

Terror trove unearthed

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Sept. 19. — In a major recovery in Jammu and Kashmir, the Army eliminated an infiltration column in Machhal sector by killing five terrorists. In addition to arms, ammunition, incriminating documents and war-like stores, the troops also recovered a huge quantity of sophisticated technical devices used for assembling the lethal improvised explosive devices, car bombs and even rockets.

A defence source said that the recovery included more than 100 printed circuit boards, more than 1,000 integrated circuits, capacitors, resistors and a variety of transistors. The recovery also included accessories like soldering iron, multi meter and wire cutters used for making improvised explosive devices and car bombs. By a conservative estimate, more than 100 car bombs could have been assembled and triggered.

Also recovered was a coded compact disc. The CD contained formulas, technical manuals for assembling a variety of improvised explosive devices, bombs and rockets. The CD also contains a manual for training terrorists in techniques of spreading terrorism. "From the material recovered it is evident that the five terrorists were probably improvised explosive device experts and were on a mission to spread large scale terrorism in the Valley," said the defence source.

Meanwhile, the Army also recovered one of the biggest ever cache of arms, ammunition and explosives hidden by terrorists about 12 km from Dawar in Gurez sector.

The recovery includes 14 assault rifles of the AK 47 and AK 56 variety, a rocket launcher, RPG of Russian origin, rocket propelled missiles, 12 under-barrel grenade

launchers, six pistols of Chinese and Pakistani make, 65 under barrel grenades, 20 Chinese grenades and over 5,000 rounds of AK ammunition. Explosives and accessories also included 80 sticks of RDX, 100 detonators, 59 battery operated improvised explosive devices and a large number of remote devices.

Kashmir's defence public relations officer, Colonel VK Batra, said that the arms and ammunition recovered were adequate to equip several squads of terrorists operating in Kashmir. The material was sufficient to prepare more than 100 improvised explosive devices which could have been used to cause mass casualties.

In addition, four modern hand-held radio sets, night vision binoculars, day binoculars, telescopic equipment and a large number of war-like stores formed part of the recovery.

This huge arsenal was found in a jungle near river Kishanganga. The arms were buried in several natural caves in the mountains of Gurez close to the Line of Control.

This was one of the biggest recoveries made by the Army in recent times and has dealt a big blow to terrorists attempting to operate in the Kashmir Valley.

The success comes to the Army at a time when terrorists are already short in arms and ammunition and a large number of them, attempting to infiltrate into the Valley, have been eliminated near the LoC. In July this year, the Army eliminated an infiltration bid in Gurez Sector wherein 18 foreign terrorists were eliminated.

Mufti on peace talks

J&K chief minister Mufti Sayeed said today that Dr Manmohan Singh and Gen. Pervez Musharraf had developed a good chemistry and both were serious about peace in the Valley.

BOMBS BLOSSOM IN VALLEY



A soldier examines a display of AK-47 rifles and ammunition at the Army HQ in Srinagar on Monday, after the Army recovered a large cache of weapons and explosives. — AFP

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Hurriyat for peace talks speed

New York, Sept. 17 (PTI): Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Omar Farooq has met Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for the third time in five months and regretted the "slow" pace of the Indo-Pak peace process.

The meeting at the Roosevelt Hotel here last night came two days after the dinner summit between Musharraf and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, widely seen as unfruitful.

During the meeting, which lasted over an hour, Farooq briefed Musharraf on the Hurriyat's talks with Singh in New Delhi on September 5 and expressed support for the Indo-Pak dialogue.

"Hurriyat Conference feels that we need to strengthen the bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan," Farooq said. "But along with this, we believe that there is a need to speed up the dialogue process and have more confidence-building measures."

Farooq, who had met Musharraf in Delhi in April and later in Islamabad in June, said: "For the first time, we, the Kashmiris, feel we are being involved into it (the peace process)."

He said the Hurriyat wants Kashmiri leaders to be associated with the talks, which has not happened yet. But the fact that both Singh and Musharraf are talking to them shows

that Kashmiris are being indirectly associated with the Indo-Pak dialogue on Kashmir.

"The matter looks fast becoming triangular," Farooq said, "and it is very much in sight, so, we as the concerned party, support it."

He said the Hurriyat has certain proposals that it wants to present before both Delhi and Islamabad.

Farooq said the Hurriyat would put forward its proposals to Singh during the second round of talks with him, which it intends to hold soon. After that, the Kashmiri leaders hope to visit Pakistan again. He, however, did not say what the proposals are.

Farooq said the meeting with Musharraf was fruitful, for the President "supported our stand".

Pakistani officials announced that Musharraf has invited Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to visit Pakistan.

Mehbooba Mufti, Sayeed's daughter and an MP, and Omar Abdullah, president of opposition National Conference, will visit Pakistan ahead of Mufti's visit, the Pakistani media reported.

Asked if he supported the visit to Pakistan by the Mufti and Mehbooba, Farooq said: "Why not, since they have already expressed their intention, they may like to do so."



Mirwaiz Omar Farooq

Confusion reigns over Kashmir committee

"Not yet contacted by Government"

Praveen Swami

NEW DELHI: Contrary to reports in the media that a five-member committee has been set up to negotiate with the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, New Delhi remains unable to agree on the structure of a future dialogue with the secessionist coalition. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the Srinagar cleric who chairs the APHC, is scheduled to lead a delegation to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh for a second round of talks in the coming weeks.

over the wisdom of creating such a body.

The disputation within the Union Government on the mechanics of the dialogue reflects larger divisions within the policy establishment on the ongoing talks with the APHC. Shortly after the United Progressive Alliance took over power in New Delhi last year, officials persuaded the new Government on the need to broaden the dialogue by engaging political actors other than the APHC. However, efforts earlier this year to bring anti-talks rejectionist figures on board, notably Islamist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, did not yield results.

Although the failure of these efforts placed pressure on New Delhi to meet with the APHC, the Union Government seemed disinclined to do so even late this summer. At a meeting chaired by Mr. Narayanan in early July, most officials present expressed concern that the dialogue would give the APHC the de-facto status of being the spokesman for the people of Jammu and Kashmir, and thus marginalise elected representatives. Interestingly, sources said, neither Mr. Narayanan nor Mr. Vohra were involved in the subsequent decision to meet with the APHC.

Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said nothing on the subject, but his actions make clear his Government's unhappiness with its exclusion from the dialogue process.

A day after the September 5 meeting between Dr. Singh and the APHC, where the detention of prisoners under the Public Safety Act was discussed, the Jammu and Kashmir Government detained Islamist activist Asiya Andrabi for two years. Since Mr. Sayeed's Government has been reluctant to invoke the Act even against terrorism suspects, Ms. Andrabi's arrest made clear its intention to resist decisions to which it was not party.

BSF to be pulled out of Srinagar

CRPF, police to be in charge

Praveen Swami

SRINAGAR: Border Security Force (BSF) troops deployed in Srinagar have received orders to withdraw from counter-terrorist operations in the city. Starting Sunday, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), in coordination with the Jammu and Kashmir Police, will be solely responsible for the security of the State capital.

Coming days after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference leadership, where the secessionist formation called for the phased reduction of counter-terrorism formations in the State, the decision appears to be aimed at consolidating the dialogue process.

15-year commitment

Although the BSF will continue to operate along the Line of Control, as well as in some rural pockets, the withdrawal will bring to an end its 15-year commitment in Srinagar. New Delhi handed over urban counter-terrorist operations to the CRPF in 2003, and BSF troops were withdrawn from urban areas north of the Jhelum river.

However, the withdrawal plan got bogged down last year amid concerns about the CRPF's ability to deal with the challenge before it.

BSF troops were sent to Srinagar in 1990 after the State police and the CRPF failed to contain violence. Although the BSF took

time to adapt to its new task, the force soon gained a formidable reputation. Since 1990, the BSF has eliminated 2,653 terrorists, among them the architect of the 2001 attack on Parliament House, Shahbaz Khan.

It secured some 9,375 arrests, including that of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Maulana Masood Azhar. Some 697 BSF jawans have meanwhile been killed here.

Concerns

While Srinagar residents are likely to greet the withdrawal of the BSF as a sign of normalisation, some officials have expressed concern. "In the last ten months," a senior Srinagar-based police officer said, "the CRPF has not carried out a single offensive counter-terrorist operation in Srinagar." Critics allege that the failure of the CRPF to contain an attack on the Tourist Reception Centre in April indicated its weaknesses. CRPF officials say all forces operating in Jammu and Kashmir have had their share of failures.

Some shortcomings in the CRPF's resources are, however, evident.

Compared with the communications intelligence infrastructure of the BSF, which enable it to track terrorist communications, the CRPF's technical capabilities are rudimentary. Nor does the CRPF have a chain of informers and moles, in contrast to the networks run by the BSF's 'G' Branch.

Nothing new in PM's offer for Hurriyat: NC

'Troops-cut assurance a challenge for APHC brass'

ARUN Joshi
Jammu, September 6

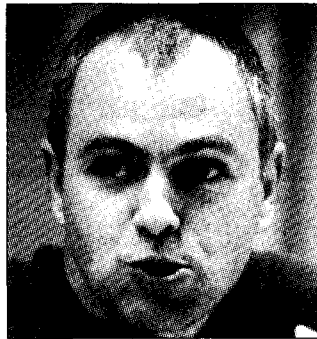
A DAY after the Hurriyat leaders held talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, National Conference president Omar Abdullah on Tuesday said, "There is absolutely nothing new in what had transpired between the two sides." Dismissing the euphoria over the talks in Delhi, the NC leader also said the Prime Minister's assurance of troops reduction if the intensity of violence subsides, would only enhance challenges for the Hurriyat leadership.

A big, but often stated "if" the violence level goes down, that qualified PM's promise to reduce troops in the Valley, has put the moderate Hurriyat leaders in an unenviable position.

Their only hope is if Pakistan helps choking infiltration from across the Line of Control, which would automatically blunt the lethal sting of militancy in the Valley.

On their part, they do not have sway over militant outfits to match the benchmark set by the PM for them. In this situation, they have none but Islamabad to turn to save their position and gain credibility for the continuation of dialogue with the Centre.

Another challenge stems for them in showcasing their September 5 meeting having something new in it, which, unfortunately, is not there.



Omar poser

NATIONAL CONFERENCE president Omar Abdullah on Tuesday wanted to know what "separates Hurriyat Conference from the mainstream parties in J&K". "To me they (Hurriyat Conference) are like one of us (mainstream parties)," he said. What transpired at Monday's meeting with the PM was just a "carbon copy of our agenda," he observed.

HTC, Jammu

Whatever Singh said on Monday evening is a re-run of what he had stated in his speech in the November 17, 2004, speech and later at a press conference in Srinagar.

The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had been very categorical that the human rights violations would not be tolerated and action taken against those found guilty.

And, as far as the review of the cases of those booked under Pota and Public Safety Act is concerned, the process in Jammu and Kashmir is on since the Mufti Sayeed government took over in November 2004. JKLF chairman Yasin Malik and hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani are among the beneficiaries of those reviews.

It was the same story of promises and "ifs", which has prominently and regularly featured in the dialogue process since January last year, when it first began.

The Hurriyat has to demonstrate the capacity to overcome or remove the "ifs" listed in the Prime Minister's assurances. That is a big challenge ahead.

To a common Kashmiri everything was so monolithic. Everything was same except that these were two occasions separated by almost 17-and-a-half months in two different settings — the fag end of the autumn of Kashmir and sweltering monsoon season of the union capital.

"There is absolutely nothing new in what has transpired between the two sides, the Centre and the Hurriyat Conference", said national conference president Omar Abdullah.

সূচনা শুভ পথ দীর্ঘ

অবশেষে কাশ্মীরের ছরিয়ত সম্মেলনের প্রতিনিধিদের সহিত প্রধানমন্ত্রীর আলোচনার সূত্রপাত হইল। মনমোহন সিংহ প্রধানমন্ত্রী হওয়ার পর মাঝেমাঝেই ছরিয়ত নেতাদের আলোচনার আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হইয়াছে। লক্ষ্য ছিল, পূর্বতন বাজপেয়ী সরকারের আমলে সূচিত আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়া চালু রাখা। কিন্তু নানা অজুহাতে ছরিয়ত নেতারা তাহা এড়াইয়া গিয়াছেন। তাঁহারা সফররত পাকিস্তান প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের সহিত সাক্ষাৎ করিতে নয়াদিল্লি আসিয়াছেন, মুশারফের সহিত আলাপ-আলোচনাও করিয়াছেন, কিন্তু প্রধানমন্ত্রী কিংবা ভারত সরকারের প্রতিনিধিদের সঙ্গে আলোচনার সময় বাহির করিতে পারেন নাই। অথচ পাকিস্তানের সহিত শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়া যত অগ্রসর হইয়াছে, নয়াদিল্লির সহিত আলোচনার বসার জন্য ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের উপর চাপ ততই বাড়িয়াছে। অন্য কেহ নন, স্বয়ং পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট মুশারফ পর্যন্ত এ ব্যাপারে ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্বকে উদ্যোগী হইতে বলিয়াছেন। অতঃপর তাঁহারা আগে পাকিস্তান সফর করিয়া পাক সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনার বায়না করেন, সে আবদারও নয়াদিল্লি মানিয়া লয়। সেখানেও পাক কর্তৃপক্ষের কাছ হইতে একই বার্তা পাইয়া শ্রীনগরে ফিরিয়া তাঁহারা নয়াদিল্লির সহিত আলোচনায় সম্মত হন। তাহাও আবার সর্বোচ্চ রাজনৈতিক স্তরে, অর্থাৎ প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে। সেই আলোচনা এক দফা সাক্ষ হইয়াছে।

প্রথম দফার এই আলোচনায় যে সব বকেয়া প্রশ্নের মীমাংসা হইয়া যাইবে না, ইহা জানাই ছিল। তবু সব ধরনের হিংসা বর্জনে ছরিয়তের অঙ্গীকার এবং কাশ্মীর উপত্যকায় মানবাধিকার রক্ষায় সরকারের দায়বদ্ধতার ঘোষণার মধ্যে একটা শুভ সূচনার ইঙ্গিত রহিয়াছে। উপত্যকায় মোতামেন সেনাবাহিনীর সংখ্যা হ্রাস করার জন্য ছরিয়ত যে আবেদন জানাইয়াছে, তাহার জবাবে সরকার অবশ্য সীমাস্তে অনুপ্রবেশ এবং উপত্যকায় সন্ত্রাসবাদী হামলা বন্ধের শর্ত শুনাইয়া দিয়াছে। মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুকের নেতৃত্বাধীন এই ছরিয়ত প্রতিনিধিরা সংগঠনের নরমপন্থী অংশের। কট্টরপন্থীরা সমান্তরাল ছরিয়ত গঠন করিয়া সরকারের সহিত আলোচনার প্রক্রিয়াটিরই বিরোধিতা করিয়াছে। স্বয়ং পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পর্যন্ত তাঁহাদের এই প্রক্রিয়ায় যোগ দিতে রাজি করাইতে পারেন নাই। সুতরাং এক হিসাবে এই ছরিয়ত একটি খণ্ডিত সংগঠন। তা ছাড়া নরমপন্থী নেতাদের মধ্যেও ইয়াসিন মালিক কিংবা সাবির শাহের মতো প্রভাবশালী নেতা এই গোষ্ঠীতে নাই। তাঁহারা অবশ্য উমর ফারুকের সঙ্গে সরকারের আলোচনাকে স্বাগত জানাইয়াছেন। সত্য, সরকার এখনও কোনও নির্দিষ্ট মীমাংসাসূত্রে পৌঁছায় নাই, সহসা তেমন কিছু অর্জিত হওয়ার নাটকীয়তাও দূরপর্যাহত। কিন্তু ছরিয়তের এই গোষ্ঠীর নেতরাই জম্মু-কাশ্মীরের জনসাধারণের একমাত্র প্রতিনিধি নহেন। যে কোনও মীমাংসাসূত্রে প্রতিনিধিস্থানীয় অন্যান্য গোষ্ঠীর সমর্থনও জরুরি। যেমন কট্টরপন্থী গোষ্ঠীর নেতারা, যেমন সাবির শাহ বা ইয়াসিন মালিকের মতো নেতারা, যেমন সর্বোপরি রাজ্যের নির্বাচকমণ্ডলীর বৈধ নির্বাচিত প্রতিনিধিরা। মনে রাখা দরকার, কারচুপি-মুক্ত জনদেশে নির্বাচিত জনপ্রতিনিধিদের সম্পূর্ণ অগ্রাহ্য করিয়া গৃহীত কোনও মীমাংসাসূত্রই আমজনতার কাছে, সর্বস্তরের রাজ্যবাসীর কাছে গ্রহণযোগ্য হইতে পারে না।

ছরিয়ত নেতাদের এ কথা প্রায়শ স্মরণ করাইয়া দেওয়া হয়। তাঁহাদের মনে পড়াইয়া দেওয়া হয় যে তাঁহারা কাশ্মীরি জনগণের একমাত্র প্রতিনিধি নন। আজ যে তাঁহারা সরকারের সহিত আলোচনায় আগ্রহ দেখাইতেছেন, তাহার পিছনে বাস্তব পরিস্থিতির চাপ আছে। তাঁহারা জানেন, উপত্যকার মানুষ শান্তির জন্য উন্মুখ হইতেছেন, সন্ত্রাস তাঁহাদের ভাল লাগিতেছে না। তাঁহারা জানেন, পাকিস্তানও আর সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের দিয়া কাশ্মীরে অন্তর্ঘাত চালাইতে আগের মতো উৎসুক নয়, তাহার উপর আন্তর্জাতিক চাপ আছে। এমনকী আন্তর্জাতিক জনমতও কাশ্মীরিদের কাছে পাকিস্তানের পুরানো অবস্থান আর অনুমোদন করে না। এই অবস্থায় ছরিয়ত যদি নয়াদিল্লির সহিত অসহযোগিতার সাবেক পন্থাই আঁকড়াইয়া থাকে, তবে তাহাদের বাদ দিয়াই ভারত-পাক শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ার সমান্তরালে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান প্রক্রিয়াও চালু হইয়া যাইতে পারে। ছরিয়ত তখন ইতিহাসের আঁজুকুঁড়ে নিষ্ক্ষেপিত না হোক, অন্তত অনেকাংশে অপ্রাসঙ্গিক হইয়া পড়িবে। কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধানে নয়াদিল্লির তাগিদ যত, ছরিয়ত সম্মেলনের তাগিদ তাহার চেয়ে বিন্দুমাত্র কম নয়। হয়তো মনমোহন সিংহের সরকারও তাহা সম্যক উপলব্ধি করিয়াছে। তাই ছরিয়ত নেতাদের আবদার মানিয়া লইলেও উপত্যকার নিরাপত্তা ও শৃঙ্খলা রক্ষায় স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রকের অবস্থান অপরিবর্তিতই থাকিয়াছে।

'LESS FORCES IF VIOLENCE ENDS'

PM, Hurriyat

Sri

69

98

137

agree to

talk more

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 5. — The first meeting between the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, and the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference tonight underlined the need to carry forward the dialogue over Kashmir with Dr Singh making a commitment that the people of the strife-torn state would live in peace and with self-respect and dignity.

During his two-and-a-half hour interaction with the separatist amalgam, Dr Singh reaffirmed his faith in peaceful resolution of all matters pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir, saying violence had no role in a democracy. In the meeting at the Prime Minister's 7 Race Course Road residence, Dr Singh and the five-member Hurriyat team agreed to continue the dialogue, in the course of which, a time-bound review of the Kashmiris detained under the Public Safety Act and Pota would be conducted.

Dr Singh said if violence in the state and infiltration to Kashmir ended, the armed forces could be reduced there. He also pledged to look into alleged human rights violations in Kashmir.

The Hurriyat delegation stressed that an honourable and durable solution to the Kashmir problem could be found through dialogue. The two sides also conceded that the only way forward was to ensure that violence at all

levels and in all forms ended. They agreed to carry forward the dialogue involving all regions and all shades of political opinions of the state.

The Hurriyat raised several points, concerning the rights of the people. The separatist group said it would be able to bring specific suggestions for honourable and durable resolution of the Kashmir problem at the next meeting.

Other than the Prime Minister, the government side was represented by Union home minister Mr Shivraj Patil, national security adviser Mr MK Narayanan, Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir Mr NN Vora and special envoy to Pakistan Mr Lambah. Earlier, Dr Singh met the Congress leader from Kashmir and Rajya Sabha member, Mr Saifuddin Soz, who is believed to have played a major role in setting the stage for today's talks.

The Hurriyat delegation, led by Mirwaiz Farooq, included Bilal Gani Lone, Abdul Gani Bhat, Maulana Abbas Ansari, and Fazl Haq Qureshi. Soon after his arrival here yesterday, the Mirwaiz had iterated that the Kashmir problem needed to be settled with the involvement of India, Pakistan and Kashmiris.

Welcoming the talks, Pakistan today said it would strengthen its peace process with India. "We think it will strengthen the peace process between India and Pakistan," a foreign office spokesman said in Islamabad today.

Dialogue in search of common ground

Zero tolerance towards human rights violations and terrorist violence is the most important CBM that the Government and the Hurriyat must agree upon.

Siddharth Varadarajan

THE GOVERNMENT of India and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference have had two unmemorable encounters in the past but Monday's meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Kashmiri outfit could well prove to be third time lucky if the two sides concentrate on the low-hanging fruit.

So great is the distance separating the formal positions of the Government and the Hurriyat that finding anything remotely resembling common ground is a difficult task at the best of times. Though the erstwhile Vajpayee Government deserves credit for having first invited the Hurriyat for talks, the BJP's approach to the Kashmir question was too rigid to allow any meaningful outcome. This was, after all, a government that had dispatched the autonomy resolution of Farooq Abdullah to the gallows without even the courtesy of a formal appraisal. The first pronouncement made by L.K. Advani after being named official interlocutor for the Hurriyat talks was predictably unhelpful: he said the only matter to discuss was "devolution." It took several weeks of delicate political surgery by concerned intermediaries — and the Vajpayee-Musharraf meeting in Islamabad on January 6, 2004 — to finally bring the Hurriyat leadership and Mr. Advani together.

The first meeting was held on January 22, the second on March 27. However, both produced little more than comforting photos. The Hurriyat said the "role of the gun should be replaced by the sound of politics" and Mr. Advani promised "zero-level human rights violations" as part of his plan for "security with a human face." Of course, neither side delivered much. Critics in Kashmir lampooned the talks as encounters between a shopkeeper who had no desire to sell and a customer who had no money to spend.

The change of government at the Centre did little to push the process forward. Shivraj Patil, as Union Home Minister, inherited

both the mantle of official interlocutor and his distinguished predecessor's penchant for setting out unnecessary preconditions. His statement that the dialogue had to be "within the four walls of the Constitution" effectively ensured no further meetings with the Hurriyat took place. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh wisely stepped into the breach with his own invitation but even then, it has taken several months for the right conditions to emerge.

Then and now

When the Hurriyat leaders meet the Prime Minister on Monday, they will do so in circumstances quite different from when they were last entertained on Raisina Hill. For one, the India-Pakistan peace process is rolling along with a third round of the composite dialogue to be launched in January 2006. A bus service operates between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad and an in-principle agreement has been reached to ply trucks on the same route. The Hurriyat leaders themselves travelled across the Line of Control and onwards into Pakistan, something no government in India had had the courage — or acuity — to permit in the past. Pakistani journalists have begun making forays into Jammu and Kashmir. Most recently, India issued visas for the first ever intra-Kashmir dialogue involving politicians and intellectuals from both sides of the LoC to be held in Srinagar. The dialogue, sponsored by the Delhi Policy Group and Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation saw the participation of a number of delegates from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Northern Areas.

Of course, underlying conditions in the State continue to be difficult, if not grim. Militancy and infiltration continue, albeit at lower levels, but the desperation of those who wield the gun is reflected in a growing number of terrorist attacks near schools and other public places. 'Breakaway' Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, too, remains a significant fly in the ointment. Though disowned by Pakistan and the Jamaat-e-Islami

of Kashmir, he continues to have a measure of public support in the Valley, certainly more than the Hurriyat leaders, as evidenced by the rally outside his house in Hyderpora last month on the first anniversary of the founding of his Tehreek-e-Hurriyat.

Convinced it has militancy on the run, the Army is unwilling to countenance another unilateral 'non-initiation of combat operations.' Elements within the Hurriyat are open to the idea of encouraging groups such as the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen to come forward with a ceasefire offer but they will be able to deliver on this account only if Pakistan weighs in with the same demand. While the idea of a ceasefire is worth exploring, the Hurriyat and Dr. Singh should begin on Monday with three simple proposals: First, there should be zero tolerance towards violence against civilians; secondly, the logic of 'confidence-building measures' as a way of creating room for a political settlement between India and Pakistan in Kashmir must be allowed to continue; and third, the space must be created for peaceful political protest.

Zero tolerance towards violence against civilians means the government must not put up with human rights violations — whether deliberate or inadvertent — and must act punitively in those cases where the facts establish wanton violence against civilians. What the Manmohan Singh Government does in the Pathribal-Panchalthan incident — where the Rashtriya Rifles abducted five civilians at random in March 2000 and killed them in cold blood in order to pin the Chittisinghpura massacre of Sikhs on them — will be an important test case for establishing its *bona fides*. The matter is an open and shut case of murder and the CBI is believed to have recommended the prosecution of the Army officers involved. By sanctioning prosecution, the Government can demonstrate that it means business and that there will be no protection for those who violate the law.

On its part, the Hurriyat must take a clear and unambiguous stand against terrorists who target — or endanger — civilians in Kashmir. Just as a civilised society expects its security forces to abide by the rules of conflict, so must it insist that militants have an equal obligation not to harm civilians. Whenever there have been terrorist killings in Kashmir, the Hurriyat leaders either maintain an unbecoming silence or disingenuously try to blame the Government. The Hurriyat must declare that the killing of civilians — and the planting of explosives in places where civilians are likely to be killed or injured — is a crime against humanity and demand that militant groups stop these activities.

As for confidence-building measures (CBMs), the Hurriyat has a crucial role to play in convincing the Pakistani establishment that the interest of the people of Jammu and Kashmir will be served by allowing greater freedom of movement of individuals, families, trade and commerce across all main points of the LoC.

To the extent to which Islamabad is wary of starting bus services from Poonch to Rawalakot, Jammu to Mirpur and Kargil to Skardu, the Indian Government should ask the Hurriyat to press for the same. Similarly, mail and telephone services could be liberalised so that communication could be quicker and cheaper.

Finally, if the Government wishes to delegitimise violence and promote dialogue and politics, it must provide legal avenues for the expression of protest and dissent. Rallies and demonstrations are an important — and crucial — part of political culture throughout India. Given the possibility of disruption by *agents provocateur*, suitable parameters and protocols need to be devised to ensure protests remain peaceful. Nevertheless, it is time the Central and State Governments conceded the principle that peaceful protest — by the Hurriyat or any other force — cannot be prohibited indefinitely in Kashmir.

HURRIYAT TEAM LANDS IN DELHI

Stage set for Kashmir talks

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4. — A five-member Hurriyat Conference team arrived here today for talks with the Prime Minister tomorrow. Dr Manmohan Singh did his homework by holding talks with the Union home minister, Mr Shivraj Patil, the Centre's pointsman in Kashmir, Mr NN Vohra, and the special envoy to Pakistan, Mr SK Lambah.

The Hurriyat team was led by the organisation's chairman, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq. "The talks are aimed at completing the cycle of Hurriyat's concept of holding triangular parleys comprising India, Pakistan and people of Kashmir," he told reporters.

Referring to the separatist group's meeting with the Pakistani establishment and leaders in Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir earlier, the Mirwaiz said: "Tomorrow's talks are aimed at completing the cycle and we want that the immediate effects of the talks are visible on the ground with improvement of security situation."

This would be the first highest-level talks of the Hurriyat with the UPA government since it came to power last year.

The Mirwaiz said the dialogue's agenda "will be to complete the political process of finding some space for Kashmiris in the talks for resolution of the issue".

The Hurriyat is likely to push for a ceasefire in Kashmir as well as release of "political prisoners". The timing of the negotiations is significant as Dr Singh is scheduled to meet the Pakistani President Gen. Pervez Musharraf in New York on 14 September on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly conclave.

Holding that the Hurriyat had always maintained that a "permanent solution" to the Kashmir problem could only be found through dialogue, the Mirwaiz



Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

said: "At the moment, the atmosphere for holding talks is very conducive and we hope it will be a constructive and fruitful interaction tomorrow."

Stressing the "continuity" of such talks, the Hurriyat chairman said his group would take up issues step-by-step. Asserting that no miracle could be expected overnight of the engagement, he expressed the hope that "the process which has begun would continue till a lasting and honourable solution was found for Kashmir".

Yesterday, the Congress MP, Mr Saifuddin Soz, held a meeting with the Hurriyat leaders in Srinagar. "The Prime Minister is going to talk to Hurriyat leaders with an open mind. The talks will lay the foundation for a fruitful dialogue..."

The Hurriyat delegation would also meet Mrs Sonia Gandhi on Wednesday. The Centre is expected to follow-up the talks with a dialogue with all political parties, representatives in the Assembly and other groups in J&K in coming days.

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KASHMIR

Singh sets up Hurriyat first date

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 31: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today invited moderate Hurriyat Conference leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq for talks early next week to resume the government's stalled dialogue with Kashmir's main political separatist alliance.

After news channels flashed the invite, conveyed verbally by Rajya Sabha Congress MP Saifuddin Soz, the Hurriyat met in Srinagar and decided to accept it.

The September 5 talks, the Hurriyat's first engagement at the highest level with the Centre, will be held nine days after

Patil. The last high-level talks its leaders had in Delhi was with former deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani last year when the NDA was in power.

Official sources said the initiative came entirely from Singh who reportedly believes it is an important aspect of his Kashmir peace drive. The group who switched to the Congress from the National Conference after falling out with Farooq Abdullah, senior bureaucrat and former adviser to the Kashmir governor Wajahat Habibullah, and journalist Prem Shankar Jha.

The sources said Singh has not drawn up a "framework" for the talks. "He will just hear

them out," said a source. Hurriyat sources said they would raise three issues: release of Kashmiri prisoners, human rights violations and improvement of the ground situation.

Mirwaiz said the invitation was a "welcome step". "The time has come when we need to address the political aspect of Jammu and Kashmir in a sincere and serious manner. We believe that Kashmir needs a political settlement, a peaceful settlement in accordance with the wishes and aspirations of the people."

In Delhi, Soz played down his role as the man behind the scenes. "What is more important is that the Hurriyat has

accepted the invitation." Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said the Prime Minister's invite was a "positive" development that "will help further promote the atmosphere of peace in the state".

Omar Abdullah, the president of the Opposition National Conference, also welcomed the talks offer. Without naming the headline faction of the Hurriyat, led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Mufti said he hoped that the talks would lead to a wider dialogue in which other groups in the state would also take part. The chief minister appealed to militants to "shun violence and join the process of talks".

