not a big time. But this was not accepted by the Pakistan delegation. Now both parties will report this position to the respective governments," the leader of the Indian delegation and Water Resources Secretary, V.K. Duggal said.

Even as his counterpart, Pakistan's Water and Power Sec-

retary, Ashfaq Mahmood, described India's stand as "inflexible" in a separate press conference, Mr. Duggal indicated that there could be convergence on some of the technical issues. He said there was no talk of re-opening the treaty "which had stood the test of time".

Asserting that this was the first time that quantitative discussions on the technical data had been held, Mr. Duggal said India received Pakistan's observations on its technical data on December 31 with the request to hold talks from January 3.

"We told them we needed more time to study the data yet we agreed to a meeting from Tuesday. On the second day of the talks we identified six technical issues, including weir at

low level, pondage, level of intake, (un)gated spillway, free-board height and low-level tunnel. We even had a smaller group of engineers discuss the technical data but needed more time."

Mr. Duggal, however, maintained that the talks were "constructive and focussed" and had moved forward. "Even though the discussion were inconclusive, a breakthrough has been archived on the technical aspects," he asserted. He said as a goodwill gesture India was willing to consider Pakistan's objections provided they did not impact on the safety of the dam and the people. India even asked Pakistan to come up with alternate design calculations or some alternate fact sheet which could be examined on a "two-way basis."

Handwritten note: *Handwritten signature or initials*

51.6 **Trust deficit** *W*
Unilateral CBMs may be Delhi's only option *G1*

Little of substance materialised from the foreign secretary level talks between India and Pakistan, as Islamabad stonewalls bilateral confidence building measures that have been proposed, or demands impossible concessions in their place. For example, one of Islamabad's measures is parity between conventional armed forces of the two sides, which scarcely takes into account that India is a far bigger country with a much larger border to police, not to mention having to tackle insurgencies promoted by Islamabad. The two sides could not agree even to notify each other about ballistic missile tests, surely the minimum that can be expected in terms of building trust. In the circumstances the best that Delhi can do is to announce unilateral confidence building measures from time to time, which deal with this particular deficit that is hampering progress. If ulterior motives are suspected behind every move Delhi makes, there is little it can do. The bright side is that reflexive hostility to India is less among ordinary people in Pakistan than in the Islamabad establishment.

Rather than adopt a tit-for-tat approach when Islamabad imposes restrictions on Indian citizens and goods, Delhi could make it easy for certain categories of Pakistani citizens, for example students, journalists, academics, tourist groups, or patients needing advanced medical care, to get visas. It should also go a long way to providing Pakistan alternative sources of information on India. The moves that Delhi is making in this regard, such as visa-on-arrival for Pakistanis below 12 or above 65, are commendable and their momentum should be kept up. There is reason to suspect that Islamabad may not be too keen to facilitate contact between civilians in both Kashmir, as it would demolish the myth that Kashmiris are better off under a Pakistani administration, whether in terms of standard of living or the right to self-determination. The eagerly expected Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link did not come through, but Delhi is keeping up the momentum by suggesting five places on the LoC where Kashmiris from both sides can meet. It will be to Islamabad's disadvantage if it keeps refusing confidence-building measures.

India must make concessions to Pakistan and remain on guard

T-18
311

Beyond this place

COMMENTARAO

S.L. RAO

Visiting Karachi, Islamabad or Muree, my preconceptions about the role of fundamentalism in Pakistan, of only burqa-clad women, hostility to India and Indians, were shattered. There are more full-burqa clad women on the streets of Bangalore than in these Pakistani cities. Among the educated, one sees little sign of a rigorous Islam. And they are extremely friendly and hospitable to Indians.

Pakistan has had an unfortunate history since its creation in 1947. Dictatorships by the military, a pliant judiciary, corrupt politicians, rulers using religion to entrench themselves, medieval society imposed on a people who were naturally tolerant and exposed to global influences, feudal land-ownership structures, female exploitation and lack of national cohesion have bedevilled its progress. Its leaders used hatred of India to give the country a focus. The retention of much of majority-Muslim Kashmir by India was projected as the reason. The military consolidated itself on the excuse of a threat from India. It built up massive intelligence services and independent revenues to fund them. The military became another class interest and the most powerful one, though membership was by selection, not by birth.

Pakistan initiated three wars with India that it lost. Indira Gandhi did not insist on a final settlement of the Kashmir issue despite almost 100,000 Pakistani soldiers in Indian captivity. Pakistan embarked on a nuclear programme aimed to give it a nuclear option as the only way to confront India. Conventional warfare had not been successful. But Pakistan did not actually test an atom bomb till India did so.

Later, the Pakistani president, Zia-ul-Haq, turned Pakistan to Islamic fundamentalism to unite the country and secure funds and support from Arab countries. He mobilized young Muslims to form the taliban and so fill the vacuum in Afghanistan after the Soviets retreated from there. This would give Pakistan leverage over India and a bargaining ploy with the West. Zia built a network of terrorist camps in Pakistan to infiltrate into Kashmir and other parts of India to wage a new form of warfare since conventional war had failed.

Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the politicians who succeeded him, allegedly made huge fortunes for themselves and their families but had no strategy for moving Pakistan forward to social and economic progress.