The Left sweeps Kerala grassroots

In a strong indication of what lies ahead in the Assembly contest of 2006, the Left Democratic Front (LDF) has swept the polls to the local bodies in Kerala, leaving the truncated ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) a dismal second. That the LDF has taken every one of the five Corporations and 33 of 52 Municipalities, in addition to the overwhelming majority of District Panchayats (79 per cent), Block Panchayats (79 per cent), and Grama Panchayats (69 per cent), sets the Oommen Chandy regime up for a Requiem Mass some time in mid-2006. It appears there is nothing the Congress and its dispirited UDF allies can do in the next six or seven months to reverse the tide. Two significant factors that surfaced in this grassroots contest relate to the role of the Democratic Indira Congress (Karunakaran), and the covert understanding between the UDF and the Bharatiya Janata Party. It does appear that the LDF has gained by making common cause in some areas with the veteran, K. Karunakaran, whose party has picked up a few seats and made modest gains. On the other side, the BJP has registered its presence in pockets, notably in Palakkad and Thiruvananthapuram, but the UDF has hardly benefited from the deal. There have been no surprises in the overall political outcome. How the verdict would go must have been clear to the Congress even before the first votes were cast in the two-phase election.

The Congress has only itself to blame for its predicament in Kerala, a highly politicised State with the country's best social indicators. Political stagnation and opportunism spiced with infighting is a recipe for certain political failure. The poor performance of the UDF in office is widely recognised. The collapse of organisational discipline, the ceaseless showdowns between the Karunakaran and Antony factions (until A.K. Antony was dethroned and Mr. Chandy installed as Chief Minister), the ineptness of the Congress high command in dealing with an intolerable situation within the party, and the eventual exit of the Karunakaran group to form the DIC(K) tell their own story. On the other side, the LDF, after an unprecedented electoral sweep in May 2004 — when it took 19 out of the 20 Lok Sabha seats — has consolidated its advantage across the State and at all tiers of the polity, from the Grama Panchayat up. It remains to be seen how the equation between the Left and the DIC(K) evolves during the run-up to the Assembly contest. It is unlikely the Left will provide much space for the family-oriented politics of the octogenarian leader. Mr. Karunakaran, the quintessential political bargainer, continues to describe himself as a Congressman; nothing for him is final or permanent. Kerala, which is habituated to a regime change every half decade, is indisputably headed for a return of the Left to power.

61.75 per cent polling in second phase in Kerala

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Minor scuffles, bomb blast mark polls in Kannur district

Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: The second phase of the civic elections covering the districts of Palakkad, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragode on Monday witnessed a voter turnout of 61.75 per cent, according to tentative figures released by the State Election Commission (SEC).

Minor scuffles between party volunteers, a country bomb blast that did not cause much damage, scores of complaints relating to bogus voting and a few charges of 'booth capturing' were reported during this phase. Most of the incidents and complaints came from Kannur district, where the police had been expecting trouble. The polling percentage is likely to change when the full

details reach the SEC from the polling booths. In the first phase of the polling covering the other eight districts on Saturday, the initial estimates had put the voter turnout at 63 per cent, but the figure came down to 59.94 per cent after the final compilation of the data.

Palakkad recorded 61 per cent polling, Malappuram 63.3 per cent, Kozhikode 62.25 per cent, Wayanad 61 per cent, Kannur 63 per cent and Kasaragode 60 per cent, according to the initial estimates. The polling followed more or less the same pattern in the urban and rural areas, unlike in the first phase where the urban centres witnessed relatively low voter turnout.

The country bomb explosion took place at Vilakkode in Kannur district. A CPI(M) worker

sustained minor injuries in the incident.

While the CPI(M) accused the BJP of indulging in the 'bomb attack,' the police were also examining whether the explosive had gone off accidentally from the hand of the injured CPI(M) activist. At Nedumbarachal, also in Kannur district, a country bomb was found abandoned on the roadside and the police defused it. Polling was disrupted for some time in a few booths in Kannur district, with the CPI(M) cadres allegedly intimidating the UDF booth agents and, in some cases, putting their fists to use.

In one case, the fracas occurred when the identity of a voter was challenged. The polling resumed peacefully afterwards.

Kashmir crisis: Leaders seek world support

HTC and Agencies

Jammu, August 21

THE LEADERSHIP of the two sides of Jammu and Kashmir is meeting in European Union headquarters, Brussels, in mid-September to drum up international support for an early solution of Kashmir crisis.

The event is being organised by London-based International Kashmir Alliance (IKA), engaged in highlighting the Kashmir issue in the European countries. Its main agenda is anti-fundamentalism and solution through dialogue.

A Kashmiri leader, Nazir Gilani, heads IKA. He is also Chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights. "All those who matter in Kashmir have been invited for the conference, and we hope that this conference will be able to convince the world that the Kashmir resolution is in the interests of peace in South Asia and also rest of the world," according to an associate of Gilani, who did not want to be named at this stage.

He is here in connection with interacting with the leaders of the various political and separatist groups who believe in the peaceful solution of Kashmir crisis.

Some top-ranking international voices on Kashmir from the US, UK and India and Pakistan will also take part in the conference. The IKA conference's venue — Brussels — has been chosen with a purpose: to get maximum attention in the European countries.

The EU is expanding its role in the resolution of the conflict situations across the globe, and that has given the cue to the organisers to hold the meet at the city of the EU headquarters.

Pak N-plans

Apparently keeping in mind the concerns of the Western countries over nuclear proliferation, Pakistan will soon put forward a proposal to them to invest in 13 nuclear power plants in the country on a "build-and-own" basis. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission has requested President Musharraf to address the concerns of the US and the Western world on proliferation by ensuring that the new plants would work under "full safeguards" of the International Atomic Energy Agency, officials in Islamabad said.

Time not ripe for J-K ceasefire: GOC-in-C

MIR EHSAN 96
SRINAGAR, AUGUST 21

NORTHERN Army Commander Lt Gen Hari Prasad today said the situation in Jammu and Kashmir had still not reached a point where they could take any decision on ceasefire with the militants or reduction in number of troops posted in the state.

GOC-in-C, Northern Command, Lt Gen Prasad said the political leadership had been asking for their inputs from time to time. "Last time, internal ceasefire with the militants proved a bad experience as militants used the time to reinforce their cadres in the Valley."

Gen Prasad said while the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with Pakistan

CRPF man kills self

SRINAGAR: A CRPF jawan committed suicide inside the heavily guarded Bakshi Stadium in Srinagar today, official sources said. Shivraj Singh of 50th Battalion of CRPF shot at and critically injured himself from his service rifle this afternoon, the sources said. Singh was rushed to a hospital where he died, sources said.

were progressing well, infiltration had not stopped. "Militant infrastructure is intact, communication set-up is still functioning and more and more militants are being pushed into the Indian side," he said adding, "Compared to the previous year, this year, very high levels of infiltration took place in June and July in different sectors along the LoC."

Gen Prasad, however, said the situation was gradually improving and only 1,500 militants were active now. "In 2003, some 3,000 militants were operating in the state. Though complete normalcy is yet to be restored, it is round the corner," he said.

Gen Hari Prasad, who is demitting office on August 31 said his present assignment was challenging. "My ambition was to bring normalcy in the Valley," he said. "The violence level has come to half of what it used to be in the past", he added.

Gen Prasad said to make their presence felt, the militants were now targeting civilians by exploding car bombs. "Seventy five percent of their leaders have been killed. Now their aim is to create terror by killing civilians," he said.

Apart from guarding the LoC, Lt Gen Prasad said the Army was also involved in tackling insurgency in rural pockets. "If the situation improves, paramilitary forces and police will be handed over the security of rural areas of the state as well," he said.

About Bangergund incident where the Army killed three school children last month, Lt Gen Prasad said the inquiry was in progress. "The report will be submitted in two weeks and guilty will be punished," he said.

Northern Army Commander said Operation Sadhbavana had managed to bridge the divide between the Army and civilians. "Now Kashmiri students are eager to join the Army and serve the nation," he said.

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কেরলে বামেদের কড়া চ্যালেঞ্জ সন্যায়

তিরুঅনন্তপুরম, ২৭ অগস্ট: অন্তর্দৃষ্টি বিপর্যস্ত দলীয় কর্মীদের মনোবল ফেরাতে আজ কেরলে এসে সহযোগী বামেদের রীতিমতো কড়া সুরে চ্যালেঞ্জ ছুড়ে দিয়েছেন কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সন্যায় গাঁধী। কমিউনিস্টদের দুর্গ কেরলে এসে তিনি সাফ জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন কেন্দ্রে বামেদের সহযোগিতায় সরকার চালালেও রাজ্যে তাদের বিরোধিতায় কোনও ফাঁকি রাখা হবে না। কেরলে বামেরাই যে কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্বাধীন ইউডিএফ জোটের প্রধান প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী তা-ও সাফ জানান সন্যায়।

তিরুঅনন্তপুরমে কেরল প্রদেশ কংগ্রেসের নতুন ভবনের উদ্বোধন করে সন্যায় বলেন, সাম্প্রদায়িক শক্তির বিরুদ্ধে ঐক্যবদ্ধ হওয়ার দায়বদ্ধতা থেকেই কেন্দ্রে বামেদের সঙ্গে সমঝোতা করেছে কংগ্রেস। কিন্তু রাজ্যে বামপন্থীদের জোটকে পরাস্ত করাই দলের প্রাথমিক লক্ষ্য বলে মন্তব্য করেন তিনি। কেরলে করুণাকরন গোষ্ঠী দল ভেঙে বেরিয়ে যাওয়ার পরে দলীয় সংগঠনকে চাঙ্গা করতে এই প্রথমবার রাজ্যে এলেন সন্যায়। কিন্তু বামেদের সম্পর্কে চাঁচাছোলা ভাষায় তিনি বলেন, “কেন্দ্রে বিজেপি ও আরএসএসের মতো সাম্প্রদায়িক শক্তির মোকাবিলা করতে আমরা একজোট হয়েছি ঠিকই। কিন্তু

আমি স্পষ্ট করে দিতে চাই এ রাজ্যে আমরা এলডিএফের প্রধান প্রতিপক্ষ। আমাদের কর্মসূচিও আলাদা।”

কেরল ও পশ্চিমবঙ্গে আগামী বছর বিধানসভা নির্বাচন। তার আগে কমিউনিস্টদের আক্রমণ করে সন্যায় এই মন্তব্য যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ। তিনি সকালে আর একটি অনুষ্ঠানে বলেন, কেন্দ্রে বামেদের সমর্থন নিয়ে রাজ্যে তাদের বিরোধিতা করা অনেকের কাছে পরস্পরবিরোধী সিদ্ধান্ত বলে মনে হতে পারে। কিন্তু কেন্দ্রে ও রাজ্যের পরিস্থিতি সম্পূর্ণ আলাদা। রাজ্যে আর্থ-সামাজিক পরিস্থিতির সার্বিক উন্নয়নের জন্য কংগ্রেস বামেদের বিরোধিতা করবে। তিনি বলেন, কংগ্রেস কখনও উন্নয়নের বিরোধী নয়। তা দল ক্ষমতায় থাক বা না থাক।

কেরল প্রদেশ কংগ্রেস সভাপতি রমেশ চেম্মিথালার গত ২২ দিন ব্যাপী পথপ্রচারের শেষে তিরুঅনন্তপুরমে আজ এক জনসভার আয়োজন করা হয়। দলের ঐক্য ফেরাতে চেম্মিথালার এই প্রয়াসের প্রশংসা করে সন্যায় বলেন, ব্যক্তিগত স্বার্থ নয়, দলের স্বার্থের কথা ভেবেই কাজ করা উচিত কর্মীদের। সন্যায় বলেন, কেরলে তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি ও পর্যটন শিল্পে উন্নয়নের প্রভূত সম্ভাবনা রয়েছে। এবং সেই লক্ষ্যেই কাজ করবে কংগ্রেস।-পিটিআই

Karnataka CM sacks deputy, 2 other ministers

Agencies
Bangalore, August 5

CAPPING WEEKS of political turmoil in the JD(S), Karnataka chief minister N. Dharam Singh on Friday sacked deputy chief minister and rebel leader Siddaramaiah and two ministers loyal to him.

Soon after senior JD(S) leader M.P. Prakash was recognised as leader of the JD(S) Legislature Party by Assembly Speaker Krishna, Singh drove to Raj Bhavan along with KPCC president Mallikarjun Kharge and recommended the dismissal.

Apart from Siddaramaiah, minister for rural development H.C. Mahadevappa and minister of state for textiles Satish Jharkhihole, who had stood solidly with him, also faced the axe.

"Yes", Singh told reporters after a 40-minute meeting with the Governor, when asked if he had recommended the dismissal of Siddaramaiah and his two loyalist ministers who had revolted against JD(S) supremo H.D. Devegowda, whose party is the Congress's coalition partner.

The Governor accepted the recommendation of the chief minister with immediate effect, a Raj Bhavan communique said. As he came under mounting

pressure from the JD(S) to ease out Siddaramaiah, Mahadevappa and Jharkhihole, Singh indicated earlier in the day that he was awaiting the Speaker's decision on the JD(S) Legislature Party leadership issue to act.

"I have considered all aspects and letters and recognised Prakash as leader of the JD(S) Legislature Party", the Speaker said after he overruled the objections of Siddaramaiah, who had questioned the JD(S) Legislature Party's election of Prakash and maintained he was still JD(S) Legislature Party leader.

The Speaker's communication set the ball rolling, with the chief minister promptly swinging into action to act on the demand of the JD(S) leadership for sacking Siddaramaiah.

In a decisive twist to months of fratricidal feud within the JD(S), Siddaramaiah was ousted as JD(S) Legislature Party leader and Prakash was elected in his place at the Legislature Party meeting on Thursday.

Siddaramaiah, too, had called a parallel Legislature Party meeting on Thursday, but, beaten in the numbers game with 53 of the 58 MLAs with the Devegowda camp, he deferred it to a later date citing a lack of quorum.

Militants kill 5 pandits in Udhampur

■ Two-year lull shattered; no outfit claims responsibility for the massacre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU | AUGUST 13

IN a strike just two days before Independence Day, militants killed five Hindus and injured nine others in Udhampur district on Friday night. The injured include three minor girls. No outfit has so far claimed responsibility for the massacre, which shattered a comparative lull of two years in the area.

Sources said the attack came when the victims were sleeping in Shajroo village. The militants, 20 in number, first killed two village defence committee (VDC) members sleeping on the roof of a house. After this, they entered the

house and hurled hand grenades, besides resorting to indiscriminate fire.

The dead include VDC members Sabaz Ram and Ishar Dass along with three boys — Narinder Singh, Charan Singh and Balwant Singh. Three girls (aged two to seven), two women and four men were injured.

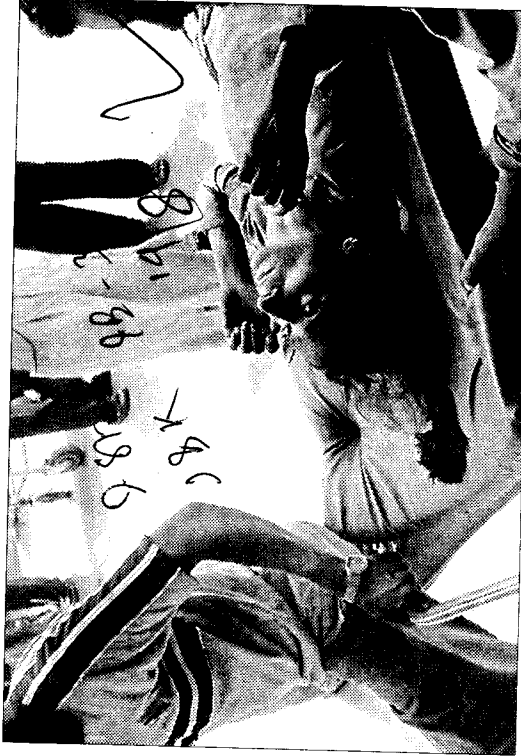
Senior officers of the police and armed forces rushed to the site. The injured were airlifted by an IAF helicopter piloted by Wing Commander R K Chauhan and Squadron Leader K Mukherjee. The DIG Udhampur-Doda range, Satvir Gupta, and Udhampur Deputy Commissioner, Ashok Parmar, accompanied the injured to Government

Singh, said due to fear of the militants, seven families used to sleep in one house.

Satvir Gupta, DIG Udhampur-Doda range said around 40 Hindus were in the house at the time of attack. He said a nine-member VDC was set up to repulse militant attack but when the militants came, only five members were inside the house. Three of them opened fire only after two of their colleagues were killed, he added.

Gupta said that when the news about the attack reached the Mahore police station, the DSP and SHO along with a lieutenant and 12 security personnel and a doctor reached headed towards the village. He said the fire-fight lasted up to 4 am.

SP Reasi J L Sharma said no organisation had claimed responsibility for the attack.



One of the injured being taken to a Jammu hospital. PTI

Medical College Hospital, Jammu. Had other VDC members not retaliated, the toll would have been higher, the villagers who accompanied the injured to the hospital said. Another attendant, Sanjeet

14 AUG 2006

INDIAN EXPRESS

ছায়াযুদ্ধ চলছেই, কাশ্মীরে সেনা ফেরাতে চায় কেন্দ্র

অগ্নি রায় ● বাঙ্গালোর

১৫ জুলাই: বর্তমান সীমান্ত পরিস্থিতির পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে সেনা কমিয়ে আনার সিদ্ধান্তটি খতিয়ে দেখবে কেন্দ্র। কাশ্মীরে হিংসা, অযোধ্যা-কাণ্ড, লন্ডন বিস্ফোরণ এবং গুরেজ সেক্টরের দীর্ঘমেয়াদি অভিযান সাউথ ব্লককে কিছুটা চাপে ফেলে দিয়েছে। প্রতিরক্ষা সূত্রের খবর, এই পরিস্থিতি বিচার করেই যত দ্রুত সম্ভব উপত্যকায় সেনা ফিরিয়ে আনার সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া হতে পারে।

কেন্দ্রীয় প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় আজ বলেছেন, গত বছর সিদ্ধান্তটি নেওয়ার পরে পর্যায়ক্রমে সেনা সরানো হয়েছে। কিন্তু তার ফল কী হয়েছে, বিশ্লেষণ করে দেখা হয়নি। সেনা সরানোর কথা ঘোষণা করার পরে পাকিস্তানের তরফ থেকে কতটা সাদা মিলেছে, তা-ও বিশদে বিশ্লেষণ করে দেখা হবে।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের আমেরিকা যাত্রার প্রাক্কালে সব মিলিয়ে পাক সন্ত্রাসবাদের বিরুদ্ধে আজ যথেষ্টই চড়া সুর শুনিয়েছে ভারত। দিল্লির পক্ষ থেকে সাফ জানিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে, বারবার বলা সত্ত্বেও পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে ভারত-বিরোধী কার্যকলাপ বন্ধ হয়নি। অনুপ্রবেশ যতটুকু কমেছে, তা ভারতেরই নজরদারিতে। প্রতিবেশী দেশের তাতে কোনও ভূমিকা নেই।

আজ সন্ধ্যায় সামগ্রিক পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বৈঠক করেছেন ইউপিএ চেয়ারপার্সন সনিয়া গাঁধী এবং প্রণববাবুর সঙ্গে। ওয়াশিংটনে সন্ত্রাসবাদ সম্পর্কিত কোন কোন তথ্য বিশদে পেশ করা হবে, তা নিয়েও চূড়ান্ত আলোচনা হয়েছে। আর আজ দুপুরে বাঙ্গালোর বিমানবন্দরের লাগোয়া ঘাঁটিতে সামরিক অনুষ্ঠানের মঞ্চ থেকে সীমান্তপারের সন্ত্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে তোপ দেগেছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। অনুপ্রবেশ থেকে শুরু করে নিয়ন্ত্রণের খার ও-পারে অটুট জঙ্গি পরিকাঠামো—প্রতিটি বিষয় তুলে ধরে তিনি বলেছেন, কার্গিলের মতো পরিস্থিতি তৈরি না-হলেও ক্রমাগত সীমান্তের ও'পার থেকে 'ছায়াযুদ্ধ' চালিয়ে যাওয়া হচ্ছে।

চার দিন ধরে গুরেজ সেক্টরে নিরাপত্তা বাহিনীর সঙ্গে জঙ্গিদের অবিরাম গুলির লড়াই চলছে। সংঘর্ষে এখনও পর্যন্ত ৯ জনের মৃত্যু হয়েছে। আটকে পড়া জঙ্গিরা সীমান্তের ও-পারে যাওয়ার প্রাণপণ চেষ্টা চালাচ্ছে বলে সেনা সূত্রের খবর। এই ঘটনাটিকে 'কার্গিলের মতো' বলতে নারাজ কেন্দ্র। তবে তাকে ছোট করেও দেখাও যে আর সম্ভব নয়, তা আজ স্পষ্ট হয়ে গিয়েছে। ইউপিএ ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে নভেম্বরে কাশ্মীর থেকে পর্যায়ক্রমে সেনা সরানোর সিদ্ধান্তও যথেষ্ট বিতর্ক তৈরি হয়েছিল রাজনৈতিক মহলে। এর পরে সরকারের কর্তারাও বিভিন্ন মঞ্চে বারবার বলেছেন, ইসলামাবাদ কথা রাখছে না। বিদেশ মন্ত্রকও একাধিক বার বলেছে, পাকিস্তানের মাটিতে ভারত-বিরোধী কার্যকলাপ, অনুপ্রবেশ এবং পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপ বন্ধে কোনও ব্যবস্থাই ইসলামাবাদ নেয়নি।

এই সব বিচার করেই কাশ্মীরে দ্রুত সেনা ফেরানোর কথা চিন্তা করা হচ্ছে। তবে ভারত-পাক শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ায় যাতে আঁচ না-পড়ে, সে দিকেও যত্নবান হচ্ছে কেন্দ্র। সরকার বলছে, সন্ত্রাসবাদীদের কাজই হল শান্তি-প্রক্রিয়ায় ব্যাঘাত ঘটানো। নিজেদের অস্তিত্ব প্রমাণ করতে নাশকতা চালানো। প্রণববাবুর কথায়, "এই ফাঁদে কারওরই পা দেওয়া উচিত নয়।"

আজ উদ্যান-নগরীতে উপলক্ষটা ছিল ৯টি জাণ্ডয়ার-সহ এক ঝাঁক সেনা-বিমান, হেলিকপ্টারের মানোন্নয়ন ঘটিয়ে বিমানবাহিনীর হাতে তুলে দেওয়া। উৎপাদক রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত্ব সংস্থাটি প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রকেরই। চোখধাঁধানো অনুষ্ঠানের আবহেও প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী কিন্তু স্বভাবসিদ্ধ ভঙ্গিমায় বাবর, আলেকজান্ডারের আক্রমণের কথা টেনে বলেছেন, "তখন আমাদের অস্ত্র-প্রযুক্তি ছিল না, কিন্তু এখন আছে।" এবং এই যুক্তিতে ফের নাম না-করে পাকিস্তানের প্রসঙ্গে চলে এসেছেন।

J-K ■ We are ready for talks at an appropriate time: Patil

Talk to us in Srinagar, Hurriyat tells Centre

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JULY 12

A DAY after Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil ruled out a fresh talks invite to the Hurriyat Conference, its chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has said his group is ready to send an invitation to Manmohan Singh "if the Centre is willing to talk in Srinagar".

The chairman of the Hurriyat's moderate faction was speaking at the Martyr's Graveyard here after laying wreaths on the graves of those killed on July 13, 1931 — "the beginning of our freedom struggle", as Farooq put it.

"We are ready for the talks. If India is sincere, it is their responsibility to decide on the dates," the Hurriyat chairman said. "If the talks are to be held in New Delhi, then the Centre will have to decide about it," he added.

Even though he has ruled out a fresh invite, Patil has said the Centre is ready for talks at the appropriate time.

Amid heavy police and CRPF deployment, Hurriyat leaders today visited the burial ground of the 1931 martyrs. July 13 is celebrated as Martyrs' Day by mainstream and



All Party Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Omar Farooq at the meeting of the Hurriyat's executive committee in Srinagar on Tuesday. PTI

separatist parties alike. But Hurriyat leaders decided to visit the graveyard a day earlier to avoid sharing a platform with mainstream politicians.

"This (1931 killings) was the beginning of our freedom struggle," Farooq said. "Our belief is contrary to those who say the objectives of the (1931) movement have been achieved. We believe the struggle still continues."

During NDA rule, the Hurriyat Conference held some rounds of talks with the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and then Home

Minister L K Advani. The conglomerate says the framework for talks with the UPA Government will be the same.

"The conditions (for the talks) will remain same," Farooq said. "The dialogue will be focused to resolve the Kashmir issue; will be outside the framework of (Indian) Constitution and that the approach will be tripartite."

Flanked by senior leaders Abdul Gani Bhat and Maulana Abbas Ansari, the Hurriyat chief said the conglomerate will meet a team of Kashmiri Pandits next week.

This is a significant development for it is the first time that migrant Kashmiris will share a table with Hurriyat leaders.

"The Hurriyat, for the first time, is meeting a delegation of Kashmiri pandits on July 19. We have invited them here and this is an important development," Farooq said.

"They (Pandits) are a part of Kashmir. They are a part of our history, our existence and our culture. They should return to the Valley. The people of Kashmir always wanted them to return and live together happily," he added.

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INDIA

Three Babbar Khalsa militants held in Jammu

Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI: Three alleged Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) militants have been arrested in Jammu by the Special Cell of the Delhi police. The police claim to have recovered 2.5 kg of explosive RDX and 10 detonators during the operation.

According to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, Ajay Kumar, one of the prime accused in the recent Delhi cinema halls blasts case, Jaspal Singh, had during his interrogation by the police disclosed that he had received nine consignments of explosives and ammunitions from one Balwinder in Jammu. Acting on the tip-off that Balwinder would be receiving another con-

signment, a police team led by ACP Rajbir Singh went to Jammu and arrested him along with two others, Ajitraj and Joginder, who allegedly had come to deliver 2.5 kg of RDX to him.

During interrogation, Balwinder purportedly disclosed that his friend Beera, a resident of Fargwal, used to visit Pakistan and bring in consignments of arms, ammunition and explosives for which he was paid handsomely.

At his instance, Balwinder was also initiated into smuggling in 1997. Initially he allegedly smuggled narcotic drugs, but later he was recruited by BKI. In due course, he came into contact with Ajitraj and Joginder, who

• RDX, detonators seized by Delhi police

• Operation follows investigations in cinema blasts case

were also allegedly engaged in smuggling on the India-Pakistan border. They too allegedly began working for BKI and couriering arms and ammunition to the terrorists at the instance of their Pakistan-based handlers. Joginder allegedly disclosed to the police during his interrogation that he earlier used to work with his father at his sweets shop in Jorian. Last year, he met a Pakistani national at the residence of his cousin, Sarfu, a village bordering Tehsil Akhnoor in Jammu, who

motivated him to smuggle drugs and weapons from Pakistan for delivery to people in India against good monetary benefits. When Sarfu was arrested last December, his younger brother Ajitraj started working in his place. At the instance of their Pakistani handlers they allegedly supplied nine consignments of arms, ammunition, explosives and electronic equipments to Jaspal Singh, who was operating under the codename "Guptaji".

The police have learnt that

BKI militants have been receiving similar consignments through one Gafoor Choudhary, a Pakistani national. For their job, the three accused had received Rs. 8 lakhs so far.

In another development, the BKI chief for operations in India, Jagtar Singh Hawara, has allegedly disclosed to the police that he along with his accomplices Inderjeet Singh, Joginder Singh and Tony had killed a doctor, Jasbir Singh, who ran a clinic at Chunni at Fatehgarh in Punjab.

They killed the person on suspicion that he was an informer of the Punjab police and that at his instance the police had killed two BKI militants in an encounter.

Attack on another Kashmir Minister

Minister of State for Public Health and Engineering Syed Bashir Ahmad escapes unhurt

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Militants on Wednesday made a bid on the life of Minister of State for Public Health and Engineering Syed Bashir Ahmad. The Minister escaped unhurt but three of his guards were injured. This is the third attack on a senior minister in the last 15 days.

Witnesses said that around 5 p.m. militants in Budshah Chowk area fired at the Minister's car as it passed by. His security officers returned the fire but the militants escaped even as the people in the area panicked. Security forces cordoned off the area.

Mr. Ahmad was escorted by the Senior Superintendent of Police, Srinagar, Syed Ahmad Saeed, to the residence of Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed.

Police recovered two AK rifles during a search operation in the area.

The Inspector General of Police, Kashmir zone, Javed Mukhdoomi, and senior officers supervised the operation.

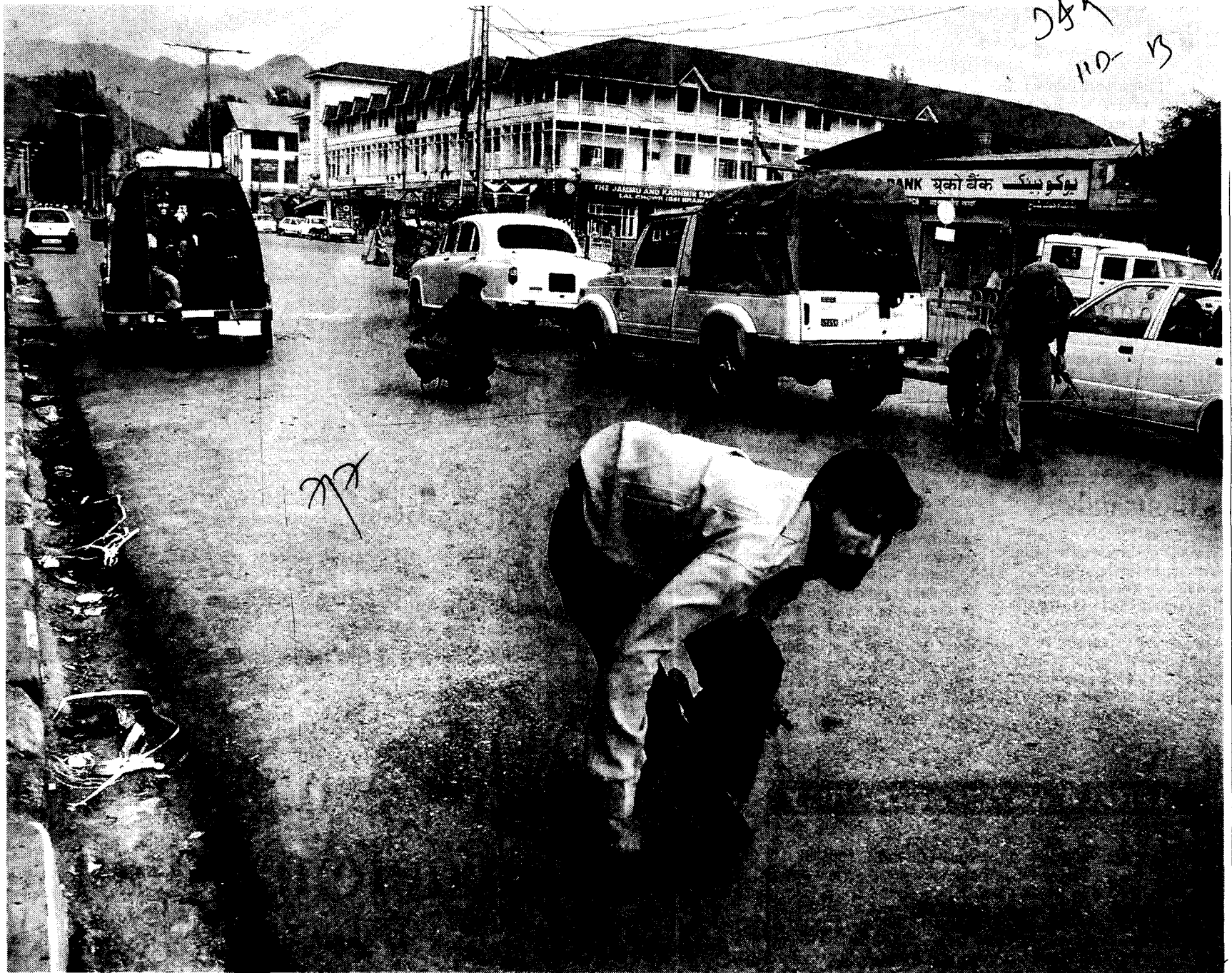
Shops were closed in Budshah Chowk and Lal Chowk, the busiest areas of the city. No civilian casualties have been reported.

No militant outfit has owned responsibility for the attack.

During the last week of June, the Minister of State for Education survived an attack in Baramulla. On Sunday four ministers, including Pradesh Congress chief and Minister for Rural Development Peerzada Sayeed and Minister for Works G.A. Mir, escaped an assassination bid near Sopore.

The landmine blast injured six persons, including the Additional Superintendent of Police, Sopore.

The authorities have reviewed the security arrangements for Ministers, an official spokesman said.



COUNTER ATTACK: Policemen take position when militants opened fire on Minister of State for Irrigation Syed Bashir Ahmad at Lal Chowk in Srinagar on Wednesday. One policeman and four civilians were injured in the attack. — PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

Peace cannot co-exist with violence in Kashmir: conference

Delegates at dialogue call for reconciliation and transparency in peace process

Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR: Making an impassioned appeal to all parties, delegates at the first intra-Kashmir dialogue said here on Saturday that all violence should end and efforts strengthened for a ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir to make the peace process result-oriented.

"There can be no peace as long as violence goes on unabated," was the common theme of the speeches made on the second day of the dialogue. Reconciliation and strong links between the different regions in the State were stressed at the deliberations which saw representatives from northern areas taking part for the first time.

Radha Kumar of the Delhi Policy Group said the peace process could not be sustained without a ceasefire adhered to by all the parties. "It will be quite a big gesture on the part of both India and Pakistan to agree to a ceasefire. Civil society should now start working towards that." Imtiaz Mir, a lawyer from Doda, said the media should play a constructive role while reporting on the conflict instead of sensationalising the events. He called for the involvement of all parties to thrash out the details of a mechanism which could help end violence.

Possibility thinking

Syeda Afshana, a teacher at Kashmir University, said: "I do not understand what kind of peace process is on when everyday dozens of people get killed." Referring to the encounter at Lal Chowk, she said: "Even as we talk about peace, hardly a few kilometres away the guns are roar-

"Even as we talk about peace, hardly a few kilometres away the guns are roaring."

ing." Stating that it required courage to say that an end to violence was inevitable, Siddique Wahid, head of the Gulab Singh

Chair at Jammu University, said: "We should look at the various possibilities for ending violence." Transparency in the peace proc-

ess and building institutions across the Line of Control would help violence to end, he added. Rights activist Balraj Puri made

"I am a foreigner here"

"It was most painful to get myself registered as a foreigner soon after we landed at the Srinagar airport."

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Farooq Khan Neazi wept bitterly as he spoke about his room at his Barzulla house. As he reminisced about his mother who would lovingly dust his books Neazi could not continue his speech at the first intra-Kashmir dialogue here.

A resident of Baghat, an uptown locality in Srinagar, Neazi left for Pakistan Occupied Kashmir in early 1990 returning here for the first time on Thursday. He was nostalgic about the days he spent in Srinagar. "I have a house here, my room is still intact. This city belongs to me but I am a foreigner here. It was most painful to get myself registered as a foreigner soon after we landed at the Srinagar airport." He broke down saying, "Only till a few years ago my mother used to take

care of my belongings but she passed away..."

Recounting his experiences in Muzaffarabad, Neazi said: "I am at the mercy of a havaldar who does not belong to my State. I do not have the right to live and I have to sell my soul to keep going." He said he was confused about his identity. "I am facing invisible torture." He wanted to know why there were no hoardings featuring Pakistan President Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in Mirpur or Muzaffarabad like the one in Srinagar. Expressing his anguish at being part of a divided family, Neazi said the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus gave hope but it should be run daily and "all should be allowed to board it."

Neazi, who married a girl in Muzaffarabad, was caught in a peculiar situation when his

wife visited her parents and the violence erupted in the Nineties. "She was still holding a Pakistani passport and I had an Indian one." After he moved to PoK his passport was not renewed by the Indian High Commission and for eight years he was without any citizenship. "It was such a difficult period for me. I was neither a Pakistani nor a resident of Azad Kashmir but finally I acquired citizenship." He was unemployed as being a law graduate he could not get the license to practice law in PoK. "I want to come back and live at my own place," he said.

Neazi, who is the chairman of the Coalition of Civil Societies of "Azad Kashmir," said peace was a comprehensive ideology and "all people across the LOC should support it to give a bright future to our children."

a plea for allowing Amnesty International and other similar international organisations to visit the State to investigate major incidents of violence. "There is a growing concern to end violence in this region."

Ershad Mehmood of the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, denied charges that Pakistan continued to provide logistic and financial support to militants. "Pakistan has discouraged militants, reined in their camps which no longer exist but India is not responding positively to the situation."

He alleged that the Indian Government through its Consulate in Jalalabad was "aiding and abetting militancy" in Balochistan province.

Rights situation

The rights situation in Pakistan occupied Kashmir also figured in the discussion with most of the delegates voicing the opinion that people were "suppressed" in that part of Kashmir.

Asking people to swear their allegiance to Pakistan before taking part in the elections was the biggest rights violation, they observed.

"There are violations in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and the Pakistan Human Rights Commission has highlighted these recently," said Ved Bhasin, editor of *Kashmir Times*. Farooq Khan Neazi of Muzaffarabad said: "Even to get a job you have to say you are Pakistani."

He said the President of POK was a serving Army General and he was imposed on the people as "Azad Kashmir is being ruled by the Army headquarter in Murree".

J&K ultras slit throats of 5 Hindus

Jammu: In a pre-dawn strike, militants on Friday killed five Hindus by slitting their throats after dragging them out of their huts in a hamlet in Rajouri district.

A group of militants stormed the Dhar Sakri area in the wee hours and took five Hindus from the hamlet to a nearby forest where they slit their throats and fled, a defence spokesman said.

He added that it was confirmed that the militants belonged to the Pakistan-based Hizbul Mujahideen.

The victims have been identified as Kan- nel Singh, Dharam Singh, Swaran Singh, Ashok Singh and Shambar Singh.

Earlier on Thursday night, militants slit the throat of a woman, Seema Akhtar, in Jaglanu village of the same area.

Police and security forces have cordoned off the area and begun an hunt for the mili-

tants. Dhar Sakri is a remote hilly hamlet, 35 km from the nearest police station, where people take their cattle to graze in the summer months. This is the first killing of minority community members by militants in Rajouri in two years.

In another incident, the bodies of a special police officer (SPO) and a Hizb ultra were found on Friday morning. Officials here said a group of militants had waylaid the SPO while he was taking the ultra to a police station in Kishtwar in Doda district on Thursday night.

Meanwhile, one of those injured in a militant attack in Gool area of Udhampur district on Thursday succumbed to his wounds at the Government Medical College Hospital in Jammu on Friday morning, raising the death toll in the incident to four. Agencies

GRENADE ATTACK



A police vehicle burns in the busy Budshah Chowk in the heart of Srinagar after it was hit by a grenade lobbed by militants around 5 pm on Friday. The rebels also opened fire at a building where security forces were camping, triggering a heavy exchange that injured eight persons, including four press photographers

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THE TIMES OF INDIA

Army sorry, Valley fumes

RISING RAGE



Security personnel stand beside a placard after a clash with Hurriyat Conference activists at a protest in Srinagar. (AFP)

OUR BUREAU

Srinagar/New Delhi, July 25: As smoke continued to billow from the hastily stubbed-out marriage feast fire, the Valley today smouldered with hundreds of schoolchildren taking to the streets in protest against the killing of innocents.

On Saturday night, Rashtriya Rifles jawans waiting to ambush militants had mistakenly shot dead three boys, aged between 11 and 16, headed for a marriage reception in Bangergund village of north Kashmir's Kupwara district.

Groups of angry students pelted stones at passing army vehicles and shouted slogans outside army camps in Kupwara, continuing the wave of protests for the second day running. A vehicle near Trehgam village was badly damaged, forcing soldiers to fire in the air.

"Police fired tear gas shells and used batons to disperse agitating crowds. Three persons were injured in the clashes and were admitted to hospital," a police officer said.

Hurriyat Conference activists, too, lent their voices, screaming "stop the killing and genocide of innocent Kashmiris", before 20 of them were herded off to a police station in Srinagar. The police said they had defied a ban on unauthorised public meetings.

The army today apologised for the death of the boys — Wasim Sultan Wani, 12, Bilal Khaliq Shah, 11, and Shabir Ahmed Shah, 16 — terming the killings a "regrettable incident". But it said the boys did not stop when challenged.

"The army requests all persons to stop when chal-

lenged and not run away as it leads to suspicion," an army statement said.

"Generally there is no civilian movement in the villages in the interior areas at night, hence they were mistaken as militants, challenged and fired at by the troops in the ambush as they tried to run away from the site."

The army said it "regrets this unfortunate loss of life" and had ordered an inquiry. Instructions had also been issued to prevent recurrence of such incidents, it said.

It also appealed to villagers in insurgency-prone areas not to venture out at night.

"People residing in terrorism-affected areas are also being advised not to move out at night. However, in case of an emergency, they are advised to move with lights," the army said.

Kupwara district borders the Line of Control and is a zone of much violence. But the army that has been regularly patrolling the countryside at night for over a decade was expected to have evolved mechanisms to prevent such "horrible accidents", an officer said.

Army chief General J.J. Singh is understood to have sought details of the incident.

The National Human Rights Commission has asked the government to submit a report in two weeks. It has asked the Centre to ensure there "is no conflict between respect for human rights and combating terrorism".

It was important not to "undermine democratic values, violate human rights, subvert the rule of law or chill civil liberties of citizens", while countering terror, it said.

Killing of boys sparks protests in J&K

Srinagar: The killing of four teenaged boys at the hands of troops in Jammu and Kashmir rocked the state on Monday as people took to the streets demanding stern action against the guilty personnel while the chief minister called an emergency meeting of the unified headquarters here.

Thousands of people from Bagargund and neighbouring Vilgam and Trehgam villages poured on the roads to protest against the killings on Sunday by the security forces, who maintained that they had been mistaken for militants.

The agitated local residents demanded that the guilty be punished, maintaining that the children were attending a marriage party and had ventured out on a stroll. Taking serious note of the incident, chief minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed, who has ordered a probe, convened an emergency



Police trying to control agitated activists of Hurriyat during a demonstration

meeting of the Unified Headquarters on Monday evening to discuss the situation arising after the tragic incident. The meeting is also likely to discuss the deteriorating security situation in the valley in view of the increasing militant attacks, the sources said.

The Unified Headquarters comprises heads of police, BSF, CRPF,

Army, State and central intelligence agencies.

At least 20 activists of the moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference, including senior leaders Javed Ahmad Mir and Shahidul Islam, were detained while they were protesting against the killings here. Mir, Islam and 18 other activists of the Hurriyat were taken into preventive custody when they were heading for the local office of the United Nations Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan at Sonawar here.

Meanwhile, political parties, cutting across ideological divides, condemned the incident. CPM state secretary Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami described the incident as "inhuman and brutal" and observed that the state is "going through a bleeding process which needs urgent and utmost attention". PTI

THE STATE OF J&K

Protests against teenagers' killings rock Valley

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Action sought against "erring" Armymen; State orders probe into incident

Shujaat Bukhari

KUPWARA: Protest demonstrations surfaced on Monday in Kupwara district headquarters and other parts of the Valley against the killing of three teenagers by the Army personnel at Bagargund village in the district on the night of July 23.

Police opened fire and burst teargas shells to disperse the protesters in Trehgam and other places. Sensing that there could be more trouble, the authorities have ordered that all educational institutions in the district be closed for two days.

Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed convened an emergency meeting of the Unified Headquarters to discuss the situation. A special investigation team (SIT) of the Jammu and Kashmir Police has been formed to probe the incident. Already a magisterial inquiry and an in-

ternal investigation had been ordered by the State Government and the Army. The largest demonstration was held at Trehgam village where thousands of people from Batargam, Vilgam and Bangargund gathered to protest the killings. A clash ensued as police tried to stop the crowd at Batargam. Police used teargas shells and later opened fire in the air to disperse the protesters. But the demonstrators managed to break the cordon and reached Kupwara town where hundreds of students joined them.

The crowd threw stones and ransacked a hotel and the office of local traders. The irate mob also smashed the goodwill hoardings put up by the Army stating "Jawan Aur Awam Aman Hey Muqam" (The goal is peace for both the soldier and people).

The protesters tried to set on fire a CRPF vehicle but the attempt was foiled. The clashes continued for the whole day. Demanding action against the "erring" security personnel, student protesters said, "We will not rest till they are brought to book." Several people, including a police officer were injured. The whole town observed the strike.

Minister of State for Home Affairs, R. Veeri, Minister for Forests Mohiuddin Sofi, and the Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, B B Vyas, visited the town to take stock of the situation. They announced ex-gratia relief and jobs for the kin of each family. "The situation is well under control but the educational institutions have been closed for two days as a precautionary measure," Mr. Vyas told *The Hindu*.

In Srinagar, demonstrations were held by various organisations and around 20 activists of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, including senior leader Javed Ahmad Mir,

were detained while they were protesting against the murder of the teenagers. They were taken into preventive custody when they were heading for the local office of the United Nations Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan at Sonawar here.

Lawyers boycotted the courts on Monday in protest against the killings.

Mufti holds meeting

Concerned at the killings, the Chief Minister convened a Unified Headquarters meeting and discussed the situation.

He said the security personnel must observe restraint. All political parties have condemned the incident. The CPI (M) State secretary, M Y Tarigami, said such incidents brought shame to democracy. JKLF chairman Yasin Malik termed the incident as an attempt to derail the peace process.

Army regrets killing: Page 12



ANGER AND ANGUISH: Activists of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) being taken into custody during a protest rally, in Srinagar on Monday. PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

3 boys, mistaken for ultras, killed in Kashmir

Srinagar: Three teenaged boys, who inadvertently walked into an ambush laid by security forces in the Kupwara area, were killed in the small hours by the forces who mistook them to be militants, police said.

Security forces, who had laid ambush at Bagargund, 90 km from here, fired on four teenaged boys around 2 am, killing three of them and injuring another, police said. Admitting it to be a case of mistaken identity, Kupwara Superintendent of Police, Sunit Dutt, said that in the darkness identity of the victims could not be ascertained. The ambush, he said, was laid in the same place where movement of militants was common, and two militants were killed about 15 days ago.

Those killed were identified as Bilal Ahmad Sheikh, a fifth class student, Wasim Ahmad Wani, a sixth class student and Manzoor Ahmad Shah while the injured boy's name is Shabir Ahmad Shah.

Expressing serious concern over the killing, chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed on Sunday said the incident was all the more unfortunate as the victims were children. Ordering a probe into the incident, Sayeed asked security agencies to avoid such occurrences in future.

The killings triggered violent protests with villagers from Bagargund, Trehgam and Vilgam taking to the streets. They said the

9-67-28X
Agitated Villagers Take To Streets, Mufti Orders Probe



boys had come to attend a marriage in the village and were killed when they had gone out to ease themselves. The security personnel fired on them without any provocation, the residents alleged. Senior administration and police

officials rushed to the village to calm the agitated villagers who are demanding an inquiry into the incident and action against the erring personnel, official sources said. PTI

Dutt said jawans mistook the boys for militants and targeted them as they were not carrying torches as is the practice. Superintendent of Police Handwara, Nitish Kumar, also described the incident as a result of mistaken identity.

Admitting that the soldiers couldn't identify the victims in darkness, he said night curfew was in force in the area and movement during night was prohibited as it fell near the forest where militant presence cannot be ruled out. The army lost a couple of jawans, including an officer, recently in the area, he said.

The situation in the village and adjoining areas was tense and the police had to use batons to restore order. Additional policemen have been rushed to the area to quell the protests.

This is the second such incident in the valley in three days. On July 22, troops of Rashtriya Rifles shot dead a teenaged boy, mistaking him for militant, Pervaiz Ahmad Dar, at Kangan in Pulwama district of South Kashmir when the victim was watering his garden. The state government has already ordered an inquiry into the incident. PTI

2004

STATES

Terror guns trained on Pandits

Joint threat by 4 groups

HT Correspondents
Srinagar/Jammu, July 23

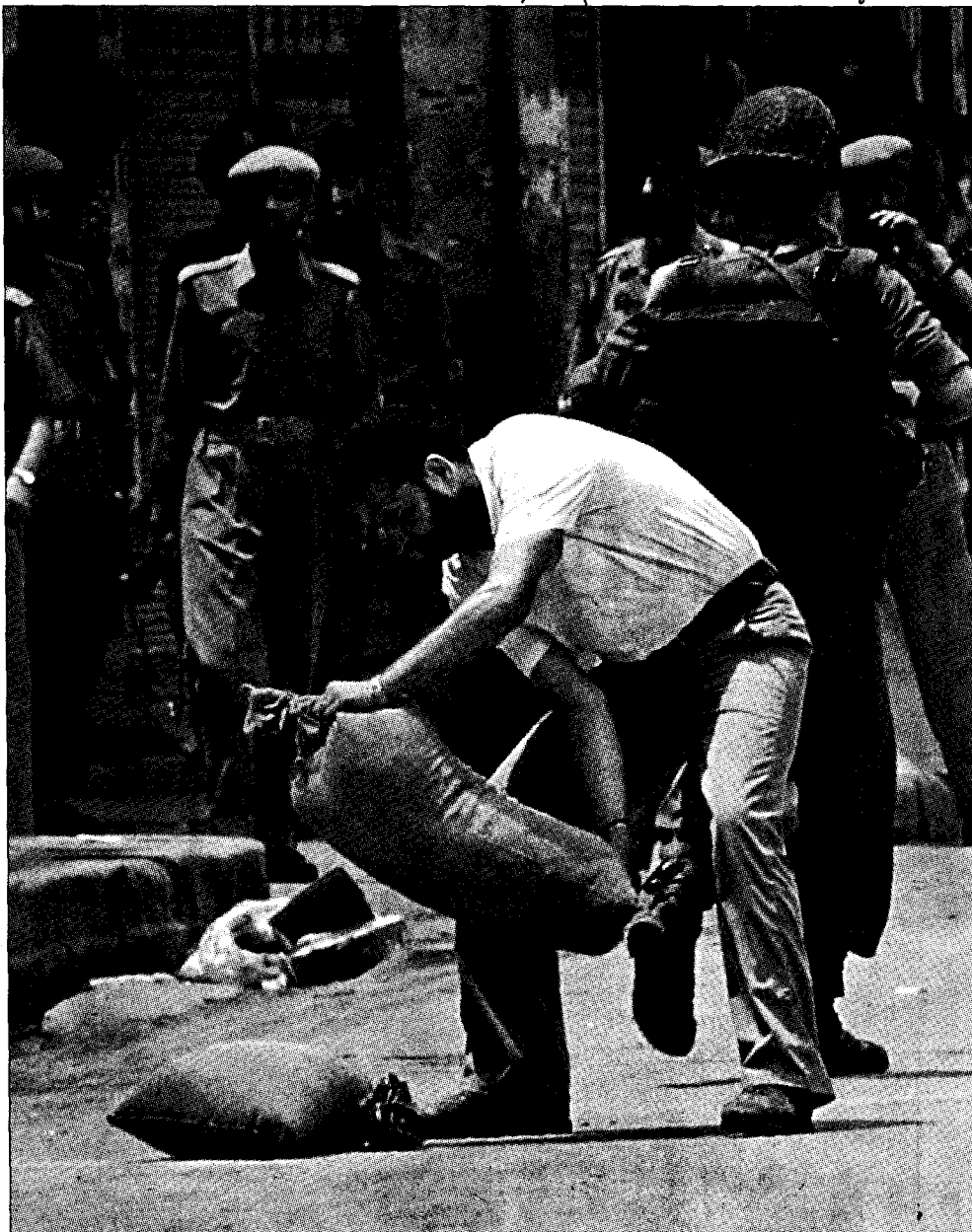
FOUR MILITANT groups — Al Nasireen, Al Arifeen, Save Kashmir Movement and Farzandan-e-Millat — have warned that if Kashmir Pandits were brought back to the valley, they would not be safe from “our” attacks. The groups also declared that Pandits were the “arch enemies of Kashmir’s freedom movement.”

“They (Pandits) are in a state of war with us”, a joint statement issued by the four groups this evening said. “We have every right to go for blood for blood. We will not allow them (migrant Pandits) to return and nobody can protect them from our attacks”, the statement added. The militants imposed conditions for the return of the Pandits. “They (Pandits) should publicly apologise for hobnobbing with Jagmohan (former Governor of the state). They should denounce India’s control on Jammu and Kashmir as forced and should join the freedom movement and fight (the) Indian army and (should) be ready to lay down their lives along with Muslims”, the militants said.

“Unless they (Pandits) fulfil these conditions, their entry to the valley is totally banned”, the statement said. The militants came down heavily on the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference and described its leaders as “hypocrites and anti-movement”. The Hurriyat leaders held a meeting with a group of Kashmiri Pandits on Tuesday to discuss ways and means to bring the Pandits back.

“The Hurriyat is a forum of hypocrites, who instead of facing the enemy with perseverance and determination, bowed before them. They (Hurriyat leaders) are themselves anti-movement. How can they protect other anti-movement elements”, the statement said. The militant groups warned that anyone trying to bring Pandits back to the valley would be “playing with fire.”

Meanwhile, several Kashmiri Pandit organisations have threatened to boycott those community leaders who held talks with the Hurriyat Conference on Tuesday saying that they had breached the trust of the community by shaking hands with the separatists. Leaders of the Panun Kashmir, Panun Kashmir Movement, Jammu and Kashmir Vichar Manch and the All-State Kashmiri Pandit Conference took this decision after a six-hour meeting late on Thursday. It was perhaps for the first time that leaders of different Panun Kashmir factions came together to discuss various issues being confronted by the community.



A member of the Kashmiri bomb disposal squad (seen in this Reuters photograph) puts sand bags around an unexploded hand-grenade lobbed by militants in one of Srinagar’s bustling marketplaces on Saturday. The squad managed to neutralise the grenade.

MAY 13

Lal Chowk, Srinagar, outside Tyndle Biscoe school

2 killed, 32 school children wounded

JUNE 13

South Kashmir town of Pulwama

16 dead, 50 wounded

JUNE 20

Nishat Gardens, outskirts of Srinagar

9 army soldiers killed, 21 injured

JULY 20

Outside Burn Hall school in Srinagar

5 dead

Death shadow on home dream

NEERAJ Santoshi
Jammu, July 23

SADNESS, SHOCK, anger, desperation, futility... 70-year-old Kashinath Pandita’s tearful eyes bore the brunt of the whirlwind of feelings that tortured his soul, his words numb with pain. His image served a poignant reminder of the plight of Kashmiri Pandits, disowned by their motherland and living virtually in exile for generations.

A few days ago — after the historic Hurriyat-Pandit conclave — the same eyes twinkled with hope, the belief of returning ‘home’ and the conviction of living in peace there almost dressing the present in fictitious fantasy.

Pandita, who lives in Talab Tiboo here, wanted to spend his twilight days in his native village of Verinag, fondling memories of childhood in the neighbourhood of the place which seeds the Jhelum. But the fantasy has made way for fear, the reverberating gunfire

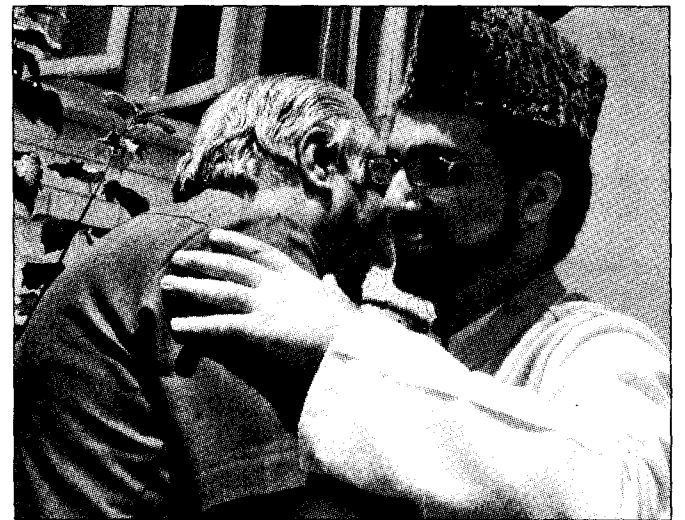
reducing all those days of innocence to a pittance.

Like Pandita, there were thousands of other Pandits who were shocked when they heard the sounds of doom — four Pakistan-based militant outfits had imposed a “ban on the return of Pandits to the Valley”.

Pandits, whom HT spoke to, said they were shocked that such threats could come even after the Hurriyat Conference had held talks with them. Most of them saw the message clear and in bold — Pandits cannot return to the Valley at present, and pluralism is till an imaginary concept there.

The Pandit leadership was equivocal in condemnation of the Hurriyat.

Panun Kashmir leader Dr Ajay Chrungoo alleged it was the other face of Hurriyat that had surfaced after the threats. “In the past, Hurriyat has come up with similar preconditions for the return of Pandits as these outfits have stated in their statements. It is once



A PTI file photograph of Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq greeting a Kashmiri Pandit leader at a recent conclave.

again a reminder that there is no place for Pandits in the talibanised and radicalised Kashmir.” On a Hurriyat leader’s allegation that the Pandits calling Kashmiri Muslims fanatics provoked such state-

ments from the militant outfits, Chrungoo said, “We had talked about the communalisation of the Valley. We did not use the term ‘fanatics’. This misrepresentation is deliberate.”

Militants issue fatwa against Pandits' return

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
SRINAGAR, JULY 22

THE first separatist initiative to begin a reconciliation with Kashmiri Pandits — who had left the state after the emergence of militancy — has hit a major roadblock.

Four militant organisations today warned the community against returning home, accusing them of “deserting” the majority community “during their hour of crisis”.

Al Nasireen, Save Kashmir Movement, Al Arifeen and Farzandani Millat — came to limelight after threatening attacks on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus. Today, their joint statement faxed to a local newspaper office declared: “We impose a ban on the return of Kashmiri Pandit migrants to the Valley. They helped Jagmohan (the state’s former governor) in implementing his heinous plans by migrating”.

The militants were unhappy with the Hurriyat moderates as well for their initiative in reconciliation with the Pandits.

“The childish assurances handed out by the Hurriyat will not protect them,” said the statement. “Exchanging garlands with leaders of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference cannot absolve them (Pandits)”.

Led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, the effort to reinstate the Pandits in the Valley was the first of its kind from the organisation to regain the Valley’s lost social fabric.

The moderates had sent emissaries to various migrant camps in Jammu and Delhi, asking for participation in a meet where the modalities of the Pandits’ return could be discussed.

The separatist hawks led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani had welcomed the return of the migrant Hindus, but disapproved the J-K government’s plan to rehabilitate them in separate colonies.

The right wing Kashmiri Hindu groups — Kashmiri Samiti and Panun Kashmir — however, had boycotted the reconciliation effort, calling it a futile exercise.

Today, the Hurriyat was tightlipped on the militant



Hurriyat was tightlipped on the militant threat

threat. “We have no comments to offer,” said Professor Abdul Ghani Bhat of Hurriyat Conference. “We have decided not to react to the statement made by the militants”.

The 40 pandits who participated in the meeting, however, say they are ready for it.

“This was expected,” said Jatinder Bakshi, speaking to *The Indian Express*, “these warnings will not matter. Such bottlenecks would be there and we would have to overcome them”.

Bakshi, however, says that under the circumstances, the onus lies on the majority community. “Only majority community can bring such an atmosphere (favourable for the return of Pandits),” he added.

Waiting for Pandits

11-18
2005
Hurriyat moderates talk to
displaced Kashmiris

THE meeting between leaders of the moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and representatives of Kashmiri Pandits add a new dimension to the peace process in Kashmir. The talks held in Srinagar on Tuesday were the first of its kind since militancy forced these Hindu families to flee the Valley. A joint statement at the end of the meet said the Hurriyat with "all other sensible elements" will work to ensure a safe and honourable return for all displaced Kashmiris. So far, the peace process — and the talks, formal and informal, in New Delhi, Islamabad, Srinagar and Muzaffarabad — has excluded the Pandits. Even those separatist groups in the Valley which talked about the composite and secular culture of the Valley have done very little about the fracturing of Kashmiri society along communal lines. The Hurriyat-Pandit dialogue is a beginning towards retrieving the secular space in the Valley. The uprising in the Valley was, at least to begin with in 1989, for a transparent democracy that addressed legitimate political, cultural and economic concerns of all Kashmiris. It got communalised later leading to the exodus of Pandits and gave the struggle a violent and sectarian twist. Jammu and Kashmir has not recovered from it yet. If normalcy has to return to the Valley, the communal divide has to be bridged.

The dialogue with Pandits will also help the Hurriyat to reinvent its profile as a progressive political conglomeration. Since its formation in 1993, the APHC has been cynical about politics in a democratic framework. It claims to represent the opinion in the Valley, but has always shied away from contesting elections. Now, there is a democratically elected government in Srinagar and civic bodies have elected representatives. Islamabad no longer has any use for Hurriyat. The APHC should enter the political mainstream. They could make a beginning by helping to bridge the communal divide. As if alarmed by the peace process, terrorists have upped the attempts to kill innocents. On Wednesday, a suicide attack killed four people in Srinagar. The army had fought terrorists trying to sneak in from Pakistan in the Gurez sector last week. Violence, especially when directed against innocents, is illegitimate. All people, except its perpetrators, know it. Hence, it is best to strengthen the peace process than get distracted by occasional incidents of violence and murder.

11-18 2005 THE TIMES OF INDIA

CAR BOMB DETONATED NEAR SCHOOL, DY CM'S HOUSE ■ ARMY MAJOR AMONG 6 SOLDIERS DEAD IN SRINAGAR

Hizbul hits security hub, kills 8



A man stands over the body of a colleague killed in the explosion triggered by a car bomb in Srinagar on Wednesday. — AFP

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, July 20. — Eight persons, including six soldiers, were killed and 15 injured when militants blew up an IED-laden car close to a passing Army vehicle near Burn Hall Catholic School in a high-security locality of Srinagar at 9.30 a.m. today. IG (Kashmir) Mr Javed Ahmed Mukhdoomi said no schoolchildren were injured in the attack. In a statement to a newspaper, Hizbul Mujahideen claimed responsibility for the blast but denied it was a suicide attack.