Pervez Musharraf appears to

lack the fundamentalist credentials of Zia and the venality of the politicians. A commando, he uses commando tactics to great effect in confounding domestic and foreign politicians. Having participated in failed conventional wars and knowing that the nuclear option was not actually usable, he looked for ways to break the stalemate. He had participated in the execution of the terrorist infiltration strategy. It failed since India showed willingness to bear any financial and human cost to counter it. He stealthily took over

United States of America. The economic support package included waivers of loans and special trade preferences. In return, Musharraf had to open Pakistan to American intelligence and armed forces and use the Pakistan army to hunt for the terrorists. In this he managed to strike a balance between offering help but not to the extent of surrendering Osama bin Laden and other top terrorist leaders. Open American intervention on the Kashmir dispute did not come about but negotiations started because the inter-

civilian leadership, Pakistan will probably remain either a military dictatorship or subservient to the military for many more years.

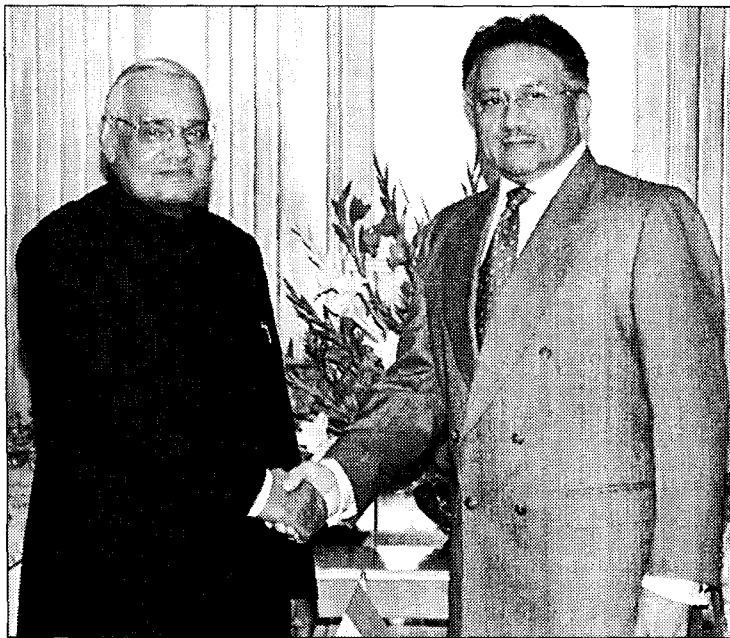
Will the army ever reform the feudal land-ownership, improve investment levels in the economy, reduce corruption, improve the health and educational services, especially for the poor, stop the drain of educated young Pakistanis from the country, clamp down hard on fundamentalists and militancy, join in making Saarc into an economic partnership, improve public and corporate governance and take all the actions to transform Pakistan into a modern state? Past experience suggests that it will not. Continued army power and influence demand that it does not rock the uneasy stability that has been built up between the different ruling elites. While the army can pick targets as Musharraf has done (fundamentalists, select terrorist groups, and so on), it cannot go against the ruling elite of defence officers, businessmen, landlords and key tribal leaders.

Pakistan has for years faced revolts in Sind, Baluchistan and Waziristan and of the mohajirs, against the ruling Punjabi elite. There is no strategy to contain and reverse these resentments. There is also the sustained divide between the Shias and Sunnis and the continuing killings of Shias by Sunnis. Karachi appears to have reached an uneasy stability but remains a city that is dangerous for foreigners, for the wealthy and Muslim minorities.

Recent economic growth exceeding 6 per cent with foreign exchange reserves crossing \$11 billion have been fuelled by massive American financial aid and the write-off or postponement of repayment of international loans. The economic progress is driven by consumption, not investment or inherent internal strengths. There is little industry or a growing industrial class, necessary for social change.

In this scenario of uncertainty, India cannot trust that successor rulers will honour any political agreements regarding Kashmir. Building economic and cultural links through people-to-people contacts at all levels, easier travel for ordinary people, removing bureaucratic visa harassments, research and educational exchange and collaborations, must be unilaterally initiated by India. The object must be to improve mutual understanding, reduce hostility and resentment of India.

Pakistan faces a very uncertain future. India must remain on its guard. Bonhomie between people does not mean that old hostilities and resentments have disappeared. India could use the resentment against its bigness and prosperity to offer unilateral concessions that do not ignore India's security interests.



New route

the commanding heights of Kargil to control Indian military access to Kashmir. A.B. Vajpayee's willingness to suffer high casualties in the Indian army to dislodge the Pakistani army from Kargil and the intervention of the international community that was fearful of a possible nuclear conflagration in south Asia ended that adventure. It also displayed Musharraf's abilities to change tactics to suit the moment. He seized control over Pakistan by banishing the prime minister, Nawaz Sharif, and began overtures to meet Vajpayee and negotiate all disputes.

Musharraf was perhaps the first in Pakistan to realize what a god-sent the World Trade Center killings on 9/11 were for him and Pakistan. He reversed tactics, abandoned the taliban and Islamic fundamentalism and offered "full" cooperation to the American president, George W. Bush. As a result he got American and hence international backing to stay in power, financial support, military hardware and the status of a close ally of the

national community intervened with India and Pakistan to prevent any possibility of nuclear conflict. He reciprocated Vajpayee's desire for better relations. After an initial stumble, Musharraf changed tactics and opted for a step-by-step process for resolving all issues.

In seeking a resolution with India, Musharraf has antagonized the Islamic fundamentalists in Pakistan, foreign mercenary groups, elements in the army and particularly, the intelligence services. Three reported assassination attempts (rumoured to have been actually 11) make it unlikely that he will die in bed. India must prepare for future scenarios without Musharraf.

The key questions are whether he has cleansed Islamic fundamentalists from the army and the intelligence services and planned his succession. In a military dictatorship, a successor could unseat the incumbent and so there is probably no plan. American support will no doubt determine the succession. With no charismatic political leader in sight and no army backing for a

The author is former director-general, National Council for Applied Economic Research