Among the slain Army men was ASC Major Kapil Vinayak who was travelling in his jeep from Tatio Ground to Badami Bagh Cantonment with six jawans. The bomb was detonated opposite Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium, from where Dr Manmohan Singh had inaugurated the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service on 7 April.

An eye-witness said the impact of the explosion lifted the Army jeep from the road and dashed it against the footpath. Civilians were lying in a pool of blood. The blast also caused the window-panes of nearby buildings to shatter. Though security agencies initially maintained that a suicide bomber had rammed his RDX-laden red Maruti car into the jeep, J&K police said the vehicle could

Peace threatened: PM

WASHINGTON, July 20. — Dr Manmohan Singh today made it clear to Pakistan that he would not be able to push forward the peace process if its territory continued to be allowed for terrorism against India.

Citing a recent bomb attack in Srinagar, the Prime Minister said these "disturbing developments" went against President Pervez Musharraf's commitment in January last year not to allow its territory to be used for terrorism against India. "I, as Prime Minister of a democracy, would not be able to go against public opinion if acts of terrorism can't be controlled." — PTI

have been parked on the way of the jeep a few minutes before the ultras triggered the blast. The wreckage of the vehicle was found near the residence of the Chief Justice of the state, Mr SN Jha.

The residences of several ministers, including the deputy chief minister, Mr Mangat Ram Sharma, the state Congress chief and minister, Peerzaada Mohammad Sayeed and the DGP are in the same locality. Dr Farooq Abdullah and his son Mr Omar Abdullah live nearby.

Chief minister Mufti Md Sayeed today condemned the blast, the second to have rocked Srinagar in less than a month.

শ্রীনগরে গাড়িবোমা, ৪ ফৌজি-সহ হত ৬

রশিদ আহমেদ ও অগ্নি রায়

শ্রীনগর ও নয়াদিল্লি, ২০ জুলাই: ছেঁড়াখোড়া চিনারের পাতার স্তূপে ইতস্তত ছড়িয়ে আছে রক্তের ছোপ, পোড়া ঝলসানো গাড়ির খণ্ডাংশ আর ভাঙা কাচের টুকরো। ধোঁয়া আর ধুলোয় ভারী হয়ে আসা বাতাস আর আহতদের আর্তনাদ। শ্রীনগরের সোনওয়ার এলাকার ব্যস্ত রাজপথে সকাল সওয়া নটা নাগাদ ছবিটা ছিল এ রকমই। কড়া নিরাপত্তা বেটনী পেরিয়ে হিজবুল মুজাহিদিনের এক আত্মঘাতী গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণে আজ প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন এক মেজর-সহ চার সেনা জওয়ান ও দু'জন সাধারণ মানুষ। আহত অন্তত ১৭ জন।



নিহত সহকর্মীর পাশে এক সেনা। শ্রীনগরে। — এএফপি

নিহতদের মধ্যে এক জনকে আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গি বলে সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে। তবে, শ্রীনগরের আই জি জাভেদ মাখদুমি বলেছেন, ঘাতক গাড়ি থেকে কোনও মৃতদেহ পাওয়া যায়নি। বিস্ফোরণের আগের মুহূর্তে ওই জঙ্গি গাড়ি থেকে পালিয়ে গিয়েছিল কি না তা-ও দেখা হচ্ছে। ঘটনাস্থলের খুব কাছেই রাজ্যের প্রাক্তন মুখ্যমন্ত্রী ফারুক আবদুল্লা, তাঁর ছেলে প্রাক্তন কেন্দ্রীয় মন্ত্রী ওমর আবদুল্লা, রাজ্যের প্রধান বিচারপতি-সহ বহু ডিভিআইপি-র বাস। কিন্তু এত কঠোর নিরাপত্তার বেটনী জঙ্গিরা কী ভাবে পার হল, তা নিয়ে উদ্বিগ্ন পুলিশ ও প্রশাসন। নিরাপত্তার গাফিলতিতেই এই হামলা কি না প্রশ্ন করা হলে মাখদুমি বলেন, ওই এলাকাটিতে

কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্র প্রতিমন্ত্রী শ্রীপ্রকাশ জয়সওয়াল আজই শ্রীনগরে যেতে পারেন। ২৫ তারিখ সংসদের বাদল অধিবেশন শুরু হওয়ার পরে প্রণববাবুও কাশ্মীরে যাবেন। তবে আজকের বিস্ফোরণের ফরেনসিক পরীক্ষার জন্য ন্যাশনাল সিকিউরিটি গার্ডের একটি বিশেষ দল আজই শ্রীনগরে রওনা হয়ে গিয়েছে।

৬ এপ্রিল শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস পরিষেবা শুরুর আগের দিন শ্রীনগরের পর্যটক কেন্দ্রে জঙ্গি হামলা ও ১১ জুন জুওহর নগরে একটি গাড়িবোমা বিস্ফোরণের পরে এই প্রথম রাজধানীর বুকে এত বড় হামলা চালান জঙ্গিরা। সোনওয়ারে শের-ই-কাশ্মীর ক্রিকেট স্টেডিয়ামের খুব কাছে, রাজ্যের মন্ত্রী আবাসনের গায়েই কড়া নিরাপত্তা বেটনী পেরিয়ে আজ একটি সেনা গাড়িতে ধাক্কা মারে বিস্ফোরক বোমাই একটি মারুতি। বিস্ফোরণের তীব্রতায় প্রায় আটটি গাড়ি উড়ে যায়, আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়ে পড়ে মাত্র ৫০ গজ দূরে বার্নহল স্কুলে। সেখানে তখন প্রার্থনার জন্য মাঠে জড়ো হয়েছিল শিশুরা। বিস্ফোরণের খবর পেয়েই উদ্বিগ্ন অভিভাবকেরা ভিড় করেন স্কুলের সামনে। কোনও ছাত্রছাত্রী হতাহত না হলেও আহতদের অধিকাংশই সাধারণ পথচারী।

নিরাপত্তা বেটনী থাকলেও যানবাহনের ভিড়ও খুব বেশি।

পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া ব্যাহত করতেই মরিয়া জঙ্গিরা এই হামলা চালিয়েছে বলে মন্তব্য করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। কাশ্মীরে গত দু'মাসে অনুপ্রবেশের সংখ্যা আশঙ্কাজনক ভাবে বেড়ে যাওয়ায় চিন্তিত কেন্দ্র। চণ্ডীগড়ে আজ প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায় বলেন, এপ্রিল পর্যন্ত কাশ্মীরে অনুপ্রবেশ কম থাকলেও মে মাস থেকে তার হার অনেকটাই বেড়েছে। তিনি বলেন, “সীমান্তের ও পারে জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি এবং প্রশিক্ষণ শিবিরগুলি সক্রিয় থাকায় অনুপ্রবেশ এত বেড়েছে।” ২০০৪-এর জানুয়ারিতে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ বলেছিলেন, জঙ্গিদের পাকিস্তানের মাটি ব্যবহার করতে দেওয়া হবে না। আজ প্রণববাবু বলেন, মুশারফকে তাঁর সেই আশ্বাসের কথাও মনে করিয়ে দিতে চায় দিল্লি। কেন্দ্রের অভ্যন্তরীণ নিরাপত্তা বিষয়ক বিশেষ সচিব অনিল চৌধুরিও আজ বলেন, সীমান্তে বরফ গলায় জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ বাড়ছে। এই সমস্যা মোকাবিলায় সব রকম ব্যবস্থা নেবে কেন্দ্র।

এর পর নয়ের পাতায়

শ্রীনগরে গাড়িবোমা

প্রথম পাতার পর

এ দিকে, জঙ্গিদের ব্যাপারে নরম মনোভাব নেওয়ার জন্য ইউ পি এ সরকারের তীব্র নিন্দা করেছে বিজেপি। লোকসভায় বিজেপি-র উপ নেতা বিজয় কুমার মলহোত্র বলেন, কেন্দ্র কাশ্মীরে জঙ্গি সম্ভ্রাস বন্ধ করতে ব্যর্থ। জঙ্গিদের বিরুদ্ধে তারা নরম নীতি নিয়েছে। তাদের চিন্তা লভনে বিস্ফোরণ বা নিউ ইয়র্কের জঙ্গি হামলা নিয়ে। কিন্তু ঘরের সমস্যা নিয়ে তাদের মাথাব্যথা নেই। জঙ্গি দমনের দায়িত্ব পুরোপুরি সেনাবাহিনীর উপর দেওয়ারও দাবি তুলেছে বিজেপি।

আজকের বিস্ফোরণকে কেন্দ্র করে সংসদের বাদল অধিবেশন সরগরম হতে পারে। অযোধ্যায় জঙ্গি হামলা, জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশ ও এই বিস্ফোরণকে অস্ত্র করে সরকারকে চেপে ধরার পরিকল্পনা করেছে বি জে পি। অন্য দিকে, কংগ্রেস প্রমাণ করতে চাইছে, শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার মধ্যেও তারা জঙ্গি অনুপ্রবেশকে যথেষ্ট গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে। সেই কৌশলের অঙ্গ হিসেবে প্রতিরক্ষা ও স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রক, সেনাবাহিনী কাশ্মীরে বিস্ফোরণের ঘটনার নিন্দা করেছে।

১ জুলাই ২০০৫

Pandits respond to Hurriyat invite

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, JULY 19

THEIR urge to return home today took them to the separatist headquarters—for the first time in 15 years. And as 40 Kashmiri Pandits stepped into the Hurriyat office here, it marked a leap for Hindu-Muslim reconciliation in the strife-torn Valley.

"This is truly a historic day," said Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, chairman of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference. "This is a humble beginning to remove the bitterness of the past. This is the first step. More meetings will follow."

There were banners welcoming the Pandits all the way to the Hurriyat office, and as they arrived, there were warm hugs and smiles all around. Within minutes, the 15 years of separation and communal divide were overtaken by the shared Kashmiri tradition and language.

At the end of the marathon meeting, which lasted for over four hours, the Hurriyat and



Kashmiri Pandits meet Hurriyat leaders in Srinagar. Express

leaders of various migrant Pandit organisations described the talks as "fruitful" and said they would continue the process.

"This is a good initiative," said Veerji Biloo, president of the Kashmir Pandits Coordination Committee. "The international scenario is changing and we have to change our minds, our stances. There will be a positive outcome if flexibility is shown by both sides."

The Kashmiri Pandits, who migrated to Jammu and other parts of the country following the outbreak of militancy in

the Valley, were represented by 40 members of more than nine organisations. Right-wing outfits like the Panun Kashmir, however, stayed away from the meeting. "It is unfortunate that there are such (hardline) parties both here and there," Mirwaiz said.

The Pandit organisations, which attended the meeting, were also critical of the hardliners. "They have been rejected by the entire community," Biloo said, when asked about the role of right-wing organisations.

"If they wish to contribute anything for the community... They should set up their office in Srinagar and we will all stand behind them."

At the end of the closed-door meeting, the Pandit and Hurriyat leaders announced a joint declaration that said: "(The) Kashmiris' return to the Valley, with a deeper sense of security and dignity, unmistakably requires a favourable environment, for which the Hurriyat, alongwith all other sensible elements, will endeavour to discharge their duty as effectively as possible... The Pandit intellectuals will, on their part, also contribute toward the forward movement." The declaration also supported the ongoing Indo-Pak peace process and called for greater involvement of the Kashmiri people in the talk process.

"The participants support the ongoing dialogue between India and Pakistan with a view to resolve all the issues, including Jammu and Kashmir," read the declaration.

Car bomb blasts army bus in Srinagar tourist hot spot

Soldiers killed on way to work

MUKHTARAHMAD

Srinagar, June 24: A car bomb shattered the calm today at Srinagar's Nishat Gardens — once a favourite Bollywood locale — killing nine soldiers just back from leave.

Twenty-five people were injured in the blast that had tourists scurrying for cover.

All the dead and 21 of the injured were troopers of the 13 Rashtriya Rifles, headed for the Manasbal army camp, 34 km away.

Militants — the Hizb-ul Mujahideen has claimed responsibility — triggered a blast in a parked Maruti packed with RDX as the army convoy drew near it, Kashmir range police chief Javed Mukhdoomi said.

"I was just entering the garden when the bomb exploded. It shook the area. When I looked around myself, I saw tourists crying and running for cover," said Mushtaq Ahmad, a Srinagar resident.

The vehicle worst-hit was a bus the army had hired, whose driver and cleaner have been admitted to hospital. The two other civilians injured were passers-by.

The wounded soldiers were taken to the army's base hospital in the Badami Bagh cantonment area.



Kashmiri women wail after police picked up their relatives for questioning after the blast. (PTI)

A caller claiming to be a spokesman for the Hizb-ul Mujahideen told a local news agency that his group had carried out the attack.

Paramilitary troops moved in immediately after the afternoon blast and began house-to-house searches. Several people

were detained for questioning. The busy highway leading to the Nishat Gardens, on the outskirts of Srinagar, was closed to traffic, forcing the buses carrying Amarnath Yatra pilgrims to take an alternative route to the Baltal base camp.

The Nishat Gardens — con-

sidered the pick of the famous Mughal gardens around the Dal Lake — is a tourist hotspot. It was laid by Asif Jah, the brother-in-law of Mughal emperor Jehangir.

Its beauty is said to have made Jehangir so jealous that he ordered its water supply to

be cut off, causing the plants to wilt and the cascades and ponds to dry up. The emperor retreated after much pleading, allowing the garden to survive.

Nishat Gardens also served as the locale for many Bollywood blockbusters of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Hurriyat keen to resume dialogue

RASHID Ahmad
Srinagar, June 22

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The moderate faction of All Party Hurriyat Conference is keen to resume dialogue with New Delhi, which was suspended more than a year ago.

"We have informal contact with government of India and have conveyed our desire to hold talks with it", moderate faction chief Mirwaiz Umer Farooq told a news conference on Wednesday. "We are ready. It is for them (central government) to decide about the date and venue. We want talks as soon as possible," he added.

Mirwaiz played down junior home minister Prakash Jaiswal's latest assertions that the Hurriyat leaders could participate in talks between India and Pakistan. "We have never demanded a seat in talks between India and Pakistan. The Indo-Pak talks are heading forward. We support these talks," Mirwaiz said. He added: "But we want the talks between Hurriyat and India on one hand, and talks between Hurriyat and Pakistan on the other."

Pak trip boosted peace process: Describing their visit to Pakistan and parts of Kashmir occupied by it as a "small yet positive step", Mirwaiz said it signalled formal inclusion of Kashmiris in the dialogue process for the resolution of the Kashmir issue.

"The realisation has dawned on Islamabad and I hope in New Delhi as well that issues need to be resolved through dialogue," he said. He also felt that India needed to take more responsibility "by improving the situation on the human rights front." The Hurriyat leader also brushed aside criticism on its representative character saying, "Elections are meant for administrative purposes which is not our aim at the moment and will be given a thought only after resolution of Kashmir."

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

“Involve Kashmiris in the peace process”

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Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front chairman **Mohammad Yasin Malik** has just returned from a visit to Pakistan. A consistent campaigner for Kashmiri representation in any talks, he tells **Shujaat Bukhari** that his next step is to build public opinion in India for this.

How would you differentiate between your recent visit to Pakistan from the last time when you crossed over as a militant in 1989?

I have been to “Azad Kashmir” eight times before. The people of Pakistan have love for us. This time the difference *vis-à-vis* our issue was visible. Earlier, if you took a pro-Pakistan line they would listen to you. But now the situation is different. They have unconditional love for Kashmiris. They just want that Kashmiris should be happy.

You were part of a delegation of separatists who apparently have the same goal. But you took an entirely different line. Why?

First let me make clear that it is not a dialogue process. It was a consultative process and I had gone with a transparent agenda that talks between India and Pakistan over Kashmir are going on but we come to know through the media. Kashmiris as a nation feel humiliated. We are for the peace process, we are for flexibility. But Kashmiris should be involved in that process.

You are for complete independence. Do you think Pakistan supports that?

See there are different types of people, civil society is there, and the media are there. As such the people of Pakistan have no problem with that. They are happy.

What about the state (of Pakistan)?

In India and Pakistan there has always been a policy of favouritism as far as the Kashmiri leadership is concerned. To push forward the peace process it is necessary to put an end to that. Kashmiris should have confidence that the leader who is talking on their behalf will represent them and not India or Pakistan. I told President Musharraf that we will represent ourselves. And it is in the national interest of India and Pakistan to include Kashmiris at the peace table.

But don't you think that both countries have moved forward on Kashmir?

If they move forward I am happy. I will be



Yasin Malik ... striking an independent note. - PHOTO: REUTERS.

happier if they resolve Kashmir. If you want peace and if you want to resolve the issue make Kashmiris part of it. Don't humiliate them. We are victims, we are dying for peace.

But Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has said that Kashmiris have been accepted as a party to the dispute.

No. We will find that out only when Tariq Aziz (Pakistan's National Security Adviser) and Narayanan (India's National Security Adviser) talk and a Kashmiri representative is there. When a decision is taken we should be there and it should not be a photo opportunity.

What do you think should be the modus operandi?

I appealed to the people of Pakistan to write a letter to their President to impress upon the Government to include Kashmiris.

And I am planning to visit all parts of India and mobilise public opinion in favour of it.

You said it is a consultative process. You have met Pakistan's President and Prime Minister. Why don't you meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to carry this process forward?

I think it is anticipatory. There is no mention of that yet. You are asking me this question and there is no such indication.

You talk about a consultative process but why do you shy away from meeting the Indian Government? Are you waiting for an invitation?

I am telling you I am going. It's not a question of invitation. I am going to assess the situation. Only then I can talk.

You were critical of the PoK leadership.

What was the reason?

Kashmiris have made sacrifices. They have lost their dear ones. The PoK leadership has a responsibility towards the Kashmiri people. They should fulfil that. This bus [from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad] is also [the] outcome of sacrifices. On February 11, 1992, when JKLF [activists] tried to cross the ceasefire line 12 [persons] were killed. They were from “Azad Kashmir.” The Kashmiri leadership should play a pro-Kashmiri role. Not the state role whether in India or Pakistan. They have state policies.

In the beginning you were opposed to Confidence Building Measures.

I was never against the CBMs. This bus is the biggest creative CBM. But it was “sold” in a different way and again Kashmiris were not part of it. That is my concern. Kashmiri leaders spoke for Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf praising them for the bus.

Mainstream parties are there. They too have support. Separatists also enjoy support. Who do you think represents the Kashmiris?

There is confusion. The Government of India says the elected representatives represent the Kashmiris and Pakistan says something else. It can be solved through a democratic process, not through Assembly and Parliament elections. Elect one representative from one district. People-to-people contact in both countries has reached a level. You can have credible citizens from both sides and then can conduct it.

There were many controversies, which followed you. One was about Sheikh Rashid.

My statement was presented out of context. When in 1990 we were thrown on the roadside in Pakistan he gave us his farmhouse. We can never forget that gesture. I never mentioned a training camp and guns. A newspaper, which has doubtful credentials in Pakistan, played this mischief.

But New Delhi reacted without going into the real context, which is unfortunate.

ISI trained our boys: Kashmir rebel

OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 17: Yasin Malik could claim he had been misquoted, but Amanullah Khan has got it down in writing.

Khan, chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front on the Pakistan side of the Line of Control, has written in the second volume of his autobiography that Pakistani spy agency ISI provided arms training to Kashmiri militants.

"We had a gentleman's agreement, an oral sort of agreement," Khan said in a later interview. "I was given the idea that the ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence) was all for the independence of Kashmir (which Khan's group wants).

"The agreement was that we will bring boys from across (the LoC) and indoctrinate (them in) our ideology by ourselves. (Then) ISI trains them and they are sent back."

The revelation will embarrass Islamabad, which has all along denied training or arming Kashmiri terrorists and acknowledged only political and diplomatic support to the militants' "freedom struggle" against Indian rule.

A few days ago during his Pakistan visit, Malik, chief of the Front on the Indian side, had embarrassed his hosts by revealing how Pakistan information minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad ran camps for 3,500 militants in the late 1980s.

A red-faced Islamabad pressured Malik into saying he had been misquoted but India, vindicated in its allega-



(Left) Kashmiris mourn the death of a former militant outside his home in Srinagar on Friday. Relatives allege that he was killed in police custody while down by separatists. (Above) Amanullah Khan (AFP and Reuters)

General Zia-ul-Haq, the Pakistani military ruler of the day, supported the notion of independence for Kashmir. He said the Front began bringing across young men from the Indian side in 1988 for training by the ISI.

Khan's Front, with its demand for independence from both India and Pakistan, was in the vanguard of the Kashmiri movement till the early

1990s. Later, its relations with the Pakistani authorities soured when it began objecting to Islamabad's interference in the outfit's affairs.

As the Front's stocks with the Pakistan government fell, the latter began giving more importance to Islamist militant groups that favoured Kashmir merging into Pakistan.

As for Malik's remarks, a Pakistani journalist, Hamid

Mir, has seconded them. "The camp was run between 1988 and 1990 at the Fateh Jung farmhouse which was also called Freedom House," Mir said.

Malik happened to be a militant himself before becoming a politician. He had travelled to Pakistan on June 2 with eight other separatist leaders from Jammu and Kashmir.

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THE TELEGRAPH

"Our talks defini^{EU and}sts

Positive indicators from both India and Pakistan are as easy as the EU increasingly rival to U.S. superpower.

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: After spending two weeks in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), the nine leaders of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and the Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) returned to a low key reception here on Thursday.

Though the Hurriyat leaders talked about positive indicators of taking the dialogue forward, JKLF chairman Yasin Malik said he would continue his struggle for ensuring a seat for the "Kashmiris" on peace table.

Amid tight security arrangements all along the 118-km road from here to Kaman Post, Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, his colleagues Abdul Gani Bhat, Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Bilal Lone and Fazl Haque Qureshi, crossed the Line of Control with optimism saying that leadership in Pakistan and PoK had supported their triangular approach to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"We held talks with a cross section of the leadership. It has definitely helped in continuing the process for finding an amicable and acceptable solution to the Kashmir problem," Mirwaiz Farooq said. "But we feel that it needed to be strengthened and taken forward in order to achieve desired results," he added.

The Mirwaiz said there were "positive indicators" from both India and Pakistan and "we will begin consultations within and outside state."

Upbeat with what he called "complete unanimity in Pakistan and PoK" on the Hurriyat's triangular approach and the involvement of the Kashmiris, the Mirwaiz said: "I think the need is to keep on going in that



BACK HOME: Jammu and Kashmir chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq on Thursday. — PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

direction"

The Mirwaiz termed the visit as "first step" towards involvement in the peace process and said: "We are happy that we have been recognised as a party."

To a question on their talks with militant leader Syed Salauddin on ceasefire, the Hurriyat chief said: "The Kashmiri movement is being undertaken at various levels and there is need to combine..." But he pre-

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Tensions between the U.S. and Europe surfaced again last week in a very different context — in an argument over how Western countries should assist African Union peacekeepers attempting to curb the genocidal violence in Sudan's Darfur region. Leave aside for now the question of whether such assistance is too little, too late. The row bore scant relation to the humanitarian exigencies of the moment.

It centred instead on whether the EU's nascent, collective defence force or U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) should lead a logistical support operation.

The U.S. has long viewed European attempts to create an independent defence capability with suspicion. France has long seen such a development as an essential part of Europe's ambition to counter-balance the U.S. In the event a compromise was found. But the argument left a bad taste.

"The priorities are profoundly wrong if NATO and the EU let their turf battle come before protecting the lives of civilians," said Peter Takirambudde, Africa director for Human Rights Watch.

Diverging viewpoints

Diverging U.S. and European viewpoints were in evidence again during the recent visit to Israel of British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw. No sooner had he arrived than Mr. Straw found himself defending his decision, backed by other EU countries, to open low-level contact with the Hamas' political wing. Hamas enjoyed considerable successes in recent municipal elections.

Such contacts are anathema to both the U.S. and Israel, which regard the Hamas as a terrorist organisation with no legitimate role. The EU and Britain on the other hand, anticipating further Hamas successes in coming Palestinian parliamentary polls, argue that the West cannot encourage democratic engagement and then reject the people's choices.

Similar trans-Atlantic strains are apparent over how best to deal with Iran's nuclear programmes — with the EU engaging in dialogue and the U.S. stand-

হরিয়তকে ভোটে লড়তে পাক পরামর্শ, কেন্দ্রকে অটলের তোপ

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি ও নিজস্ব সংবাদদাতা, শ্রীনগর, ১৬ জুন: পাকিস্তান থেকে আজ কার্যত খালি হাতে ফিরলেন হরিয়ত নেতারা। এবং আজই হরিয়তকে অযথা গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে বলে কেন্দ্রকে বিধল বিজেপি। ফলে ঘরে বাইরে যথেষ্ট চাপে হরিয়ত।

পক্ষ কালের পাক অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর ও পাকিস্তান সফরের সময় মুশারফ প্রশাসন হরিয়ত নেতাদের স্পষ্ট ভাষায় বলেছে, নির্বাচনে অংশ নিয়ে আগে নিজেদের জনপ্রিয়তা প্রমাণ করুন। তা না হলে কাশ্মীরের শান্তির প্রক্রিয়ায় আপনাদের সামিল করা সম্ভব নয়।

পাকিস্তান যখন হরিয়ত সম্পর্কে এই কড়া মনোভাব দেখাচ্ছে, তখন মনমোহন সরকার তাদের অযথা গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে বলে অভিযোগ বিজেপির। খোদ অটলবিহারী বাজপেয়ী প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে চিঠি লিখে বলেছেন, এনডিএ আমলে শুরু হওয়া শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ার 'বিচ্যুতি' ঘটিয়েছে ইউপিএ সরকার। ভারত-পাক শান্তি আলোচনা এখন বড় বেশি কাশ্মীর-কেন্দ্রিক। সেখানে রাজ্যের নির্বাচিত প্রতিনিধিদের উপেক্ষা করে হরিয়তকে গুরুত্ব দেওয়া হচ্ছে।

কংগ্রেস অবশ্য পাল্টা বলেছে যে, এই অভিযোগের ভিত্তি নেই। কেন্দ্র হরিয়তকে গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে না। দিচ্ছেন মুশারফ ও পাক সরকার। তবে, ভিসা ছাড়াই যে ভাবে হরিয়ত নেতাদের পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের বাইরে যেতে দিয়েছে ইসলামাবাদ, তার কড়া

সমালোচনা করেছেন কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র আনন্দ শর্মা। তাঁর দাবি, এ ব্যাপারে বিশ্বাস ভঙ্গ করেছে পাকিস্তান।

আজ দুপুরে কামান পোস্টে পৌঁছে হরিয়ত নেতারা তাঁদের সফরকে সফল বললেও, পাক সরকারি সূত্র বলছে হরিয়ত নেতাদের আশা মোটের উপর অপূর্ণই থেকেছে। তাঁরা চেয়েছিলেন দু'দেশের শান্তি প্রক্রিয়ায় তাঁদের সামিল করার জন্য দিল্লিকে চাপ দিক ইসলামাবাদ। কিন্তু পাকিস্তানের প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী চৌধুরি শুজাত হুসেন প্রকাশ্যেই জানান, হরিয়তই কাশ্মীরি জনতার এক মাত্র প্রতিনিধি নয়। বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ মেহমুদ কাসুরিও বলেন, "হরিয়ত নেতাদের কথায় সামিল করার জন্য আমরা ভারতকে চাপ দিতে পারি না।"

ওয়াকিবহাল মহল বলছে, পাক প্রস্তাবে হরিয়ত নেতাদের খুব একটা আপত্তি নেই। তবে একই সঙ্গে পাক অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে নির্বাচন করার পক্ষে সওয়াল করে এসেছেন তাঁরা। হরিয়ত চেয়ারম্যান মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুক কামান পোস্টে বলেন, "প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে পূর্বশর্ত ছাড়াই আলোচনায় বসতে আমাদের আপত্তি নেই।"

হরিয়তের সঙ্গে আলোচনা শুরু হয় এনডিএ আমলেই। কিন্তু বিজেপি-র বক্তব্য, তাঁরা হরিয়তকে যতটা গুরুত্ব দিয়েছিলেন, তার থেকে অনেক বেশি গুরুত্ব দিচ্ছে মনমোহন সরকার। বাজপেয়ী তাঁর চিঠিতে বলেছেন, এক

বছর আগেও হরিয়তের মধ্যে কটরপন্থী ও মধ্যমপন্থী বিভাজন ছিল। কিন্তু নতুন সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার পরে সেই বিভাজন ধুয়েমুছে গিয়েছে। এখন সবাই পাকিস্তানপন্থী। অতীষ্ট যা সিদ্ধ হচ্ছে, তা সবই পাকিস্তানের।

হরিয়ত নেতাদের ভিসা ছাড়াই পাকিস্তান যেতে দেওয়া নিয়ে আগেই সরকারের সমালোচনা করেছিল বিজেপি। কিন্তু তখন কেন তাঁদের মাত্রাছাড়া গুরুত্ব দেওয়ার কথা বলা হয়নি? অটলের চিঠি সংবাদমাধ্যমের সামনে প্রকাশ করে প্রাক্তন বিদেশমন্ত্রী যশবন্ত সিনহার জবাব, হরিয়ত নেতারা দেশে ফেরা পর্যন্ত অপেক্ষা করা হচ্ছিল। দলীয় সূত্রে বলা হচ্ছে, পাক সফর সেরে আডবাণী মনমোহনের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে গিয়েই বলেছিলেন, হরিয়ত নিয়ে সরকারের সতর্ক হওয়া উচিত। তিনি পাকিস্তানে থাকাকালীনই হরিয়ত নেতারা সে দেশে পৌঁছেন। 'ট্র্যাক টু' কূটনীতির নামে সেই সফর ঘিরে উদ্ভাদনা পছন্দ হয়নি আডবাণীর।

অটলের চিঠিতে সেই মনোভাবই তুলে ধরা হয়েছে। তিনি লিখেছেন, "প্রবল প্রয়াস ও ধারাবাহিক কৌশলের ফলে পাকিস্তানকে দিয়ে ২০০৪-এর ৬ জানুয়ারির যৌথ বিবৃতি দেওয়ানো গিয়েছিল। তাতে তারা স্বাভাবিকতা ফিরিয়ে আনতে সর্বস্বীন চেষ্টা করার আশ্বাস দেয়। কিন্তু এখন মনে হচ্ছে এই শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া কাশ্মীর-কেন্দ্রিক হয়ে পড়েছে। পাক প্রশাসন এটা চায়।"

Contest elections, Pak tells Hurriyat

ARUN JOSHI and RASHID AHMAD
Kaman Post/Srinagar, June 16

LEADERS OF the Mirwaiz faction of the Hurriyat, who returned from their two-week visit of Pakistan and Muzaffarabad on Thursday, have been told by the Pakistani establishment to participate in elections to prove their popularity if they want to have a seat on the dialogue table with India, on Kashmir.

Placing the Kashmiri leadership at the centre of the Indo-Pak dialogue, All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq told reporters that a triangular dialogue would soon get under way. He also said that the Hurriyat would pursue the dialogue by talking to the government of India.

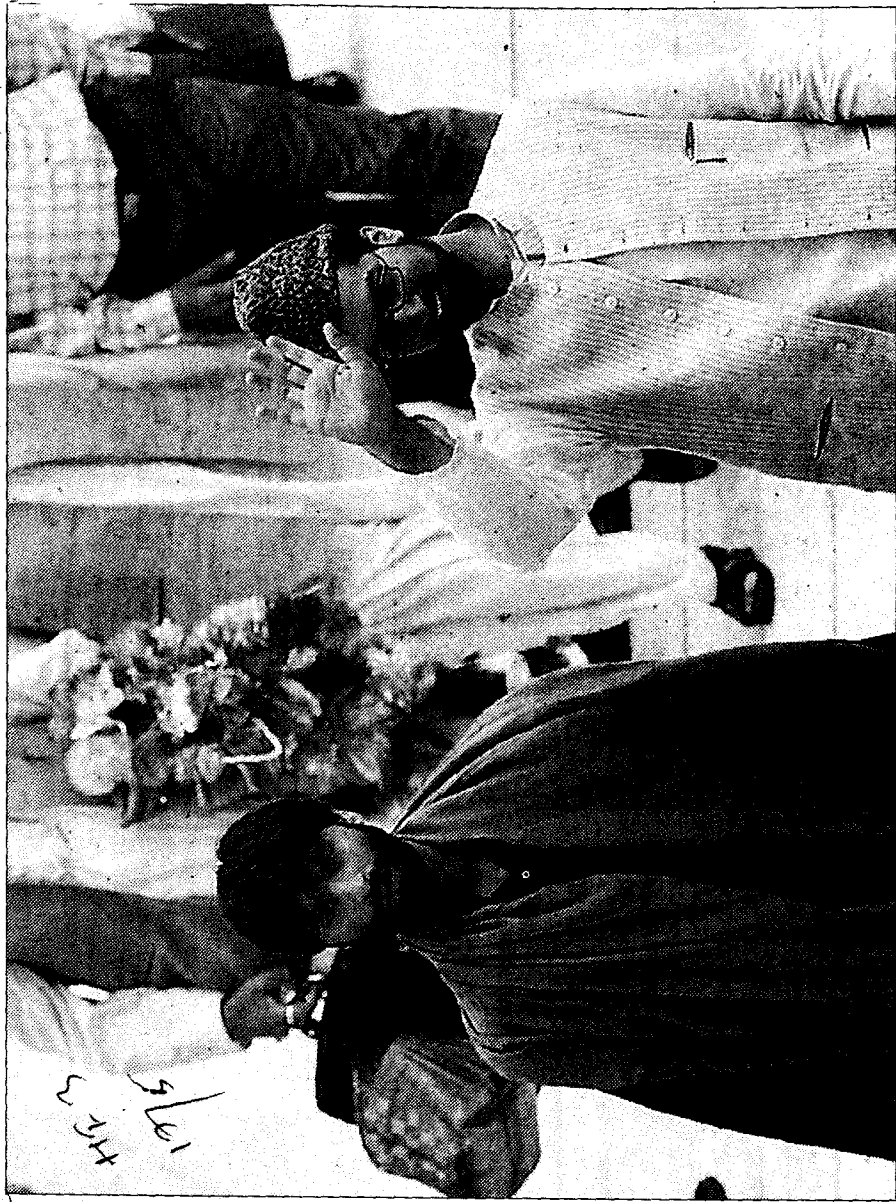
About the Hurriyat leaders being asked to prove their popularity through elections, sources said that the issue of representative character dominated their discussions in Pakistan. The APHC leaders were told by their Pakistani hosts that "we cannot convince the West and other friendly countries unless you prove your popularity".

Former Pakistan PM Shujat Hussain publicly said Hurriyat leaders alone were not the representatives of the Kashmiri people. Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri stopped just short of saying this when he said, "We cannot force India to include Hurriyat leaders in talks."

Hurriyat leaders are reported not to have rejected the idea outright. They, however, suggested that similar elections be simultaneously held in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, to send the message to the people that the elections were not for "electing people for governance but for representing them on the dialogue table".

Meanwhile, Hurriyat leaders are likely to seek a date for talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh sometime next month.

A veteran Congress leader who is mediating between the Hurriyat and the Centre did not rule out the possibility of a mid-term poll for the state Assembly if the APHC agreed to participate.



JKLF chief Yasin Malik and Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq at Kaman Post on their return from Pakistan.

AFP

Pulwama blast

Explodes simplistic theories

It would be easy, and tempting, to explain away the blast in Pulwama as a sign of militants getting desperate over dwindling public support, as a bid to disrupt normality during the tourist season, or even as a message to the returning Hurriyat moderates who spoke out against violence during their trip to Pakistan. That would be over-simplistic. The grim reality is that militancy remains entrenched and even as the chief minister vigorously pursues his policy of reconciliation, the security drive must continue in top gear. No contradictions should be seen in that, for only when the pressure mounts does the violence dissipate a little. Rather than attempt to draw inferences from militant action, there must be a determination to render them inactive, and comparing statistics of "incidents" over the years will prove pointless.

Inputs from the militancy front are not encouraging, even though the overall climate may have improved somewhat. The reported use of chemicals to cut openings in the barbed wire fencing along the LoC, and the use of more sophisticated weapons and equipment indicate that the reservoir of finances and munitions are not drying up. Wireless intercepts confirm that the operations are well planned and coordinated — perhaps the only change is that fewer locals are picking up the gun. Good, but not great because foreign mercenaries are not in short supply. On the ground it makes only marginal difference if Pakistan's "sponsorship" has declined or is more covert: a bullet kills, a bomb blast decimates, who foots the bill for it is of academic interest. What matters is that somebody paid for it in blood. The ceasefire along the LoC is not to be confused with a drop in militant activity. It is fashionable to use a telescope when viewing every positive sign in Jammu and Kashmir but to invert that instrument when looking at the negative. That is dangerous, the peace dividend is still some way from being harvested. All plans on further troop cuts, or using more police instead of military must be examined afresh. Pulwama permits little else.

✓ 'FREEDOM SANS INDEPENDENCE'

Hurriyat in autonomy mode

5/11
16/6

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, June 15. — Giving a tacit backing to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's "autonomous Kashmir sans independence" formula, the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference today said that it would go ahead with it if there was a consensus on the proposal.

Gen. Musharraf, on a visit to Australia at present, was quoted by the media as saying at Canberra that a complete independence for Kashmir would not be acceptable to both India and Pakistan and an "autonomous Kashmir" was his "earnest desire" if some consensus could be developed on it.

Bilal Lone, one of the Hurriyat leaders touring Pakistan with a Kashmiri separatists' delegation, said: "President Musharraf has his own point of view. If there is a consensus, we will go ahead with it. What is the problem with it? The suffering of the Kashmiri people has to end. Violence should take a back seat now. Let us give this peace process a chance."

Lone, representing the People's Conference, a constituent of the Hurriyat faction led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, said several proposals, including one on an autonomous Kashmir, had been discussed during the meeting with Gen. Musharraf. The Kashmiri leaders will be winding up their fortnight-long trip tomorrow.

Lone said: "Musharraf being the President and chief of army is in a commanding position. If we cannot solve it (the Kashmir issue) now, it would be a tragedy for the people of Kashmir and India."

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Yasin Malik, an advocate of independence, however,

'No celebrations'

SRINAGAR, June 15. — Grieved over the heavy loss of life and property in the wake of the bomb blast in Pulwama, the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference today called on the people to cancel the reception arranged for their delegation returning from Pakistan tomorrow. A statement quoting Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said: "I appeal to the people to desist from organising receptions or taking out welcome processions on the occasion of the return of the Hurriyat delegation from Pakistan in view of the mayhem witnessed in Pulwama on Monday." Mirwaiz asked the people to go to the Jamia Masjid on Friday as the delegation members would apprise the people of their visits to Pakistan and PoK. — PTI

declined to react to President Musharraf's comments. "Let us leave it aside. We had an excellent visit to Pakistan where we had the stamp of approval for the inclusion of Kashmiris in the peace process," said Malik, who had held separate talks with Gen. Musharraf. He claimed that the response he had received during the visit to Pakistan was a "mandate" for the involvement of Kashmiris in the India-Pakistan peace process. Malik said India and Pakistan should stop indulging in "favouritism" by backing different leaders. "I am representing the Kashmiri people's aspirations," he said.

Lone, significantly, lashed out at hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, saying: "I am not concerned about Geelani. It is a big process between India and Pakistan which I do not think anyone will try to derail. We have to be a part of this process."

'Malik spoke the truth': page 5

16 JUN 2005

THE TESTIMONIAL

A visit and its balance-sheet

The Hurriyat faction is aware of the battle ahead of it from the separatists as well as the 'pro-India' political forces as it gets down to the task of convincing the various constituencies about its new line of thinking.

B. Muralidhar Reddy

WAS THE visit by the Kashmir leaders to Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) a historic event or a mere photo opportunity? This is the topic of debate among them as they wind up their first formal, fortnight-long visit to Pakistan.

As they were about to return to Srinagar on June 16 by the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus, the delegation remained sharply divided on the outcome.

The Hurriyat faction led by its chairman, Mirwaiz Omar Farooq, is convinced that their first such visit to Pakistan and the PoK has proved to be 'historic' and that a solution to Kashmir might be closer today than ever before.

The only dissenting voice in the delegation comes from the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leader, Yasin Malik. Even if he is not prepared to say it in so many words, his supporters do not mince any words in suggesting that the visit is no more than a 'photo-op'. As they see it, it is a matter of weeks before Mr. Malik will be pitted against the Mirwaiz faction led by the Hurriyat.

Changed world realities

Mr. Farooq and Co. are not only reconciled to the prospect of a negotiated India-Pakistan settlement on Kashmir but also resigned to a radical departure from the traditional stance on the 1948 U.N. Resolutions on Kashmir. Citing the changed world realities post-9/11, they have openly been talking about the need to be 'realistic, pragmatic and conciliatory'.

The JKLF chief, who favours an independent Jammu and Kashmir, wants a central place for Kashmiris on the negotiating table. His argument is that Kashmiris alone can decide their fate and that neither India nor Pakistan has any business to be formulating a Kashmir solution.

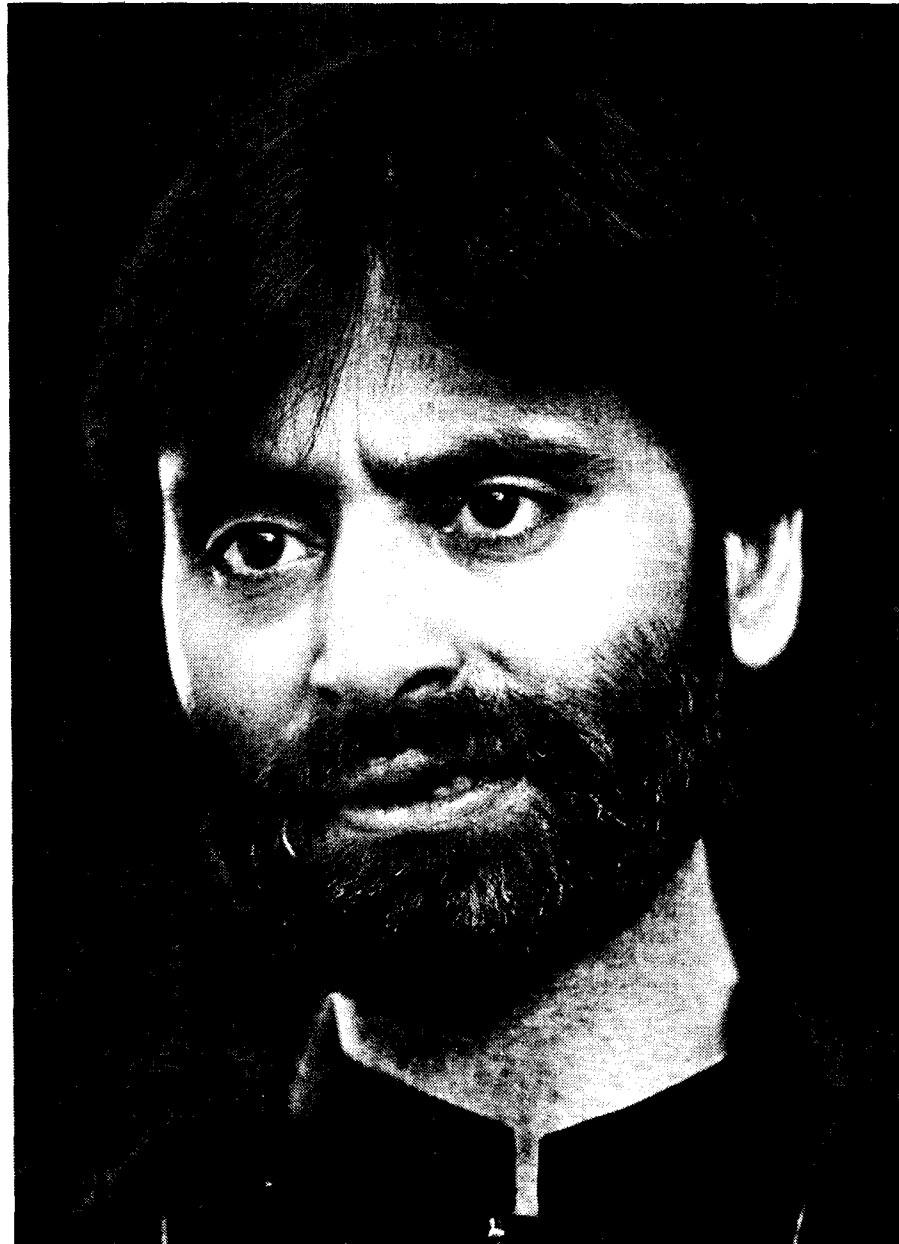
He has publicly disagreed with the Mirwaiz that their visit marks the beginning of a triangular process towards a resolution of the Kashmir issue.

The visiting Hurriyat faction is aware of the battle ahead of it from the separatists as well as the 'pro-India' political forces as it gets down to the task of convincing the various constituencies about their new line of thinking.

In anticipation of the flak from the hardliners, Mr. Farooq has been maintaining the refrain that the time has come to change the meaning of several 'words' in Kashmir.

In response to criticism of his statement that the time has come to move beyond the U.N. Resolutions on Kashmir, Mr. Farooq has been saying that the term *ghaddar* (betrayor) needs to be redefined.

For fear of incurring the wrath of the hardliners, the moderate faction has been



LONE VOICE OF DISSENT: JKLF chief Mohammed Yasin Malik.

— PHOTO: REUTERS

subdued in its welcome of the latest proposal made by Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on an 'autonomous Kashmir'.

Bilal Lone, the People's Conference leader and a supporter of Mr. Farooq, said that Kashmiris should have no problem with the thinking of Gen. Musharraf on Kashmir as long as there was a consensus on it. Gen. Musharraf, currently on a visit to Australia, was quoted by the local media as saying in Canberra that an 'autonomous Kashmir' was his 'earnest desire' if some consensus could be developed on it.

He also said that complete independence

for Kashmir would not be acceptable to India or Pakistan.

'Give peace a chance'

Bilal Lone, one of the Hurriyat leaders touring Pakistan as a part of the nine-member delegation of Kashmiri separatist leaders, told Indian journalists in Islamabad: "President Musharraf has his own point of view. If there is a consensus decision, we will go ahead with it. What is the problem with it? The suffering of [the] Kashmiri people has to end. [A] lot of blood was shed. Violence should take [the] back seat now. Let us

give this peace process a chance."

Mr. Lone said during their recent meeting with Gen. Musharraf that several proposals including one for an autonomous Kashmir were discussed.

"Anything that satisfies maximum political thoughts in Kashmir, we should not say 'no' to it. We should just go behind it. Musharraf, being the President and [the] Chief of [the] Army [Staff] is in a commanding position. If we cannot solve it now it would be a tragedy for people of Kashmir and India," he said.

The other view

Yasin Malik, an advocate of independence, however, declined to react to Gen. Musharraf's comments. "Let us leave it aside. We had an excellent visit to Pakistan where we had the stamp of approval for inclusion of Kashmiris in the peace process."

Mr. Malik, who held talks with Gen. Musharraf separately, claimed that the response he received during the visit to Pakistan was a "mandate" for the involvement of the Kashmiris in the peace process.

He wanted India and Pakistan to stop their 'favouritism' in Kashmir by backing different leaders.

Mr. Lone lashed out at the hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who has opposed the peace process and attempted to project the faction led by Mr. Farooq as *ghaddaar*. "I am not concerned about Geelani. It is a big process between India and Pakistan, which I do not think anyone will try to derail. Derailing is out of question. We have to be part of this process. I respect him as [an] individual but it is not necessary that I go with his ideology. [The] people of Kashmir and [the] political leaders cannot remain hostage to [a] single particular individual," he said.

"He may have his way with ideology, if tomorrow [the] people of Kashmir adopt his ideology I cannot help it. Let them go behind him. But what I foresee at this point of time is that [the] people of Kashmir are not with his ideology. That is it," he said.

Mr. Lone said his group was not unduly concerned over the refusal of the militant groups, specially the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, to hold talks with them officially. Hizb leader Syed Salahuddin had declined to back the moderate Hurriyat faction against Mr. Geelani.

"If Salahuddin has not met us this time, no problem, we will meet him next time," he said. He added that leaders of several other militants groups, including Pakistan-based outfits, met them.

"Everybody came here. There is posturing outside and inside and there is no question of rebuff. It was his [Salahuddin's] decision. If he thinks it was good that is his problem. Our doors were kept open for everyone. We had streams of visitors during our stay here," Mr. Lone said.

BJP up in arms against UPA over security arrangement in Kashmir



Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 14 JUNE

A day after a car bomb detonated by terrorists left 14 people dead and over a 100 injured at Pulwama in south Kashmir, the BJP came down heavily on the UPA government for lowering the guard in the violence-ravaged state.

Condemning the Pulwama incident, the BJP demanded an all-party meeting to discuss, among other things, the recent spurt in cross-border terrorism in the valley, the Hurriyat visit to Pakistan and the initiatives taken by the Manmohan Singh government to further the peace process.

Taken together with its determination to rake up in Parliament the government's failure to rein in the Hurriyat leaders, the strong attack mounted by the BJP against the UPA government on the issue Pulwama bomb blasts signals the party's determination to pursue the matter. It is now collecting statistics to buttress its argument that jihadi violence had, in fact, gone up in the state ever since the UPA came to power.

"The government seems to believe that terrorism-related violence has decreased considerably following the improvement in ties between the two countries. We had warned the ruling coalition against relaxing the vigil by the armed forces," BJP spokesperson Prakash Javadekar said here on Tuesday afternoon. The UPA government owes an explanation to the people for the increase in the incidences of cross-border terrorism, he said. He added: "The Pulwama incident should serve as an eye-opener."

The BJP spokesperson expressed surprise over the commonality in languages used by Hurriyat leaders and Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf. "The two sides trumpeted the permission granted to the separatist leaders to travel to Pakistan without Indian passports as proof that the Kashmir valley was a disputed territory. The Indian government has so far failed to react to their assertions," he alleged. The BJP leader warned the government against being complacent and being overtaken by the hype surrounding the peace talks.

VHP wants Advani to quit top job

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 14 JUNE

THE VHP on Tuesday ratcheted up its confrontation with BJP president LK Advani, seeking his ouster from the post for his remarks accrediting Muhammed Ali Jinnah with the "secular" tag, and for expressing remorse over the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya.

Mr Advani, once idolised as the Hindutva mascot for his role in the Ayodhya movement, was accused by the VHP of betraying the Hindu cause and asked to quit politics.

The RSS affiliate adopted two resolutions — one on Mr Advani and the other on the BJP — on the inaugural day of the meeting of its margdarshak mandal — the VHP's highest policy-making body. In keeping with the strident tone it has adopted against the BJP president ever since he made his re-appraisal of the founder Pakistan, the VHP came down heavily on him.

The resolution on Mr Advani, moved by the general secretary of the Sant Samiti, Hans Das, described him as a "betrayal" of the Hindu cause and asked him to step down from the posts of BJP president, leader of the Opposition and the membership of the Lok Sabha. He should quit poli-

tics altogether, was the resolution's advice.

If he failed to act on the advice, it asked the BJP to seek Mr Advani's ouster and replace him with a "pro-Hindu" leader. Mr Advani, the VHP alleged, had converted the party into "Bharatiya Jinnah Party". Demanding that Mr Advani apologise to the Hindu society for his attempts to appease Muslims, the resolution said the BJP-led coalition at the Centre had failed to fulfil any of the items mentioned in the 40-point Hindu Agenda.

The resolutions adopted on the inaugural day of the two-day-long meeting at Hardwar signalled the complete collapse of relations between the two arms of the RSS. Even though ties between the two sides had been on the downslide ever since the BJP-led coalition came to power at the Centre, it touched a nadir early this month when Mr Advani, during his six-day-long trip to Pakistan, described the Ayodhya demolition as the "saddest" day of his life and also made his now-famous remarks on Jinnah.

It provoked the firebrand VHP general secretary, Mr Praveen Togadia to brand Mr Advani as "a traitor" who had let the Hindu society down — remarks for which he was ticked off later by the RSS chief.



Car bomb kills 14 in Kashmir

BLAST NEAR CRPF CAMP, SCHOOL

Press Trust of India

PULWAMA, June 13. — At least 14 persons including two schoolchildren and three CRPF officers were killed and over a hundred injured when militants detonated nearly 40 kg of RDX packed in a car just outside a government school this morning.

The attack took place barely 50 metres from a CRPF camp at Wachbug, 32 km from Srinagar. No militant outfit has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

The toll is likely to go up as the condition of some of the injured was critical. Officials initially said that an IED was fitted to a truck, but recovery of the engine of a Maruti car some distance away and the lack of damage to the truck suggested a car bomb.

Today's blast was the second of its kind in as many months. Last month, a car-bomb was triggered by militants in the posh Jawahar Nagar locality of Srinagar.

The casualties in today's blast were mainly caused by splinter injuries. The explosion rattled the entire township, officials said. Several buildings, including 18 houses, 20 shops and scores of vehicles were damaged.

The CRPF officers killed were identified as inspector TRV Prasad and sub-inspectors Amba Rao and JDR Kumar. Their bodies were mangled beyond recognition. Three persons were killed in the driver's compartment of a truck that was driving past the RDX-laden Maruti, sources said. Five persons succumbed

to injuries while being shifted to hospital.

The blast led to massive protests in Pulwama with people taking to the streets and pelting stones on passing vehicles. Police resorted to lathi-charge and fired tear gas shells to control the situation.

Several parties, including the National Conference, condemned the blast. But, while demanding an "impartial" inquiry into the attack, the headline Hurriyat faction gave a clean chit to militants. Their leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, said: "Such incidents cannot be the handiwork of those sacrificing their lives for the sacred cause of freedom... the blast is part of a deep-rooted conspiracy to harm the ongoing freedom struggle."

Meanwhile, six militants, including a Pakistani infiltrator and a Jamaat-e-Islami activist were among 10 persons killed overnight in Jammu and Kashmir where police arrested six youths who were being herded to Pakistan for arms training. A police spokesman said that all of them were from Pulwama.

Hurriyat stand on talks

In Islamabad, the moderate Hurriyat faction today said that Pakistan does not have a solution to the Kashmir dispute despite the options articulated by General Musharraf from time to time.

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said here yesterday: "There is no readymade solution (to Kashmir)." The best thing would be tripartite talks between India, Pakistan and the Kashmiris, he added.



Relatives of blast victims cry inconsolably outside an operation theatre of a hospital in Srinagar on Monday. — PTI

Peace possible in a fortnight: Pervez

AP & PTI

Did Rashid train Malik?

ISLAMABAD, June 13. — Pakistani information minister Sheikh Rashid was embroiled in controversy today as a TV channel reported that separatist leader Yaseen Malik had identified him as a prominent leader of the "terror camps" in Pok in the 1980s. "I first met him then," Malik was quoted by NDTV as saying to those attending an exhibition of his "signatures for peace". The minister had no comment to offer. Sheikh Rashid, incidentally, has confirmed that he will board the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus on 30 June. — PTI

reporters in Kuala Lumpur today while leaving for Australia. "At this moment, the leadership has the will and I am therefore very

optimistic that it would be resolved in a certain timeframe," he said. Gen. Musharraf also said that he would love to visit Kashmir. "I would love to go there." But, he qualified, he was not making a formal proposal as "the time is not ripe yet." On Siachen, Gen. Musharraf said talks were being held to put an end to "eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation".

However, Pakistan foreign office spokesman, Mr Jalil Abbas Jilani, maintained Islamabad's official stand, saying: "India committed aggression on Siachen in 1983... (and) it has to vacate that aggression in order to make Siachen a peaceful area. We hope, following the (Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's) statement, India would unconditionally withdraw its aggression."

Salahuddin rejects Hurriyat peace call

Favours armed struggle for Kashmiris

Islamabad, June 12

THE HIZBUL Mujahideen has rejected the moderate Hurriyat's call asking militants to take the back seat and support the political leadership in finding a solution to the Kashmir issue. It, instead, feels that the situation in the Valley warrants an armed struggle. "The situation (in Kashmir) has aggravated and warrants an armed struggle all the more," Hizbul leader Sayed Salahuddin said from Muzaffarabad in PoK, in response to Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's call.

He claimed that it was due to the sacrifices made by militants that Kashmir had come out of cold storage to become the focus of global attention. "Visits to Delhi Darbar and Pakistan had become possible due to the very sacrifices. No political or diplomatic activity could see success without patronising an organised and effective armed struggle," he said.

Salahuddin, who operates from the PoK capital as also Rawalpindi, also rejected Farooq's assertions that UN resolutions on Kashmir have failed to deliver. "Launch of different options, while openly deviating from the UN resolutions, is a condemnable attempt to deprive the 56-year-old freedom struggle of its strong historic, moral and legal base," Salahuddin, who heads the United Jehad Council (UJC), a conglomerate of militant groups, was quoted as saying by *Dawn* on Sunday.

According to him, the militant groups want the UN resolutions to be made a basis for efforts to achieve an acceptable solution to Kashmir.

In an interview to the same newspaper Farooq, once again, appealed to the militant groups, saying, "The need of the hour is to focus on a political settlement of the Kashmir problem. "Those who are



Salahuddin: Guns over roses

engaged in militancy should also be taken into confidence."

Salahuddin's remarks came after Farooq met him and sought his support for the peace process and called him to join the "triangular" dialogue process on Kashmir.

Salahuddin, who backs the hardline Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, also rejected the Mirwaiz' appeal to nominate a Hizbul representative to the APHC's moderate faction.

"The militant leaders do not need to join the APHC, but they are keeping a vigilant eye on political and diplomatic activities while carrying on their basic important task," he said.

Farooq termed his visit to Pakistan and his plans to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his return as a triangular dialogue process whereas Geelani and Salahuddin insist on tripartite talks to facilitate direct participation of Kashmiri leaders in the India-Pak dialogue process.

'Next year crucial'

THE KASHMIR issue has "now reached resolution phase" and the next year or so will be "very crucial" in the context of resolving the problem, moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said.

Farooq, who is on a visit to Pakistan along with eight other Kashmiri separatist leaders from the Valley, also supported Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's proposal on involvement of the international community as guarantor in any agreement that would be reached with India to resolve the vexed issue.

Agencies

Visits to Delhi Darbar and Pakistan have become possible due to the armed struggle
— Syed Salahuddin

কাশ্মীর নিয়ে হতাশ হিজবুল ফেরাল হরিয়তের শান্তি-প্রস্তাব

ইসলামাবাদ, ১২ জুন: হরিয়তকে খালি হাতেই ফিরিয়ে দিল হিজবুল মুজাহিদিন। দিল্লির হয়ে পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের বিভিন্ন জঙ্গি সংগঠনের উপরে সংঘর্ষ-বিরতির জন্য মূলত চাপ সৃষ্টি করতেই পাকিস্তানে এসেছিলেন হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব। কিন্তু পাক-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরের মুজফফরাবাদে বসে হিজবুল নেতা সৈয়দ সালাউদ্দিন হরিয়তের মধ্যপন্থী গোষ্ঠীর নেতা মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুকের শান্তি প্রস্তাব সাফ নাকচ করে দিয়েছেন। জানিয়েছেন, কাশ্মীরের বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি যথেষ্ট হতাশজনক। এই সময় লড়াই থেকে সরে আসার প্রশ্নই নেই। বরং তাঁরা লড়াই আরও বাড়ানোর কথা ভাবছেন।

কূটনীতি বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে, হরিয়ত নেতৃত্বের পাকিস্তান যাত্রা আদতে নয়াদিল্লি-শ্রীনগর-ইসলামাবাদের সুপারিকল্পিত প্রয়াস। যার লক্ষ্য, জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলিকে শান্তি প্রস্তাবে রাজি করানো। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদ বলেছিলেন, দু'দেশের সেনাবাহিনীর মধ্যে সংঘর্ষ-বিরতি চলছে। পাক

জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গেও সংঘর্ষ-বিরতি হলে উপত্যকার অর্থনীতি চাঙ্গা হবে। তাই এই 'ট্র্যাক-টু' কূটনীতিতে দৌত্যের জন্য বেছে নেওয়া হয়েছিল হরিয়তকে। কিন্তু শান্তি প্রস্তাব ফিরিয়ে সেই সেই দৌত্য ব্যর্থ করেছে হিজবুল।

পাক সফররত হরিয়ত নেতা মিরওয়াইজ উমর ফারুক বলেন, ৯/১১-র জঙ্গি হানার পরে কাশ্মীরে শান্তি প্রতিষ্ঠার উপযুক্ত সময় এসেছে। জঙ্গিদের উচিত, রাজনৈতিক নেতাদের চালকের আসনে বসিয়ে তাঁদের সাহায্য করা। ফারুকের বক্তব্য উড়িয়ে দিয়ে সালাউদ্দিন জানিয়েছেন, লড়াই চলবে। একাধিক জঙ্গি দলের যৌথ সংগঠন 'ইউনাইটেড জেহাদি কাউন্সিল'-এর প্রধান নেতার বক্তব্য, রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের প্রস্তাব সরাসরি অগ্রাহ্য করে সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন পথে এগোনোর চেষ্টা হচ্ছে। কাশ্মীরে ৫৬ বছরের সংগ্রামকে দমন করার এটি একটি নিন্দনীয় প্রয়াস। তাঁর কথায়, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যা সমাধানের চেষ্টা রাষ্ট্রপুঞ্জের প্রস্তাবের ভিত্তিতেই হওয়া উচিত বলে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির মত।

হরিয়তের মধ্যপন্থী অংশের জন্য

হিজবুলের এক জন প্রতিনিধি মনোনীত করার আবেদনও জানিয়েছিলেন ফারুক। কিন্তু হরিয়তের কট্টরপন্থী নেতা সৈয়দ আলি শাহ গিলানির ঘনিষ্ঠ বলে পরিচিত সালাউদ্দিন সেই আবেদনও ফিরিয়ে দিয়েছেন।

হিজবুল প্রস্তাব ফেরালেও ফারুক মনে করেন, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যা সমাধানের চূড়ান্ত পর্বে পৌঁছে গিয়েছে। আগামী বছর এ সম্পর্কে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সিদ্ধান্ত হতে পারে বলে তাঁর ধারণা। সেই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের প্রস্তাব সমর্থন করে তাঁর বক্তব্য, "ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে এ ব্যাপারে কোনও চুক্তি হলে আন্তর্জাতিক মহলাকে তা নিশ্চিত করতে হবে।"

চিন বা আমেরিকা সেই ভূমিকা নেবে কি না, প্রশ্ন করা হলে তাঁর উত্তর, ভারত-পাকিস্তান-চিন, তিন পরমাণু শক্তিধর দেশ ও পরস্পরের প্রতিবেশী। ভারত-পাক চুক্তি হলে চিনের স্বার্থ জড়িয়ে থাকবে স্বাভাবিক। আমেরিকাও চায়, কাশ্মীর-সমস্যার সমাধান হোক। — পি টি আই

13 JUN 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

India keen to open trade routes with Aksai Chin

Ajay Kaul
LEH (J&K) 11 JUNE

AFFIRMING India's commitment to settle the issue of Aksai Chin with China and Baltistan with Pakistan peacefully through talks, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Saturday said efforts would be made to open trade routes with these areas currently under "foreign occupation". He said talks would be held with China for opening up of the route to Kailash Mansarovar through Ladakh so that the time of pilgrimage to one of the most sacred religious place could be reduced.

"A big part of Ladakh, Aksai Chin, is under foreign occupation. In the same way, Baltistan (in Northern areas under Pakistani occupation) is under control of foreign troops," he said in a public meeting after laying the foundation stone for a 45 MW hydel power project here. "We are firmly determined to resolve these problems through talks with China and Pakistan so that



VISION POSSIBLE: Manmohan Singh releasing Ladakh Vision 2025 in Leh on Saturday. — PTI

people of (J&K) can lead a peaceful life and can utilise their creative energy to take the state to new frontiers," he added.

Aksai Chin is a part of J&K occupied by Pakistan in 1947 and later ceded to China. Dr Singh noted in earlier times, trading used to be done through Ladakh with Xinkiang (China) and Central Asia. "I will make an effort to ensure that relations with China improve and new trade routes

are opened with that country."

Earlier, Dr Singh said efforts were being made to open the route between Kargil and Skardu in Pak-occupied Northern areas as people wanted to have trade relations with Baltistan and Gilgit. Dr Singh, who laid the foundation stone for a 44 MW power project in Kargil earlier, said the people of the state were suffering a lot of problems because of conflict with Pakistan.

Recalling the 1999 Pakistani aggression in Kargil, Dr Singh said "Our effort is to ensure that such dangers do not recur. That is why we have started talks with Pakistan government to ensure permanent end to mutual conflicts and so that people of two countries could live peacefully... in this regard an important decision has been taken on opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service after 55 years."

Dr Singh announced a grant of Rs 10 crore each for Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC), Kargil and LAHDC, Leh. — PTI

PM calls for making Ladakh a tourist hub

TNN & AGENCIES

Leh: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his first visit to Ladakh after assuming office, called for developing the region as a new tourist hub of Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing a function here to rename Leh's airport after Kushok Bakula Rimpoche, a Buddhist monk considered the architect of modern Leh, Singh hoped that air connectivity would bring more "tourists, investors and scholars to this remote corner of the world".

Singh, who is here on a three-day visit which includes a trip to Siachen promised all help to the state government in improving tourist infrastructure in the beautiful mountainous area. "I hope it opens the gateway of prosperity for this region," Singh said, adding that his government had already embarked on a programme of modernisation. "From the islands of the Bay of Bengal to the Himalayan mountains, we will invest in modernisation of our airports, railways, roads, ports, waterways and telecom infrastructure."

The PM asserted that Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh would benefit greatly from this modernisation. "Our government is committed to the modernisation of our infrastructure across the length and breadth of the vast subcontinent," Singh said, adding that this would "ensure that the emotional and economic integration of the country is better enabled." He said that the Ladakh region would see bet-



Ladakhi women welcome Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his arrival at the airport in Leh on Friday

care and education were top priority for the government and Jammu & Kashmir would also benefit from this, the PM said.

By renaming the Leh airport after 'Bakula', a great son of Ladakh, "we are committing ourselves to improving the connectivity between Ladakh and the rest of the country," Singh said. He paid tributes to Bakula saying that he was a unique 'Lama' of great talent and exceptional gift. Bakula, a towering figure of Ladakh and former Indian ambassador to Mongolia, had passed away over a year ago.

During the course of this trip, the PM will also lay the foundation stones of two hydel projects - a 44 MW project at Kargil and a 45 MW one at Leh. Each project is being built at a cost of Rs 630 crore and is to be completed in four years.

During his visit to Siachen, the PM will address the jawans guarding the borders in sub-zero conditions. He will spend Friday and Saturday in Leh and would attend the annual Sindhu Darshan festival.

At the renaming function, chief minister Sayeed said his government was working to address the grievances of people in all regions of the state. "If there is any grievance, its root cause is some injustice," he said, adding that his government was making all efforts to ensure that such a situation did not arise. Referring to Ladakh, he said there was some feeling of injustice among people but that had been taken care of. He added that Ladakh had immense tourism potential but few flights to the region was impeding the realisation of that potential.

more flights to Ladakh, the PM said that all "obstacles" in the path of connectivity to this mountain-locked region would be removed so that its full tourism potential could be exploited. Expansion of health

ter schools, hospitals and urban facilities soon.

Responding to Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his deputy Mangat Ram Sharma's demand for

FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2005

The Hurriyat visit and beyond

The ongoing visit to Pakistan of several leaders of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has belied the negative expectations of those outside and inside government who felt the exercise might somehow compromise India's interests. Not only has this not happened, the visit has served to get a better focus on the peace process that is ineluctably taking shape. In all their public utterances across the Line of Control and in Pakistan proper, the Hurriyat leaders have conducted themselves with restraint and even dignity. By emphasising the primacy of politics over militancy, they have endorsed a key element of the April 18 joint statement by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Pervez Musharraf: terrorism must not be allowed to impede the peace process. Even as they sought to emphasise the need for the "true representatives" of Jammu and Kashmir to be included in any discussion on the State's future, the APHC visitors avoided saying or doing anything that might derail or retard the current bilateral dialogue. The Pakistani leadership, for the most part, also appears to have stuck to a sober script. When General Musharraf met the Hurriyat leaders, he stopped short of reiterating Islamabad's earlier demand that the separatist grouping should be given a seat at the negotiating table. Instead, he said that any permanent settlement of the Kashmir dispute would be possible only if the wishes and aspirations of the Kashmiri people were taken into account.

The Hurriyat visit should also help shore up the domestic constituency for peace in Pakistan. The perception of a number of Pakistanis is that Islamabad is conceding "too much" by way of normalisation in exchange for little or no change in New Delhi's position. This is, in fact, untrue. One instance of the new flexibility on the Indian side is the Manmohan Singh Government's virtual encouragement to the Hurriyat leaders to undertake their *yatra* to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Although there is still some residual resentment in South Block over Pakistan's violation of the intra-Kashmir bus agreement in allowing them to travel outside PoK, the Government would do well to move on. A far more important issue for New Delhi to work on is the pace and content of the internal peace process. The Hurriyat leadership will return to India politically rejuvenated and the indications are it is likely to accept the Government's invitation for talks. It is, therefore, essential that the Prime Minister's Office speed up the process of inter-ministerial consultation so that there is some internal clarity about what cards the Government can bring with it to the table. The only thing worse than not talking is to talk without being clear about what one wants. This is the mistake the National Democratic Alliance Government made — with the Hurriyat and, earlier, on the issue of autonomy. The United Progressive Alliance Government must learn from this experience, and learn quickly.

THE MINDU

UN resolution hasn't delivered: Hurriyat

Islamabad, June 8

THE HURRIYAT Conference's moderate faction on Wednesday said UN resolutions on Kashmir had failed to resolve the issue.

"The UN resolutions (on Kashmir) have failed. We may have to sacrifice one lakh more people to get them implemented," Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, who is visiting Pakistan along with eight other separatist leaders, said in Islamabad along with Pakistan Information Minister Shaikh Rashid Ahmed.

Apparently taking a dig at hardliner Sayeed Ali Geelani, who is advocating for the UN resolutions, Farooq said those who are advocating this should look at Palestine and Iraq

where the UN has failed besides Kashmir.

Asked to elaborate, Farooq said, "The matter of fact is that the UN has failed and there is no other option other than exploring other ideas." While the UN resolutions are there, one should look beyond and explore other possibilities, he added.

Other visiting Hurriyat leaders Abdul Ghani Bhat, Abbas Ansari and Bilal Lone were also present at the press meet. However, JKLF chief Yasin Malik, who advocates independence, stayed away from it.

Giving an assessment of their meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, Farooq said they discussed a number

of options, including the proposals for soft borders and self-



AFP
Umer Farooq with Pakistani Opposition leader Fazlur Rehman.

governance. Meanwhile, India on Wednesday sought to downplay the visit of Hurriyat leaders to Islamabad, saying this reflected a degree of confidence in the government that it could take a "liberal" view of such activities.

Official sources said New Delhi never had problems with the Hurriyat meeting Pakistani leaders. Leaders of the separatist conglomerate have made it a point to meet visiting Pakistani leaders in Delhi and had been allowed to do so. The sources said India had made it clear that passengers on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus would travel only within the limits of Jammu and Kashmir.

PTI

We can't force tripartite talks: Kasuri

Denies following US roadmap for Kashmir

Islamabad, June 7

PAKISTAN HAS made it clear to the visiting Kashmiri separatist leaders that it cannot "force" India to include them in the dialogue to resolve the Kashmir issue.

"Let us walk before we run. We cannot force India to include the Kashmiri representatives in the dialogue," foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri said.

Pakistan has been trying to persuade India to include "genuine" representatives of Kashmir in the dialogue but has not been successful, Kasuri told reporters after a meeting with Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and eight other leaders from Valley, including JKLF leader Yasin Malik in Islamabad on Tuesday.

Kasuri, however, said Pakistan has been trying to put "diplomatic pressure" on India in this regard.

During the meeting, which took place hours before their talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, the separatist leaders discussed the ongoing peace process to resolve the Kashmir issue and their demand for inclusion of Hurriyat representatives in the dialogue process to make it trilateral.

Kasuri vehemently denied allegations by hard-line Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani that Pakistan followed a US-drawn roadmap on Kashmir. He said similar allegations were

made in the past over Iraq, but Pakistan neither voted for the US invasion of Iraq nor dispatched its army to Baghdad at Americans' request.

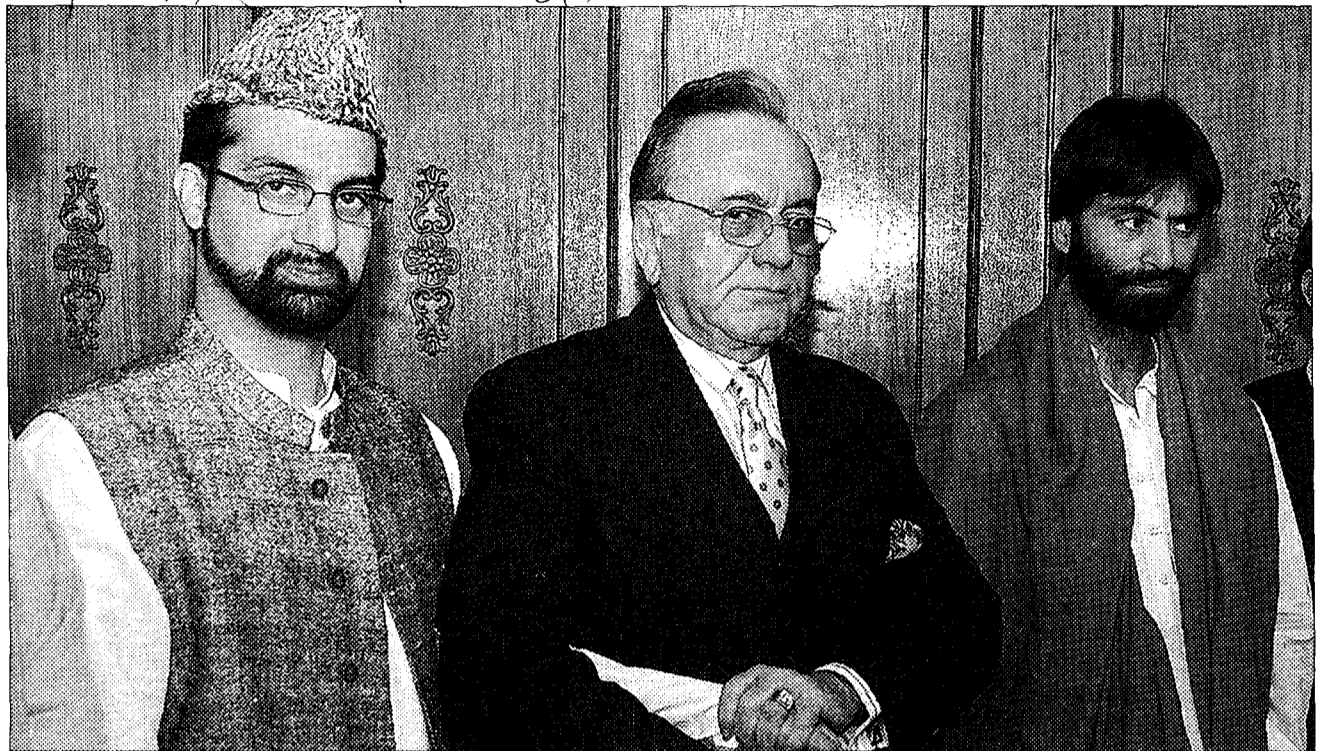
Geelani had turned down Pakistan's invitation for the visit to the country and PoK. Kasuri asserted that there was no military solution to the Kashmir issue. "We cannot enforce a military solution on India and vice-versa," he said, answering questions during a luncheon hosted by him.

While pressing for inclusion of Kashmiris in the dialogue, Farooq wanted the two countries to speed up the process with a set timeframe for resolving the Kashmir issue. "Right now, there is too much delay in the meetings held by India and Pakistan over Kashmir. The dialogue should be speeded up and held with a set timeframe," he said.

Farooq said Kasuri has assured them that no decision on resolving the Kashmir issue would be taken without involving the Kashmiris.

He denied any US pressure, saying they have been interacting with various American officials and he has not heard of any US roadmap on Kashmir. He also said efforts were underway to take all leaders on board, but the time has come to move forward even if some leaders decline to join, apparently referring to Geelani.

PTI



Pakistan foreign minister Khurshid Kasuri with Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and JKLF chief Yasin Malik in Islamabad.

Hizb won't talk sans Geelani

HTC & Agencies
Islamabad, June 7

HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN chief Syed Salahuddin said that he could not back peace moves or any future solution unless hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani was taken on board, the media reported on Tuesday.

During the interaction with Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and JKLF leader Yasin Malik in Islamabad on Sunday, Salahuddin also reportedly advised the Mirwaiz to disassociate himself from other moderate leaders like Abdul Ghani Bhat, Abbas Ansari and Bilal Lone, whom Hizbul "detested".

On his part, the moderate

Hurriyat leaders sought Salahuddin's help in persuading Geelani to bring about unity among all separatist leaders.

The Indo-Pak peace process and efforts to involve Kashmir leaders in the process also figured in the talks.

Pak minister's visit

An official communication has not come as yet from Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied Kashmir regarding the proposed visit of Pakistan's information minister Sheikh Rashid to Jammu and Kashmir on the June 15 by Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus, though preparations have already begun to welcome him in a

grand style. "There is no official word with us", a senior government functionary told *Hindustan Times*. "We've heard about his visit only through the media".

Sheikh Rashid, a close confidant of President Pervez Musharraf had expressed his desire to visit Kashmir on the bus that plies between two parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

He has some relatives in the downtown part of Srinagar, the summer capital.

The government, however, is excited about the first high-profile visit from across the border to this part on June 15. "He will receive a red carpet welcome", the official said.

Chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has already

extended "welcome" to the Pakistan minister.

Sources revealed that a "grand reception" awaits the minister on his arrival and he would be taken to sightseeing to the famous tourist resorts of Gulmarg, Pahalgam. He would be lodged in the state guesthouse at Cheshma Shahi, which offers panoramic view of Srinagar city and the vast expanse of Dal lake.

The All Parties' Hurriyat Conference and other separatist leaders currently on a visit to Pakistan are also scheduled to return to India on June 15. They have met leaders of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, and minister for Kashmir affairs.

AP

08 JUN 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

কাশ্মীর বিতর্কিত, ^{১৯৫৫} ছুরিয়ত সফর স্বীকৃতি তারই, দাবি মুশারফের

ইসলামাবাদ, ৪ জুন: কাশ্মীর নিয়ে নতুন এক বিতর্ক উস্কে দিলেন পারভেজ মুশারফ। অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর থেকে ছুরিয়ত নেতারা ইসলামাবাদে এসে পৌঁছানোর দিনই। পাক প্রেসিডেন্টের কথায়, “এই সফরের রাজনৈতিক গুরুত্ব অপরিসীম। ছুরিয়ত নেতারা ভারতের পাসপোর্ট এবং পাকিস্তানের দেওয়া ভিসা নিয়ে আসেননি। ফলে ভারত-অধিকৃত কাশ্মীর যে একটি বিতর্কিত ভূখণ্ড, এই সফর কার্যত তাকেই স্বীকৃতি দিল। এই সফর বোঝাল যে, সমস্যা সমাধানের লক্ষ্যে দু’দেশই যথেষ্ট নমনীয়।”

মুশারফের এই দাবি অবশ্য নস্যাৎ করে দিয়েছে ভারতীয় বিদেশ মন্ত্রক। তাদের দাবি, “চার দিন আগেই আমরা বলেছিলাম, ছুরিয়ত নেতাদের অনেকেই পাসপোর্টের জন্য আবেদন করেছেন এবং তাঁদের পাসপোর্ট দেওয়ার প্রক্রিয়া শুরু হয়েছে। তাঁরা পাসপোর্ট ছাড়াই পাকিস্তান গিয়েছেন, এ রকম তথ্য আমাদের কাছে নেই।”

মুজফফরাবাদ থেকে হেলিকপ্টারে ইসলামাবাদে পৌঁছলেও মিরওয়াইজ ওমর ফারুক-সহ কাশ্মীরের বিচ্ছিন্নতাবাদী সংগঠনগুলির নেতাদের সঙ্গে আজ দেখা হয়নি মুশারফের। তিনি আজই তিন দিনের সফরে দুবাই ও কাতার গিয়েছেন। সেই সফরে রওনা হওয়ার আগে চাকলালা বিমান ঘাঁটিতে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে ওই মন্তব্য করেন মুশারফ। মঙ্গলবার মিরওয়াইজদের সঙ্গে দেখা করবেন তিনি। ছুরিয়ত নেতাদের ইসলামাবাদে স্বাগত জানান পাক বিদেশ প্রতিমন্ত্রী খুসরু বখতিয়ার এবং পাক কাশ্মীর কমিটির চেয়ারম্যান হামিদ নাসির চাট্টা।

ইসলামাবাদে নেমেই মিরওয়াইজ বলেন, এই সফর কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে কাশ্মীরিদের স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার প্রাথমিক পদক্ষেপ। স্বাধীনতার যুদ্ধে

কাশ্মীরিদের আত্মত্যাগের ফলেই এই লক্ষ্যে পৌঁছানো গিয়েছে বলে দাবি করে তিনি বলেন, “আমরা এখানে এসেছি সরকারের সঙ্গে আলোচনা করতে এবং তাদের অবস্থান জানতে। দু’দেশের আলোচনায় যে ভাবে পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট কাশ্মীরিদের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করার প্রয়াস নিয়েছেন, তার প্রতি পূর্ণ সমর্থন রয়েছে ছুরিয়তের।” অন্য দিকে, ছুরিয়ত নেতা বিলাল লোন বলেন, “শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া কোন পথে এগোলে সব চেয়ে ভাল হবে তা স্থির করতে জঙ্গি সংগঠনগুলির সঙ্গে আলোচনা করা উচিত দু’দেশের সরকারের।” ৮০-র দশকে উপত্যকায় সন্ত্রাস মাথাচাড়া দেওয়ার পরে পাকিস্তানে আশ্রয় নেওয়া জঙ্গি নেতাদের ফেরার ব্যবস্থা করার দাবিও করেছেন তিনি।

জে কে এল এফ নেতা সাবির শাহ বলেছেন, “ভারত ও পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে কাশ্মীরিদের যুক্ত করাই এই সফরের একমাত্র উদ্দেশ্য।” মিরওয়াইজের মতে, কাশ্মীরিদের অংশগ্রহণ ছাড়া শুধু আস্থাবর্ধক পদক্ষেপের মধ্যে দিয়ে সমস্যার সমাধান সম্ভব নয়। তিনি বলেন, “পাকিস্তান বরাবরই কাশ্মীরের প্রতি তাদের নীতিগত ও কূটনৈতিক সমর্থন জানিয়েছে। কাশ্মীরিরা সে কারণে পাকিস্তানের প্রতি কৃতজ্ঞ।”

সাংবাদিকদের প্রশ্নের জবাবে মিরওয়াইজ বলেন, “কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান নিয়ে সূত্র একটা রয়েছে, কিন্তু তা এখন বলা যাবে না।” এই মন্তব্য ঘিরে জল্পনা হচ্ছে পাকিস্তানে। ছুরিয়ত নেতারা ৭ তারিখ পর্যন্ত ইসলামাবাদে থাকবেন। তার পরে যাবেন করাচি ও লাহোর। পক্ষ কালের সফরে মুশারফ ছাড়াও প্রধানমন্ত্রী শওকত আজিজ, বিদেশমন্ত্রী খুরশিদ কাসুরি ও পাক কাশ্মীর কমিটির সঙ্গে তাঁদের বৈঠকের সম্ভাবনা আছে। — পি টি আই, রয়টার্স

JUN 2005

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ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

'KASHMIR'S DISPUTED STATUS RECOGNISED'

9-8-78K SFJ

Pervez picks peace price

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Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, June 4. — Giving a twist to India's gesture in allowing Kashmiri separatist leaders to travel to Pakistan and his pat for the move, President Pervez Musharraf today said it was a recognition of the "disputed status" of Jammu and Kashmir by both the countries.

Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and eight other separatist leaders from the Kashmir Valley, including JKLF leader Yasin Malik and a representative of another Kashmiri leader, Shabbir Shah, were flown from Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) into the Pakistani capital by helicopters around the time the Pakistani President was leaving on a three-day visit to the UAE and Qatar. He will, however, meet the leaders on his return here.

The visit of the separatist leaders had "great political significance because they have not come on Indian passports and visas issued by Pakistan," the General was quoted as saying by the state-run APP news agency at Chaklala airbase before his departure.

So, he said: "It is the recognition of the disputed status of India-held Kashmir by both the countries." India earlier expressed reservations about the travel by the separatist leaders beyond PoK on spe-

More CBMs, says Natwar

HONG KONG, June 4. — Stating that a number of confidence-building measures were in the pipeline to propel the peace process with Pakistan, India today nevertheless made it clear that much would depend on Islamabad honouring its commitment to stopping cross-border terrorism through "concrete actions". "We sincerely desire to find mutually acceptable solutions to all outstanding issues with Pakistan by carrying forward the current composite dialogue process and by making our quest for abiding peace irreversible," India's visiting external affairs minister, Mr Natwar Singh, said while addressing prominent members of the Indian community here. **PTI**

cial permits but later issued them passports to facilitate it.

New Delhi, however, made it clear that the onus for the travel by them beyond PoK would be on Pakistan.

Describing the visit as "a very important confidence-building measure," Gen. Musharraf said: "This is a great leap forward in understanding flexibility being shown by the both sides." This should now lead to a discussion in the resolution of the Kashmir issue, he said. The option is open — we hope that it leads on to that."

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THE STATESMAN

Hurriyat's soundbites

The Hurriyat visit conveys India's serious search for ways to end violence in Kashmir

THERE are some foreign policy experts in India who are greatly disturbed by the visit that the moderate faction of the Hurriyat is currently paying to Pakistan. They see it as evidence of the Centre's lack of a coherent Kashmir policy. They are right when they argue that New Delhi should have been more pro-active in engaging with the Hurriyat and maintaining a continuity with the dialogue process that the NDA government had initiated with one faction of the Hurriyat Conference.

Having said that, we also need to view the current peregrinations of the Hurriyat team in perspective. First, it follows Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's April visit to this country in which he conceded for the first time the possibility of borders in Kashmir becoming irrelevant. He followed this up with the significant observation that the answer to the Kashmir problem does not lie in a religious solution. Given the fact that the General's observations were bound to ruffle the feathers of the hard-liners in Pakistan, they represented significant concessions. By allowing the Hurriyat to visit Pakistan, In-

dia has just given the Pakistan establishment some leeway in effecting an important change of course. There is also a striking symbolism in the visit. Many of these men who are currently visiting Pakistan and speaking about putting an end to violence and wanting to be involved in the peace process, were the very ones that the Pakistan Army had used to stoke the fires of insurgency in J&K in the lost decade of the nineties. Today, their very words are testimony to the changed ambience in J&K, a state that has seen a free and fair election and a significant reduction in the blood-letting.

Of course visits of this kind are always a gamble, and of course there will be abrasive moments that will no doubt rankle. But on balance this visit does not compromise New Delhi's position in any significant way. Even the little flurry over proper travel documentation has been straightened out without loss of face. Significantly, leaders like Abdul Ghani Bhat have also indicated in Muzaffarabad that their current programme will be followed by talks with New Delhi. The Centre must take it from there.

"LoC as border is no solution"

Consider a role for Kashmiris in India-Pakistan talks: PoK President

B. Muralidhar Reddy

MUZAFFARABAD: The Line of Control is not the solution to the Kashmir "dispute," says Pakistan-occupied Kashmir President Sardar Muhammad Anwar Khan. Speaking at a dinner he hosted in honour of the visiting Hurriyat delegation here at midnight on Thursday night, he said making the LoC a point of dispute would not resolve the Kashmir issue.

"The peace process is moving forward because of the sacrifices made by thousands of Kashmiris"

"Kashmiris must be taken along in the process of talks between India and Pakistan. Indians should be forced to accept Kashmiris as part of the dispute," Mr. Khan said. He paid tributes to the "sacrifices" made by thousands of Kashmiris and said the peace process was moving forward because of them.

'Historic visit'

Mr. Khan regretted that the United Nations "failed" to implement its resolutions on the lingering dispute. He termed the Hurriyat visit "historic." It was also "historic" that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders were visiting Islamabad without visa.

Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front chief Yasin Malik said Kashmiris had "invested" in their cause, making thousands of



WARM WELCOME: Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Prime Minister Sardar Sikandar Hayat Khan (centre), greets leader of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference delegation Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (right) during a meeting the team had with the Legislative Assembly members in Muzaffarabad on Friday. The former president of the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Sardar Abdul Qayyum, looks on. - PHOTO: REUTERS

"sacrifices." India and Pakistan must consider a role for Kashmiris in their talks to resolve the dispute according to their wishes.

Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz

Umar Farooq said the Kashmir "dispute" would be resolved when India, Pakistan and Kashmiris moved forward together. The purpose of the visit was to talk to the leaders of Kashmir

and Pakistan. "We are ready to talk on any proposal for the resolution of the dispute. And our case is so strong that we can put it before the world in an emphatic way." PoK Prime Minister

Sardar Sikandar Hayat said the atmosphere raised hopes that the Kashmir issue would be resolved during the tenure of the present governments in India and Pakistan.

We will stay the course, say Hurriyat leaders

Message to PoK: stop romanticising Kashmiris' struggle

B. Muralidhar Reddy

MUZAFFARABAD: The visiting All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders urged the leaders of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan to shed the notions of "romanticism" associated with the "struggle" of the Kashmiris and prepare for a new role in the "changed environment."

This was on the eve of their departure to Islamabad for talks with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

A meeting on Friday with members of the PoK Assembly and Council, on the premises of the PoK Parliament, provided an opportunity to the Hurriyat delegation to ventilate its grievances against the leadership of PoK and Pakistan.

Syed Ali Shah Geelani, leader of the hard-line Hurriyat faction, was apparently the target of criticism by the visitors for his "negative approach" to the India-Pakistan peace process and efforts for resolution of the Kashmir issue.

The clear message to him from the moderate leaders was that they were determined to stay on course and work for the goal of becoming relevant in the evolving scenario.

It all started with the lament by Bilal Ghani Lone of the People's Conference on the plight of "refugees," those who crossed the Line of Control either to join the militants or for other reasons, in PoK. He made a passionate plea to the PoK leaders to facilitate the return of the refugees back home.

Mr. Lone said the very fact that the struggle of Kashmiris had not yielded the desired results was a reflection of the "mistakes" made by the leaders. "Time has come for a new thinking and strategy to realise the

Hurriyat speak

- Time has come for a new thinking and strategy to realise the dreams of Kashmiris
- Jihad waged with tongue is more powerful than the one waged with the sword
- Leaders of PoK have to take the maximum blame for the deaths of 80,000 Kashmiris

dreams of Kashmiris," he observed.

Picking up the theme, Allama Abbas Ansari said that a jihad (holy war) waged with tongue was more powerful than the one waged with the sword. He said the Holy Quran taught Muslims to work towards the resolution of issues peacefully and side with those who fought peacefully than through arms.

Yasin Malik prefaced his speech with the observation that he had some "unpleasant" views to convey to the gathering and urged them to shed the culture of hypocrisy for the sake of power and learn to speak the truth. "Both in India and Pakistan leaders of Kashmir are being told to be content with 2,400 watt arlight attention from television studios. Let us strive to be leaders of people and not media-made leaders," he said.

He stunned the audience with his observation that the leaders of PoK had to take the maximum blame for the deaths of 80,000 Kashmiris. Bright and young Kashmiris were sucked into militancy thanks to roman-

tisation of the "freedom struggle." Mr. Malik said: "You call yourself elected representatives of Kashmir. Tell me if any of you have been taken into confidence on the India-Pakistan peace process and the efforts for resolution of Kashmir."

Without referring to anyone, Abdul Ghani Bhat quoted famous poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz saying that "let crows eat flesh of my body bit by bit with the exception of my eyes. I could at least see my beloved." He said there were critical gaps in the collective political thinking of Kashmiris and it needed to be addressed immediately if they had to march towards their goal.

He appealed to the audience to give the visitors a patient hearing on the plea that they were victims. Mr. Bhatt said the delegation had come with some concrete ideas to improve the situation of Kashmiris and would like to hear some major Confidence Building Measures from the Pakistan side before they left Pakistan. "We would be leaving with a heavy heart if we do not hear some major initiatives to provide comfort to the Kashmiris," he said.

The delegation leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq in his remarks said that the need of the hour was to clearly define the goal.

"We can always alter the strategy as long as there is clarity on the goal. Some people think it is not right to change the strategy. I do not agree with them," he said in what is considered a clear reference to hardliners like Mr. Geelani.

Mr. Farooq said the Hurriyat was determined to make itself "relevant" in the India and Pakistan peace process and work towards the objective of becoming part of the process.

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THE HINDU

Hurriyat leaders pledge to work as bridge between India, Pakistan

Journey to PoK a "first step" towards resolution of the Kashmir issue

Shujaat Bukhari

KAMAN POST (LOC): A nine-member delegation of separatist leaders on Thursday boarded the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus (Karvan-e-Aman) and began its historic visit to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan with a pledge to work as a bridge between India and Pakistan to resolve the long-standing Kashmir problem.

Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) chief Shabir Shah could not join the group as he was denied permission for having mentioned his nationality as "Kashmiri" in the application form for LoC permit and passport. His trusted lieutenant, Mohammad Abdullah Taari, replaced him.

Even as the bus began its fourth trip carrying 23 passengers, the leaders of the moderate Hurriyat Conference left in their cars in a procession up to Salamabad. The journey, termed by Hurriyat leaders a "first step" towards the resolution of the Kashmir issue, started from Rajouri Kadal, ancestral home of Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. He led a few thousand people and reached the Hurriyat Conference headquarters at Rajbagh to join colleagues Moulvi Abbas Ansari, Abdul Gani Bhat, Fazl Haque Qureshi and Bilal Gani Lone.

The Mirwaiz and other leaders, who were waving to the crowd, were followed by their supporters amidst chanting of slogans "We want freedom; Hurriyat leaders go ahead, we are with you."

The journey up to Uri, last

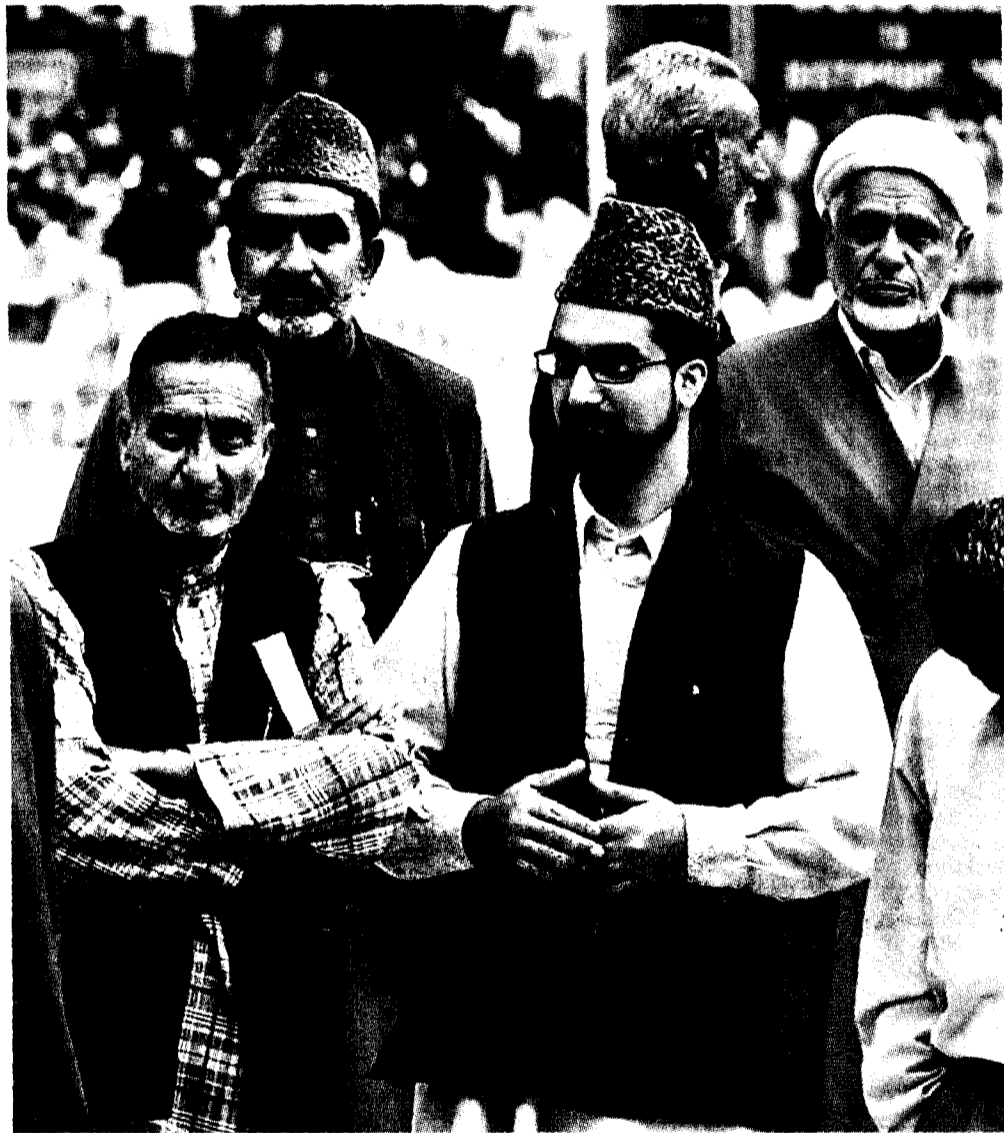
major town on this side of the Line of Control was smooth, but the crowd turned violent as authorities did not allow them to accompany their leaders up to the Kaman Post.

Around 5.30 p.m. all the leaders crossed Aman Setu (Peace Bridge). The leaders, followed by a battery of mediapersons, were seen off by Baramulla Deputy Commissioner Rohit Kansal and SSP Munir Khan. Chowdary Liaqat Hussain, Deputy Commissioner, Muzaffarabad, was the first to greet them from the other side.

"It is a sad feeling as I have crossed this LoC eight times with my friends who are no more in this world" said JKLF chief Yasin Malik, who reached the Kaman Post without fanfare.

Before leaving for Muzaffarabad, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said the Hurriyat was going with an open mind to involve all those associated with the Kashmir issue to find an amicable solution. "Our struggle has come from the battlefield to the negotiating table so we will try to evolve a consensus and our endeavour will be to have a joint effort between the leaderships of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir to achieve our goal" he said, adding "Kashmiris have to show a vision, a sign of maturity."

The Mirwaiz said the "freedom struggle" had entered a crucial phase and "we are happy that the Kashmiris have been recognised as a party to the dispute as we are being allowed to hold separate talks with Pakistan ... I hope India will have further realisation of the situation and will continue the peace process with the same zeal."



THE FIRST STEP: Leaders of the moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq (second from right) at the Kaman Bridge on Thursday, just before they crossed the Line of Control on their way to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. PHOTO: AFP

Geelani faction rejects Pakistan's invitation

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Separatist leaders will not board the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on June 2

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: The hard-line faction of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, led by Syed Ali Geelani, on Sunday rejected the Pakistan Government's invitation to visit "Azad Kashmir." It decided not to board the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on June 2.

After a six-hour meeting of the Hurriyat general council, Mr. Geelani told presspersons: "We are thankful to the Pakistan Government for extending the invitation to us but we do not feel that our visit will serve any purpose."

Reiterating his stand that the Centre was denying Kashmiris "their right to self-determination," he said: "Pakistan is supporting our stand on the right to self-determination. So, with which demand would we be going to meet them?"

On the other hand, "it is India which has been denying us the right. So, I do not think our visit to Pakistan is warranted at this stage."

Dissenting voices

Mr. Geelani admitted that there were voices of dissent at the meeting. "But it was a majority decision and they [dissenters] agreed to abide by this decision."

Out of the 17 constituents, four are reported to have shown keenness to visit Pakistan.

"I have a desire to visit Pakistan but I would like to visit as a free Kashmiri and not as a slave"

Asked about this, he said: "I have a desire to visit Pakistan but I would like to visit as a free Kashmiri and not as a slave."

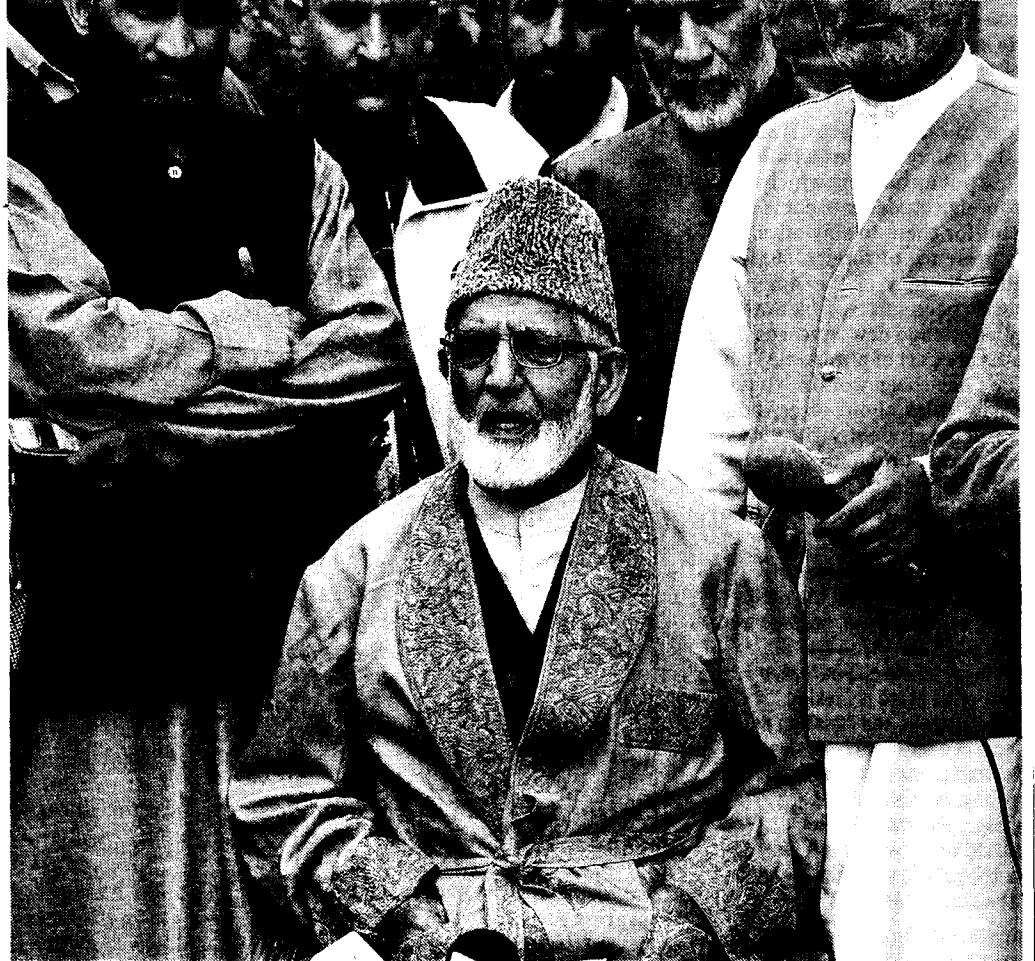
Tripartite talks

Asked about other separatist leaders, including those from the moderate faction, taking up the journey, Mr. Geelani said: "If they return with a decree for *Azadi* [freedom], I will be the first person to garland them. But look at the attitude of New Delhi. They are not allowing them to move beyond 'Azad Kashmir.' The Kashmir issue needs to be resolved through tripartite talks with Kashmiris, the basic party to the dispute."

'Restore principled stand'

Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf must restore Islamabad's "principled stand" on Kashmir.

"I told him during my recent meeting and I repeat: 'you have shown flexibility, but India has not. So it is better to go back on Pakistan's policy on Kashmir and support our just and genuine cause,'" he said.



NO TO INVITE: Syed Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of All Parties Hurriyat Conference, speaks to presspersons in Srinagar on Sunday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

MAY 2005

THE HINDU

ISLAMABAD READIES FOR ADVANI VISIT

Hurriyat hardliners reject Pak invitation

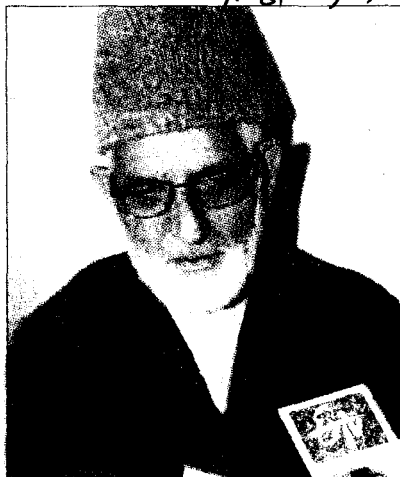
SNS & PTI

SRINAGAR/ISLAMABAD, May 29. — The hardline faction of the All Party Hurriyat Conference, led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, today turned down Pakistan's invitation to visit that country and part of Kashmir under its control. The Hurriyat hardliners said the decision was taken to express resentment against Islamabad for "deviating" from its principled stand on Kashmir.

While thanking President Pervez Musharraf for his invitation, Syed Geelani said his faction would not board the 2 June bus to Muzaffarabad.

At the end of a day-long meeting of Majlis-e-Shoora (advisory council) of the amalgam, the decision was taken by a majority vote with 11 in favour and five against it. The moderate faction of the Hurriyat has already decided to visit Pakistan.

Syed Geelani said the "flexibility" shown by Gen. Musharraf "has not moved India an inch from its rigid stand on Kashmir." "They (India) still have a Parliament resolution claiming Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India."



Syed Ali Shah Geelani at a press conference in Srinagar on Sunday. — PTI

Meanwhile, Pakistan was getting ready to roll out the red carpet for Mr LK Advani. This will be Mr Advani's second visit after 1979.

He is scheduled to visit Lahore, his hometown Hyderabad and Karachi during his week-long stay in Pakistan. During his two-day stay in Islamabad, Mr Advani will hold talks with Gen. Musharraf, Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz and other Pakistani leaders.

Another report on page 4

Difficulties exist, says Manmohan

SHIMLA, May 29. — Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today asserted that India was committed to making "full and sincere" efforts to resolve all bilateral problems with Pakistan through talks. "It appears to me that the atmosphere is okay. But there are many difficulties," he said expressing satisfaction with his talks with General Pervez Musharraf.

Observing that relations between the two countries were "improving", he said: "Our endeavour will be to resolve all problems through dialogues. We are trying that the confidence-building measures become stronger and people-to-people contact increases."

Asked about the possibility of increasing the frequency of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Dr Singh said: "Nothing can be ruled out." About Siachen, Dr Singh, without being specific about withdrawal of the Army, said defence secretaries of the two countries had already held talks in Islamabad on the issue.

Dr Singh said he would meet defence secretary Mr Ajai Vikram Singh on his return. Mr Singh earlier met his Pakistani counterpart Lt-Gen (Retd) Tariq Wasim Ghazi. — SNS

30 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Crafty confusion

To complicate the I&K issue

No shortage of ideas afflicts Pervez Musharraf. He talks of the need for an "out of the box" solution to the problem of Kashmir but interprets the term to equate with a jack-in-the-box approach, popping a new theory almost every time he has a media audience. International guarantees being the latest. There is, alas, precious little consistency to the strategy he appears to pronounce, and it is doubtful if a few months down the road he would advocate a similar line. At times he seems terribly conciliatory, sensitive to certain Indian concerns, soon thereafter he waves the equivalent of a red rag to the bull. Those who give him the benefit of the doubt think he is displaying an eagerness over the problem so that both nations can devote attention and finance to development. But there is reason to suspect a purpose to his cause. Floating balloons does have a military connotation too: not the defensive ones earlier used to deflect what the bombers delivered, but a contemporary eyes-in-the-sky. Every far-fetched idea Musharraf tries to sell is aimed at trying to confuse, trying to see how far he can push India, and at the same time keeping himself safe in western eyes. He may not have a "lean and hungry look", but his man is dangerous.

Fortunately there are few in any section of South Block who are overly impressed by his overtures. While seeking to build on the goodwill generated by people-to-people contact, which neither government could have suppressed indefinitely, New Delhi must be quick and diligent to insist that Islamabad follows up every Musharraf proposal with a documented formulation. Chances are that Pakistan's foreign office, competently staffed though it is, will be hard pressed to convert the General's strategic thinking into anything like a clearly-articulated doctrine, let alone a battle plan. Little credence should be given to what is, deliberately and conveniently, spoken through the media and any serious discussion or negotiation must be based only, and entirely, on what is officially put on the table. The ex-commando's scope for manoeuvre is infinite.

A number of self-styled strategic thinkers in the country have allowed themselves to be carried away by Musharraf's sweet talk and have immunised themselves to the sting he also serves up. It has become fashionable (profitable?) to talk of "seizing opportunities" and to brand those who call for caution "hard liners", or worse. The bottom line is neither hard nor soft, it is and must be the nation's best interests. This is not to suggest that India breakoff the "engagement" with Pakistan, just to be wary of any marriage proposal from Musharraf.

28 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

India sets limits on Hurriyat ride

Pak Kashmir is as far as they can go

HTC & Agencies
New Delhi, May 26

INDIA ON Thursday said Hurriyat leaders intending to avail the bus service, next month, linking the divided parts of Kashmir could only travel to Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

"There is an explicit understanding between India and Pakistan that those travelling on board the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus will be allowed to visit only the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir," external affairs ministry spokesman Navtej Sarna told reporters.

A group of leaders of the moderate faction of Jammu and Kashmir's All Party Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had on Wednesday announced their decision to travel to Pakistan-administered Kashmir and Pakistan on the bus service.

The bus was open to all citizens of Jammu and Kashmir but travel by those aboard the bus to any location other than the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir would be contrary to the understanding between the two countries, Sarna said. The government would consider all applications by separatist Hurriyat leaders to travel on the Kashmir bus according to the rules.

"The government will consider all applications by individuals from the Hurriyat Conference to travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus as per the established procedures," Sarna said.

June 2 passengers

In Srinagar, the Hurriyat Conference announced a five-member delegation that will travel to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) by the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on June 2.



Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

ABOARD THE BUS

Mirwaiz Farooq, Abdul Ghani Bhat, Maulana Abbas Ansari, Bilal Lone & Fazal Haq Quereshi

The team includes Mirwaiz, Umer Farooq, Prof Abdul Ghani Bhat, Maulana Abbas Ansari, Bilal Lone and Fazal Haq Querishi. Hurriyat Conference had on Wednesday announced its decision to accept the Pakistani invitation to visit that country and had authorised the Mirwaiz to name the delegation. However, members of the moderate faction and the militant leader Syed Salahuddin, has said that their visit is fairly useless if the hardline faction of the Hurriyat, led by Syed Ali Shah, isn't coming along. The Hurriyat will be reportedly trying to convince militants to order a ceasefire. But Salahuddin, who is the head of the United Jihad Council, has said in

Rawalpindi that a united team of Kashmiri leaders should travel to Pakistan.

Earlier, there was a rush for all separatist leaders to take the bus even though the bus could accommodate only 30 persons. Anyone who is anyone in the separatist spectrum of Kashmir was desperate to board the bus to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, thinking it as a rare opportunity to be on the other side of Kashmir and hold talks with the leaders of Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabir Shah wanted to carry a delegation of 15 with him. "It should not be a show of individuals, but of all the people who want to take part in the process of building bridges and finding a solution," he told *Hindustan Times*.

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front leader Mohammad Yasin Malik declared that he would take 17 members on the bus. If the wishes of all these separatist leaders are to be fulfilled then more seats are needed to accommodate all these leaders. Hurriyat leaders can only go to Pakistani Kashmir.

20 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

বিবাদ চরমে, রাজ্যপালকে সরাতে দিল্লিতে মুফতির দরবার

জয়ন্ত ঘোষাল • নয়াদিল্লি

২৪ মে: পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে ভারতের শান্তি প্রক্রিয়া যখন চলছে, ঠিক সেই সময়ে কাশ্মীরের রাজ্যপাল জেনারেল এস কে সিন্হার সঙ্গে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদের বিবাদ চরমে উঠেছে। অবস্থা এমনই যে মুফতি রাজ্যপালকে সরানোর জন্য দরবার করতে দিল্লিতে এসেছেন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর সঙ্গে তাঁর কথা হয়েছে। কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিলের সঙ্গেও দেখা করবেন তিনি।

সন্ত্রাসবাদ প্রক্ষে বিপরীত মেরুতে থাকা এই দুই ব্যক্তিত্বের বিবাদের সর্বশেষ কারণ অমরনাথ যাত্রার মেয়াদ। রাজ্যপাল এই যাত্রা দু'মাস ধরে চালাতে চান বলে জনসমক্ষে ঘোষণাও করেছেন। কিন্তু মুখ্যমন্ত্রী এ প্রস্তাবের বিরোধী। তিনি এক মাসের বেশি সময় দিতে রাজি নন।

সরকার গঠনের পর থেকেই রাজ্যপালের সঙ্গে মুখ্যমন্ত্রীর বিবাদ চলছে। সন্ত্রাসবাদ ও জঙ্গি দমন প্রক্ষে কী মনোভাব নেওয়া হবে, তা নিয়ে দু'জনের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির মৌলিক ফারাক আছে। মুফতি নিজে সন্ত্রাস দমনে

কঠোর মনোভাব না নিয়ে জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে সংঘর্ষ-বিরতির পক্ষে। রাজ্যপাল আবার জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে সমঝোতার বিপক্ষে। কিন্তু এখন বিবাদ এমন চরমে পৌঁছেছে যে রাজ্য সরকার রাজ্যপাল সিন্হার বদলে নতুন কাউকে চাইছে। মুফতি বা তাঁর কন্যা মেহবুবা অবশ্য প্রকাশ্যে রাজ্যপাল বদলের কথা বলতে চাইছেন না। মেহবুবা আজ বলেন, “আমার বাবা খুব উদার মানুষ। তিনি শেষপর্যন্ত বোঝাপড়া করেই এগোতে চান। তবে রাজ্যপাল নিয়োগ ও বদলির ব্যাপারটি কেন্দ্রের বিচারাধীন বিষয়।”

লালকৃষ্ণ আডবাণী যখন কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী ছিলেন, তখন জেনারেল সিন্হাকে অসমের রাজ্যপাল করে পাঠান। কিন্তু অসমের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী তরুণ গগৈয়ের সঙ্গেও তাঁর বিবাদ হয়। প্রাক্তন সেনা প্রধান জঙ্গি দমনে ‘ডাঙা দিয়ে ঠাণ্ডা’ করার নীতিই নিতে চেয়েছেন সর্ব স্তরে। অসমের রাজ্যপাল থাকার সময়ে অনুপ্রবেশ নিয়ে তিনি এমন এক রিপোর্ট দেন যা সে সময়ে বিজেপির জাতীয় কর্মসমিতির বৈঠকে বিতরণ করা হয়েছিল। এর পর জেনারেল সিন্হাকে কাশ্মীরে পাঠানো হয়। সেখানেও

বিতর্ক তাঁর পিছু ছাড়েনি।

কাশ্মীরের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী অমরনাথ যাত্রাকে এক মাসের বেশি সময় ধরে করতে চান না। এই যাত্রা শুরু হওয়ার কথা জুলাই মাসে। কিন্তু রাজ্যপাল জুন মাস থেকেই যাত্রা শুরু করাতে চান। রাজ্য সরকারের বক্তব্য: অমরনাথ যাত্রার নিরাপত্তার জন্য এক মাসের প্রস্তুতিরও প্রয়োজন। কাজেই তা জুন মাস থেকে শুরু করা সম্ভব নয়। মুখ্যমন্ত্রী কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারকে বলেছেন, দীর্ঘদিন ধরে অমরনাথ যাত্রা চালালে নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থাও দীর্ঘদিন ধরে রাখতে হয়। সে ক্ষেত্রে সাধারণ মানুষের অনেক অসুবিধা হবে। এত দিন এই যাত্রা এক মাস ধরেই হয়েছে। গত বছর থেকে রাজ্যপাল এ ব্যাপারে বিতর্ক সৃষ্টির চেষ্টা করছেন।

রাজ্যপাল জেনারেল সিন্হার ‘অতি সক্রিয়’ ভূমিকা নিয়েও রাজ্য সরকার প্রবল তুলেছে। মুফতির অভিযোগ, রাজ্যপাল বিভিন্ন গ্রামে গিয়ে স্থানীয় পর্যদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে স্বাধীন ভাবে বেশ কিছু প্রশাসনিক নির্দেশ দিচ্ছেন। রাজ্য সরকার মনে করে এটি তাঁর সাংবিধানিক এক্তিয়ারের মধো পড়ে না।

25 MAY 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

India cleared Hurriyat visit: Pervez

NILOVA Roy Chaudhury
New Delhi, May 24

CALLING IT a "breakthrough" that "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has allowed them to travel to Pakistan", Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf has called the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) as "the true representatives of the Kashmiris".

For a resolution to the Kashmir problem, Musharraf said in an interview to the Lahore-based *Daily Times* on Tuesday, "I feel the true representatives of Kashmiris is the Hurriyat. The Kashmiris are the Hurriyat and there are Pakistan and India."

His statement appears less flexible than his statement last November that he had no problems with the "Hurriyat plus" formulation, with parties like the National Conference and the People's Democratic Party (PDP)

also joining the talks as representatives of Kashmir.

In New Delhi, officials confirmed that India has no problem with the Pakistani invitation to Hurriyat leaders to travel to Pakistan.

But, if people like Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and others wish to travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on June 2, as Islamabad has indicated, there is a certain procedure that needs to be followed.

"First, they have to fill the form and apply," an official said. After India okays the list, it would be handed over to Pakistan for clearance.

If the APHC leaders wish to travel by air, they would face the same passport and visa formalities all Indians face, officials said. New Delhi's contention is that an elected, representative government exists in Jammu and Kashmir.

But it is willing to speak to All Parties Hurriyat Conference representatives to ascertain their point of view on how to carry forward the dialogue.

Musharraf, in his interview on the eve of defence secretary-level talks between India and Pakistan on the issue of demilitarisation of Siachen, said, "intentions are very good on both sides," to resolve "unnecessary irritants" like the Siachen and Sir Creek issues.

But, calling certain Indian actions on the Baglihar dam as "mala fide", Musharraf said, "It is surprising that India dragged its feet so long on bilateral discussions that it pushed Pakistan to demand a neutral expert to adjudicate the issue."

The Swiss engineer, Raymond Lafitte, will now adjudicate the matter. But India will not stop construction work at the site on the Chenab river.

Indian and Pakistani defence secretaries are scheduled to meet in Islamabad on May 25 and 26 to carry forward the talks on demilitarisation of the Siachen glacier. India wants the actual ground positions to be demarcated before any withdrawal of troops.



"The true representative of Kashmiris is the All Parties Hurriyat Conference"

—Pervez Musharraf

"I opposed the bus service. In these circumstances how can I go in it?"



—SAS Geelani



"This is how an invitation should be extended. We've made up our mind to go"

—Mirwaiz Umer Farooq

Kashmiris cannot be ignored: Sajjad Lone

“Sheikh Abdullah entered into an agreement with Delhi in 1975. Did that work?”

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: People's Conference Chairman Sajjad Gani Lone on Sunday said only a solution endorsed by the people of Jammu and Kashmir would be durable and permanent.

He called upon New Delhi and Islamabad not to thrust leaders on “Kashmiri nation.”

It would only prove counter-productive.

Mr. Lone, who was addressing a public meeting organised to commemorate the third death anniversary of party founder and his father Abdul Gani Lone, said Kashmiris should be allowed to “choose their representatives” for holding talks with both India and Pakistan.

“Nobody can claim to be the sole representative of the people as there are many leaders and parties,” he said.

The Government should involve the entire gamut of leadership representing different sections.

“Great leaders”

Both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Gen. Pervez Musharraf were great leaders who have been going ahead with the peace process amid difficulties.

“But I want to tell them that the final destination of this process is the solution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the wishes of people,” he said.

“You cannot keep the Kashmiris away from a solution process. They are dying; they are bearing everything. Why are you trying to humiliate them in this [peace] process too,” he asked. “Sheikh Abdullah was a towering leader. He also entered into



‘INVOLVE US’: Supporters greet Peoples' Conference leader Sajjad Lone as he arrives to take part in a rally held to commemorate the death anniversary of his father Abdul Gani Lone, in Srinagar on Sunday. - PHOTO: AFP

an agreement with Delhi in 1975. Did that work,” he asked.

Attacking Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, head of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, Mr. Lone said “those people [Hurriyat leaders] are making

mockery of talks.”

Without naming the Mirwaiz, he said: “there are over one lakh mohallas [localities] in Kashmir. If one [referring to Mirwaiz] wields influence in four, does he represent Kashmir?” Charging

the Mirwaiz faction with bailing out New Delhi, he said: “they are creating confusion which suits New Delhi.”

Paying tributes to his father, who was gunned down three years ago during a rally in Srina-

gar, Mr. Lone said: “what he said five years back, that is being pursued by the leaders of India and Pakistan today.”

But since he was a Kashmiri he could not say it and was silenced forever.

24 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Mufti, Hurriyat welcome Pervez peace proposal

SNS & PTI

JAMMU, May 21. The Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today welcomed Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf's detailed blue print to resolve the Kashmir dispute. The moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference has also endorsed Gen. Musharraf's latest suggestion to solve the Kashmir issue saying the ball was now in Delhi's court.

While Mufti said Gen. Musharraf's suggestion of autonomy was a step in the right direction and would benefit the people on both sides of the LoC, Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said Gen. Musharraf has adopted a realistic approach and time had now come when Delhi should respond positively to Pakistan's suggestions.

Mirwaiz also suggested that Pakistan and India fix a time-frame for the settlement of the Kashmir issue. He was addressing a public meeting at the Idgah ground in Srinagar which was organised to pay tributes to senior separatist leaders Mirwaiz Mohammed Farooq and Abdul Gani Lone on their death anniversaries. Both leaders were killed by militants.

Mirwaiz said: "We have been invited by the government of Pakistan occupied Kashmir over telephone for a visit." A formal invitation

would also follow very soon, he added.

"The Pakistan President has always been far-sighted and his statement carries weight. Now that he has made his proposals public, the Centre should shun rigidity, so that the Kashmir issue is resolved for lasting peace and prosperity in the sub-continent," he said.

However, leader of the hardline Hurriyat faction, Sayeed Ali Shah Geelani, rejected the proposals outright, saying "maximum self-governance is not a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue" and no solution that is not in accordance with the wishes of the people of Jammu and Kashmir would be acceptable.

Gen. Musharraf had yesterday proposed to make the borders of Kashmir irrelevant and suggested the demilitarisation of Kashmir.

Ex-MLA arrested

JAMMU, May 21. — Senior National Conference leader and former MLA Gul Rafiqi was arrested yesterday for taking a militant leader in his vehicle to Attari border in Punjab and facilitating his escape to Pakistan. Rafiqi was taken into custody from his house in Anantnag.

Earlier, a series of raids were conducted by police in Srinagar, Anantnag and Jammu to nab him. Police presented Rafiqi in a court in Anantnag today. The judge sent him to eight days' police remand.

Kashmir police claimed that Rafiqi gave lift to a most wanted Hizbul Mujahideen divisional commander, Mohammad Amin Baba alias Aabid, from Bijbehara to Attari. Baba had obtained a passport on a fake name and address and crossed the border. SNS



Women look on as children wave flags in support of the Hurriyat in Srinagar on Saturday. AFP

PPP slams Musharraf

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD, May 21. — Accusing President Pervez Musharraf of making "unilateral suggestions" about resolution of the Kashmir issue, former Pakistan Premier Mrs Benazir Bhutto-led Pakistan People's Party has charged that Gen. Musharraf was "offering concessions" to India without taking into consideration the opinion of Kashmiris or the elected Parliament.

Flaying Gen. Musharraf for his remarks at the conference of South Asian parliamentarians last night that solution to the Kashmir issue cannot be on religious basis due to Indian sensitivity towards its secular credentials, the PPP spokesman Senator Faratullah Babar said: "We believe that such a unilateral announcement will not advance the cause of finding a solution to

'Ready for ceasefire in J&K'

JAMMU, May 21. — Union home secretary Mr VK Duggal today said the Centre wanted total peace in Jammu and Kashmir and it was ready to take any step including a ceasefire to achieve it. "Ceasefire is one of the objectives of the Central government for achieving total peace in the violence-plagued state," he said while addressing a news conference in Srinagar this afternoon after chairing a unified headquarter meeting. "We are ready for it," he said. SNS

Kashmir." In the recent past, proposals have been announced from Gen. Musharraf's side like the seven-point formula to resolve the Kashmir issue, for which India had not responded, he said. "He (Musharraf) is offering concessions without preparations," he added.

Two killed in attack on mourners

Narrow escape for leaders,
leave minutes before attack

Special Correspondent

SRINAGAR: Militants hurled a grenade and opened fire on Tuesday at a gathering of mourners on the outskirts of Srinagar, killing two persons and injuring nine others. A large number of people had gathered to mourn the killing of Abdul Gani Bhat, brother of the former 'divisional commander' of the Hizb-ul Mujahideen, Mohammad Akbar alias Zafar Fateh. Bhat was shot dead by militants on Saturday.

"The proceedings were in the final stage when the attack took place," witnesses said.

Could not act immediately

Superintendent of Police (South City) S.P. Pani told *The Hindu* that a grenade was lobbed first and it was followed by firing "but we could not immediately react as there were many personal security officers in civvies." He said two persons died on way to hospital and nine were injured. Locals said that 17 persons had been wounded.

Culprits escape

Police cordoned off the area and conducted house-to-house searches but failed to nab the culprits. No militant outfit has

claimed responsibility for Tuesday's attack or the killing of Bhat.

A number of separatist leaders, including National Front chairman Nayeem Khan, Agha Syed Hassan and Fazl Haq Qureshi, had a narrow escape as they left the venue minutes before the attack.

Among those injured were Zafar Fateh, who now heads a separatist political party, the Jammu and Kashmir Salvation Movement. Zafar was among the commanders who held talks with the Union Home Secretary during a brief ceasefire announced by the Hizb in June 2000.

People's Conference chairman Sajjad Lone and Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq condemned the attack.

Four beheaded

Suspected militants abducted six Gujjars from Dara village in Srinagar district and killed four of them in the forests of Dardkhore.

The throats of the four had been slit, a police spokesman said on Tuesday. A search was on for those missing, which included a woman. "We are trying to ascertain why they were targeted by the militants," the spokesman said.

18 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

WEDNESDAY, MAY 18, 2005

Behind the explosions

The recent terrorist attacks in Srinagar indicate that Kashmiri extremist groups have not lost their sting. The May 17 assault on those attending the funeral of a former militant was the latest in a series of terrorist strikes. While the grenade attack of May 12 was directed at the security services, it was unclear whether the car bomb explosion of May 11 had a specific target. The victims of the three explosions — five dead and 85 wounded — were civilians, many of them heart-rendingly school-children. Al-Nasreen, the militant outfit behind the car bomb, is one of the three organisations violently opposed to the new Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. With travel across the Line of Control smoothly under way, the hope was that the extremists would be forced to re-think their approach. After all, people on both sides of the LoC warmly welcomed the 'soft borders' initiative. The extremists were not expected to turn against the very people they claimed to be fighting for. Al-Nasreen now claims its attack was intended to show that the security situation in the Valley continues to be fragile. This is a self-damning assertion from a group that until recently claimed its objective was the termination of India's control over Kashmir. It is as if the extremists are now declaring that their only purpose is to demonstrate their continued relevance. The message they try to convey is that they retain the capability to disrupt the composite dialogue between India and Pakistan because they have the power to unleash terror on Kashmiris.

What do the extremists really hope to achieve politically through the display of their disruptive capabilities? Are they trying to emphasise they cannot be left out of the negotiating process? Or are they indicating they will not give up their violent ways even if there is progress in the negotiations? At this juncture, it appears the Kashmir issue can be kept under control without changing the territorial jurisdictions India and Pakistan exercise but with a modulated softening of the LoC. Those who fought for Kashmir's 'independence' or its accession to Pakistan will naturally find such a solution in progress hard to accept. The infrastructure supporting the extremist movement remains intact on either side of the LoC even though official Pakistan appears to have suspended its active backing of the extremist organisations. There is no reason to doubt the word of General Pervez Musharraf, who has several times reiterated his commitment to a negotiated settlement. In fact, the Pakistan President and his Ministers have tried, over the past few weeks, to make pro-Pakistan groups realise that they have to be realistic in their aspirations. Those striving for a peaceful solution will have to be resolute and patient in dealing with the young men who have pursued unattainable goals over the past several years. However, no tolerance should be shown to those who kill and wound innocent civilians or treat them as tools for the achievement of disruptive political ends.

18 MAY 2005

THE HINDU



FAIR POWER: Women demonstrate during the funeral procession of a woman and her daughter at Lal Chowk in Srinagar on Friday. The two were killed and 46 people, including several students, injured in a grenade explosion outside a school in the area on Thursday. — PTI

14 MAY 1990

THE STATESMAN



Injured children being rushed to hospital after a grenade attack by militants in the heart of Srinagar. Javeed Shah

Terror targets children in Srinagar

■ 2 women killed, 20 kids in hospital after grenade's hurled at school

MOZAMIL JALEEL
SRINAGAR, MAY 12

A LITTLE red shoe, wind-screen fragments, a tiny crater, three patches of blood and the wails of mothers.

A day after the uptown Jawaharnagar blast, terror struck at the heart of Srinagar today, when a suspected militant lobbed a grenade on the road outside a school gate near Lalchowk, injuring 50 and killing two unidentified women.

And when the screaming and wailing victims outside the Christian Missionary Tyndal Biscoe

school were being rushed to hospital, all adjectives for brutality fell woefully short.

In its place was just this list: Faisal Fayaz (3, Nursery), Insha Altaf (4, KG), Tazeen (3, Nursery), Insha Altaf (6, II Grade), Tazeem Mushtaq (4, KG), Taseem Yousuf (5, Ist Grade), his sister Tazkia Yousuf (15, Class 10), Abdul Manan (11, Class 7), Nighat Shafi (15, Class 10) and 11 others who were hit by splinters and survived—barely.

Other than the 20 children, a teacher Bilal Ahmad was wounded and so was the school's peon Mohammad Maqbool. Also on the list

of injured—some seriously—were a few parents and relatives, who had come to take their children home, and some passers-by and shoppers. The two unidentified women died later at the Medical Institute, Soura.

It was around 2.30 pm, and the road outside the school—metres away from Lalchowk, the city's business hub—was bustling with activity when the blast rocked the area.

"I had just stepped out of the gate (of the school) and was talking to a friend on the footpath. There was a blast. I fell down," said

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Terror targets children in heart of Srinagar

Nighat, a Class 10 student. "I tried to get up and saw blood on my hands. I was scared and started screaming. Everyone was screaming."

Even as the wounded were being shifted to hospital, the news had spread across the city. Within 15 minutes, a flood of anxious parents and relatives arrived at the school gate, stopping strangers, asking for their children.

"My son hasn't returned home," a mother wailed as she beat her chest in frustration. The traffic on the road was jammed and police was having a tough time controlling the mob.

A few miles away, the entrance to the Emergency unit of SMHS Hospital was choked with frantic relatives. "Did you see Salman's name? Salman Illiyas Pandit. He is my son, in Class 5," a woman pleaded with hospital staff. "He is a bit naughty. Is he okay?" she asked, her eyes filling up.

She had been told that her son was not among the 20 wounded students, but she was running from ward to ward to confirm for herself.

Tazkia Yousuf, sharing her hospital bed with younger brother Taseem, said, "Both of us were standing outside. I saw a Gypsy collide with a Scorpio and then something hit me. I ran

towards the gate (of the school). My legs were heavy and there was blood."

Tazkia said she missed her brother in the chaos. "Everyone was running and I somehow got into the compound (of the school). I realised that my brother was still outside so I ran out again and found him there. He had been hit, too." Splinters had pierced both her limbs and her white uniform was splattered with blood.

Taseem lay silently—a splinter had cut into his abdomen and injured his legs.

Outside the hospital door, police had prepared a hand-written list of all wounded and pasted it on a pillar. But nothing could prevent anxious relatives from scouring the wards.

This attack, after yesterday's blast that killed two and injured 40, means militants are getting desperate, said police. Yet, people are angry, unable to understand the reason behind this sudden spurt in violence in public places. "The militants are doing all this in desperation," said H K Lohia, Deputy Inspector General of Police, Kashmir range. "We have had major successes recently. More than a hundred militants were killed in last one month. And now they have attacked school children."

13 MA

INDIAN EXPRESS



TRAGIC MOMENT: Relatives mourn Javid Ahmed, a civilian who was killed in an explosion in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AP

Devastating car bomb blast in Srinagar

It was an earthshaking blast and I just fell down, says an SBI employee; Mufti condemns attack

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: One person was killed and 45 were injured in a car bomb explosion near a busy intersection at Jawahar Nagar here on Wednesday. The condition of at least six of the injured is stated to be critical.

The blast is believed to have been caused by militants detonating the explosive-laden car at 10.45 a.m. It ripped through the car and impacted over a dozen vehicles, tossing up people. Several buildings were extensively damaged.

Javed Ahmed, an Excise department officer travelling in a car, died on the spot. While unconfirmed reports claimed that three Central Reserve Police Force jawans died, Ahmed Ali, DIG of CRPF, said that six personnel, including a deputy commandant, were only injured. "But no one is critical," he said.

Al-Nasreen owns responsibility

Al-Nasreen, a pro-Pakistan militant outfit, has owned responsibility for the blast and warned that such attacks will

- One killed, 45 injured in attack

- Al-Nasreen claims responsibility

- Condition of six critical

continue. "By detonating the car bomb we have exposed the security lapses in Srinagar," the spokesman of the outfit told a local news agency over phone.

The blast was heard within the three-km radius. The re-

mains of the car engine and two damaged tyres were flung 300 metres away

"Nothing could be seen as it happened suddenly," said a man, who emerged from his shop which bore the brunt of the explosion near the graveyard. "It is a miracle that I am alive."

"It was an earthshaking blast and I just fell down," said Diltza Shah, a State Bank of India employee.

Workers inside the damaged buildings and shops and students in a nearby school suffered severe injuries.

Soon after the blast the CRPF men opened fire in the air to keep the people away from the site.

However, some civilians rushed to the spot and evacuated the injured to hospital.

Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, condemning the blast, told *The Hindu*: "Spilling of blood is highly condemnable and no civil society can accept this. Those who are indulging in such activity are undermining the people's urge for peace and normality."

THIRD PEACE BUS LEAVES AMID SECURITY

Violence rises in Valley

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, May 5. — With 37 passengers on board, the third Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus left Srinagar early this morning amid tight security. There were 24 passengers from the Indian side and 13 from Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir returning to Muzaffarabad after visiting their relatives on this side, especially in Poonch and Rajouri districts.

The *Karaavan-e-aman* rolled off from the police headquarters at Batamaloo around 8:15 a.m. Senior police officers, including the Kashmir range police chief, Javed Mukhdoomi, were present as the bus rolled out of the departure lounge at the police control room.

Security forces had early in the morning once again checked the entire Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road for landmines.

The passengers had been put up last night at an undisclosed place due to security reasons. Police and paramilitary personnel were guarding the 120-km road to Kaman Post, the last point on this side of the Line of Control. Militant outfits al-Arifeen, Al-Nasireen, Save Kashmir Movement and Farzandan-e-Millat



A woman injured in a terrorist attack on a marriage party in Jammu being rushed to a hospital on Thursday. — PTI

have threatened to target the bus and its passengers.

And even as the bus rolled peacefully, violence escalated in the entire Valley today. Eight persons, including two Hizbul Mujahideen ultras and two members of a marriage party, were killed and 23 injured in gunbattles and grenade attacks while a suspected ultra was arrested and three hideouts busted overnight, officials said today.

HC dismisses Pakistanis' plea

Delhi High Court today dismissed the plea of a Pakistani national, Md Ovais Ali alias Kwaja Qumar Alam, who wanted a direction to the Centre to grant Indian citizenship to him, his wife and seven children. Ms Justice Gita Mittal directed the police to take Ali, his wife and their children to Seva Sadan in Sarai Rohilla where foreigners without valid travel documents are kept.

06 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Hurriyat chants unity mantra

■ Geelani, Mirwaiz likely to shake hands again

MUFTI ISLAH
SRINAGAR, MAY 4

DOVES and hawks may cohabit again in the Valley, as a crucial one-on-one between heavyweights Syed Ali Shah Geelani and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is on the cards to bring the separatist flock under one banner.

Geelani and Mirwaiz, who head the hardline and moderate factions, have been avoiding each other since the Hurriyat Conference split nearly two years ago. Geelani, who walked out of the amalgam in September 2003, has been maintaining that his faction was the "real and purged" Hurriyat, slamming the Mirwaiz-led group for "compromising" on the Kashmir issue after the latter held two rounds of talks with the NDA government.

But the estrangement, sources say, may soon be over as some "neutral" groups and second-rung leaders in both factions are doing the spadework. While



In happier times

Mirwaiz as the chief priest enjoys clout in Srinagar city, Geelani's influence in the hinterland is undisputed.

A three-member team from Mirwaiz's party, Awami Action Committee, headed by his aides Nazir Ahmad Ronga and G.N. Zaki, are in touch with Geelani. The ailing hawk, too, has consented to "do anything for a reunion", sources said.

"I am for unity. In fact my group has been continuously working for it. Our doors are open to everyone who abides by

the Hurriyat constitution," Geelani said today.

Sources close to Mirwaiz say the meeting has become imperative after Pakistan president General Pervez Musharraf told the heads of the rival Hurriyat factions that their unity was in the "best interest of the Kashmiris". It also follows Mirwaiz's reported telephonic discussion with Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salauddin, urging him to persuade Geelani to agree on a reunion.

"Some friends are trying to set up the meeting between the two

top leaders. We hope they meet soon and shun all differences," a moderate Hurriyat leader told *The Indian Express*.

In fact, a few doves within his own Hurriyat are pestering Geelani to agree to a reunion. These leaders accompanied him recently to New Delhi where Geelani met up with Musharraf.

"We are hopeful of a breakthrough. We have been persuading Geelanisahib to bury the hatchet and he, too, is willing," said Nayeem Khan, a senior leader. "The date and venue of the meeting has not been decided yet, but they are going to meet soon," he added.

"We have appealed to the veteran leader (Geelani) to join and bolster the movement at this juncture. Time has come when the separatists should speak in one voice," said another leader.

Meanwhile, JKLF chief Yaseen Malik, senior separatist leader Shabir Shah and Kashmir Bar Association president Main Qayoom who form the neutral group and had last year tried hard to forge a unity are at it again. Yesterday, they met Mirwaiz at his Nigeen residence and urged him to work for a speedy reunion among the separatists.

Geelani under house arrest, separatists held

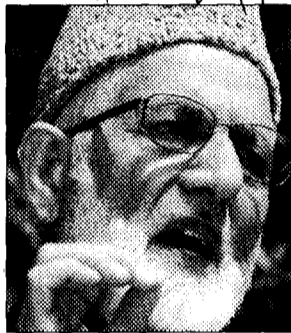
Rashid Ahmad
Srinagar, April 22

THE POLICE on Friday placed Syed Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of Hurriyat's hardline faction, under house arrest and took around 100 separatist Islamic Students League and Democratic Political Party activists in custody on the eve of Eid-e-Millad (Prophet Mohammad's birthday).

The police also resorted to caning and fired tear smoke shells to disperse the separatists, who had taken out a procession to mark Milad eve.

Geelani was to lead a religious procession organised by one of his Hurriyat constituents, the Democratic Political Movement (DPP). The procession was to be taken out from the Abi Guzre locality in Civil Line area. A strong police contingent swooped on Geelani's Hyderpora house early in the morning and asked him not to move out. Geelani's spokesperson said he was not even allowed to offer Friday prayers.

Bashir Ahmad Andrabi, the acting chairman of DPP, led the procession, which was joined by around 500



Syed Ali Shah Geelani

people. They shouted pro-freedom and religious slogans. The locality had heavy deployment of police, who immediately came into action as the procession started. They plugged all exit routes. But as the DPP activists resisted, the police resorted to cane charge to scare them away.

When the DPP activists refused to disperse, the police fired tear smoke shells. Around 60 activists and leaders of the outfit were held.

A DPP spokesperson condemned the police action.

The police also swooped down on a similar procession by Islamic Students League (ISL) at Habbākadal and



Kashmiri women pray on Friday, Prophet Mohammad's birth anniversary, at the Hazratbal Shrine in Srinagar.

arrested dozens of other separatist activists. ISL chief and senior separatist leader Shakeel Bakhshi was leading the procession. Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Forum chief Javid Ahmad Mir were among those held.

Three-point J&K formula

PERVEZ FOR 'OUT-OF-BOX' SOLUTION

HTC & Agencies
New Delhi, April 18

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf on Monday wound up a high-profile visit here agreeing with the Indian view that the Kashmir issue should be addressed on a step-by-step basis and floating a series of ideas of his own including a new three-phased approach.

Musharraf, whose tough rhetoric had contributed to the failure of the Agra Summit during his last visit to India four years ago, confessed to a change of heart, ruled out a military option on Kashmir and advocated an "out of box" solution without any "rigid timeframe".

India and Pakistan need to discuss Kashmir by analysing in deeper context the issues of self-governance, independence, autonomy, joint control and joint management on a step-by-step basis for a solution that would be acceptable to them and to the people of the state, he said before flying off to Manila.

But, for his audience back home, he proposed a three-phased approach consisting of "broadly ascertaining"

>> VIEWS FROM PAKISTAN

■ India has throughout maintained its historic stand that there can be no revision of boundaries...meanwhile, Pakistan has stopped speaking of its own principled stand and made increasing references to flexibility and thinking outside the box

The Nation

■ The admission by the president of Pakistan of the existence of the option of independence for Kashmir is like hitting one's own legs with an axe and stepping back from our own just stand

Nawa-e-Waqt

■ Normalisation process is working for Pakistan and improving the country's standing in the world community. The right thing for President Musharraf is to hold fast to the Kashmir stance — with the promise to think out of the box — and move ahead on the confidence-building measures

Daily Times

■ Look at the way the smiling Dr. Manmohan Singh shook hands with Gen. Pervez Musharraf after the joint statement was issued, that tells you the story

PTV

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.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, speaking to a group of Indian and Pakistani editors, also advocated a step-by-step and people-centred approach on Kashmir, emphasising that territorial disputes could not be resolved immediately.

Musharraf said the Kashmir issue was so complicated that it cannot be resolved by tripartite talks — between India, Pakistan and Kashmiris, which has been Islamabad's traditional demand.

"This is so complicated, even if three persons sit down, they can never agree. This is that complicated an issue. It is the top leadership which needs to sit down and

think of broadly what kind of solution is possible between India, Pakistan and people of Kashmir," he said.

Suggesting the three-phased formula, he said the first stage is to broadly ascertain the will of Kashmiris that can never be ignored, to set a broad direction.

Phase two, he said, is to develop a consensus through debate and discussions while phase three is to take the decision. "At this moment, the leadership, which means frankly myself and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh are sincere in our desire, flexible enough and may bold enough to move forward. I am optimistic," Musharraf said.

"It is my firm belief that the Kashmir (issue) should be discussed by the top leadership of the two countries. Resolution is not possible other than top leadership," the general said.

Geelani, Umer Farooq meet Musharraf

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: The visiting Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, on Sunday night had more than a three-hour-long meeting with leaders of the separatist All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) at Pakistan House here.

Both the factions of the separatist conglomerate — moderate and hardline — led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq and Syed Ali Shah Geelani met Gen. Musharraf and apprised him of their views on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, stressing upon the need to involve the people of Kashmir in the process aimed at solving the Kashmir problem.

Mr. Geelani, who led a five-member delegation of his faction of Tehrek-e-Hurriyat, was the first to get an audience with Gen. Musharraf.

During his nearly 90-minute meeting with Gen. Musharraf, Mr. Geelani told the President that the current confidence-building measures (CBMs) were meaningless unless human rights violations and killings were stopped in Jammu and Kashmir and unless India took some tangible steps towards a resolution of the Kashmir issue in a "just and amicable" way in the spirit of the U.N. Security Council resolutions.

In a three-page memorandum submitted to Gen. Musharraf,

Mr. Geelani gave details of alleged killings and human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir and demanded that India withdraw its military, Central forces and release all "freedom fighters" detained in jails.

According to Mr. Geelani, atrocities were still being committed on the people of the State by the security forces. He claimed that between January 2004 and March 2005, 786 people had lost their lives, 2,526 were injured, 2,322 arrested and 196 had disappeared.

Besides Mr. Geelani, those who participated in the meeting were Nayeem Khan, Aga Hassan Budgami, Saidullah Tantray and Sheikh Ali Mohammad from the Tehrek-e-Hurriyat.

Gen. Musharraf was assisted by the Foreign Minister, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri, and the Information Minister, Sheikh Rashid. He also had separate meetings with the separatist leader, Shabbir Shah, the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front chief, Yaseen Malik, as well as with a delegation of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat, led by the Mirwaiz.

It is learnt that both the Mirwaiz and Mr. Malik stressed on the inclusion of the Kashmiris in the peace talks and that talks without Kashmiris would be a futile exercise. They also reportedly expressed their desire to interact with separatist groups across the border.

18 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Include ultras in talks: Mirwaiz

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, April 12. — In a significant development in Kashmir's separatist poli-



Mirwaiz Umar Farooq during a press conference in New Delhi on Tuesday. — AFP

tics, the Hurriyat Conference (Ansari group), perceived as the moderates, today asked both India and Pakistan to involve the Kashmiri separatist militant leadership in the ongoing dialogue process on Kashmir. This is the first time that the moderate faction of the Hurriyat has favoured involving militants in the talks.

"The inclusion of the Kashmiri leadership, both militant and political, into the process has become extremely important and without them the dialogue between India and Pakistan will not bear fruit," said Mirwaiz Umar Farooq while addressing a press conference in Srinagar after chairing a joint session of the Hurriyat's executive council, general council and working committee.

Declaring that they would lay emphasis on this issue during their forthcoming meeting with Gen. Pervez Musharraf on 17 April, the Mirwaiz asserted that they would lay emphasis on this as it has become extremely important to involve Kashmiris in the process and the militant and political leadership need to be consulted for finding a solution to the Kashmir issue.

"It has been our stand and we want to reiterate it again that without Kashmiris the dialogue between India and Pakistan will not be fruitful," Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said, adding that the Hurriyat wishes to have a separate meeting with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh in order to put across its point of view about Kashmir.

The Hurriyat, Mirwaiz said, is in touch with the Government of India in this regard and has also desired to meet Dr Singh. He said it was extremely important to have separate meetings with the Pakistani President and the Indian Prime Minister. Pakistan's President Gen. Pervez Musharraf has already invited them for a meeting in New Delhi on 17 April. "We wish New Delhi also agrees to our meeting with Dr Singh," he said adding that the meeting with Dr Singh can be considered as a start for the dialogue process that was stalled after the UPA government took over.

To a question on whether they are ready to hold dialogue with the UPA government, Mirwaiz said that they had always expressed their desire to meet the Central leadership, provided they accept

Baglihar project to be completed by 2006-end

NEW DELHI, April 12. — The Baglihar power project in Jammu and Kashmir, which Pakistan has objected to, is likely to be completed by the end of next year. A senior official said Rs 4,000 crore — two-thirds of the money allotted for the power plant — has already been given out, and much of it spent. In the past, Pakistan had complained to the World Bank about the project and suggested that it involve itself in the dispute. Pakistan fears that it will not get sufficient water as a result of the project. India denies that contention and wants bilateral talks to sort out the problem. — SNS

their three suggestions. "We have said it time and again that we want dialogue but it should be based on three principals: dialogue on Kashmir issue, involvement of Pakistan and unconditional dialogue. If these things are met we will hold the dialogue." Mirwaiz further said that they welcomed the bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. "but the real issue is that of Kashmir".

Ready to take the bus, says separatist leader

By Our Staff Reporter

SRINAGAR, APRIL 10. The chairman of the moderate faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, today said he was prepared to lead a delegation of the separatist leaders on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus which made its inaugural run on April 7. This is the first time that a separatist leader of some standing has categorically stated that he is prepared to take the bus to visit Muzaffarabad.

Talking to *The Hindu* today, Mirwaiz said, "I would like to cross the Line of Control on the bus. I have taken a stand that the bus is a good step and I think that Hurriyat leaders should be allowed to travel on this bus. I believe that a sincere political

ideas for an amicable solution of the Kashmir problem."

Asked about the objections of some of the separatist leaders and militant groups, Mr. Farooq said, "I do not agree with the objections to this road. I am prepared to take a lead in talking to these groups, particularly local youth who have taken up arms. There is a need to convince them of the futility of violence and instead to work for the political resolution of the problem."

According to Mr. Farooq, his family is among the few in the valley who have relatives living across the Line of Control. In 1947-48, a part of the Mirwaiz family known as the chief priest of Kashmir valley, migrated to Muzaffarabad and one of his uncles, Mirwaiz Yusuf Shah, was

the president of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir for some months. "My uncle's family lives across the Line of Control and it is really unfortunate that I have never met them. And certainly I would like to meet them. I spoke to them last month," he said.

No objection

The Centre has stated that it has no objection to separatist leaders travelling on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus. The Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, in fact, said they should be allowed to visit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on the bus. Interestingly, the Pakistan Government had earlier denied permission to the mainstream leaders as the bus was "meant for the divided families." But recently, the Mushar-

raf Government said it was prepared to welcome the Hurriyat Conference and also asked the Indian Government to allow the Pakistan chapter of Hurriyat leaders to visit the Indian side.

The only frontline separatist leader who travelled across the Line of Control in the 1990s was the chairman of the People's League, Abdul Ghani Lone. But the purpose of his visit was purely personal as it was to attend the marriage of his son, Sajjad Lone, with Asma Khan, the daughter of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation chief, Amrullah Khan. It was on this visit that Lone asked the *jiltadi* elements among the local cadre of the militant *tanzeems* to leave the valley. Lone was killed by the Al-Umar militants on May 21, 2002.



Mirwaiz Umar Farooq

dialogue should start now between the political leaders on both sides of the Line of Control, irrespective of the difference of ideologies and a visit by the Hurriyat leaders would go a long way in the convergence of

Jhelum Valley road opens after 48 yrs

End of a violent chapter in Kashmir's history

Arun Joshi & Agencies
Srinagar, April 7

THE JHELUM Valley road on which the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus out on Thursday, witnessed vehicular traffic after 48 years. It was 1.40 IST when the 30 passengers from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) set foot on the bridge amid a glare of cameras picking up each movement.

The moment also erased a 58-year-old violent chapter in Jammu and Kashmir's history. In 1947, tribal invaders, while retreating in the face of counter attack by the Indian army had blown up the bridge, later named Kaman bridge after Lt-Col Kaman Singh Pathania.

After that the bridge had remained open for very restricted vehicular movement till 1956 before being completely closed down, according to historians here.

Construction of the historic road, which takes its name from River Jhelum, began in 1881. Considering that there was not even a single wheeled mode of transport in the land-locked Valley in those days, the project seems a "curious undertaking".

The then Maharaja government, on advice from British residents, had entrusted construction of the road between Kohala and Baramulla in north Kashmir to a British contractor firm — Spedding Mitchell and Company — that engaged European engineers and several 100 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, say historians.

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 snakebites.

Following completion of the road, travel to and from Kashmir became easier, cheaper and more comfortable. Initially, *torgas* 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 majority of tourists from all over India also entered Kashmir through the Jhelum Valley road. Considered to be one of the most wonderful mountain roads in the world, its length from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad is 170 km.

From Muzaffarabad it runs further 20 km to reach Kohala where the boundary of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir ends.



Flanked by Sonia Gandhi and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh flags off the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus in Srinagar on Thursday. PTI

PM thanks Pak for making bus possible

Nilova Roy Chaudhury
Srinagar, April 7

PRIME MINISTER Manmohan Singh struck an optimistic note on India's ties with Pakistan, singling out the Pakistan President for making Thursday's historic launch possible.

Before flagging off the first bus to Muzaffarabad, he said, "We are thankful to Pakistan and its President, Pervez Musharraf, for making the service a reality". The re-opening of this road was the result of close cooperation be-

tween New Delhi and Islamabad, he said. "The greatest significance is that both neighbours have fulfilled the desires and aspirations of the people of the two sides of the divide. If we work together in this fashion, we can achieve a lot", the Prime Minister said.

Though no diplomats from Pakistan were present at the Sher-e-Kashmir cricket stadium, from where the two buses were sent off, several Pakistani journalists were present.

Along with the Prime Minister were two former foreign service of-

ficials who are now members of the Union Cabinet; external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh (who announced the launch of the bus service on February 15) and Union petroleum minister Mani Shankar Aiyer.

PM's promises

But days ahead of President Pervez Musharraf's visit to India, Singh also assured local people here that electricity would shortly be available constantly, thanks to projects like Baglihar.

"We will provide electricity to every village in the next four to five years," the Prime Minister said, referring to the Baglihar Project, for the completion of which Rs 330 crore have been set aside.

India was committed to improving its relations with Pakistan through a process of negotiations, United Progressive Alliance chairperson Sonia Gandhi said.

The start of the bus service would foster brotherhood and bring prosperity to the region, she said before joining in the flagging off ceremony.

Terror camps still active: Army chief

Report

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, April 7. — Army chief General JJ Singh today said that fewer militants are infiltrating into Jammu and Kashmir. The terrorist training camps on the other side of the Line of Control are, however, intact.

The statement, issued on the day the peace bus began its journey to Muzaffarabad, is being taken as a sign that despite the

euphoria, India will not let down its guard. It will instead monitor militant activities in J&K during the summer months.

Currently, there is not much infiltration because of the heavy snow, the fencing along the LoC and forward deployment by Indian troops. But in summer, the passes will open and the potential for trouble will increase. A senior Army officer said the level of communication between the militants and their brass remains the

same except that there is a lot of "personal talk" on stocks of flour and so on.

Speaking on the J&K situation, he said the Army's approach was a mixture of velvet glove and iron fist and already, results are evident. He said during his recent visit he had noticed that Kashmiris have begun to smile and there is a higher level of prosperity. "People have rejected the agenda of the terrorists."

The situation in the North-east

is under control and the Army is trying to ensure that the situation improves.

He said he has spoken of Assam being the centre of Southeast Asia, not just a faraway province of India. In Nagaland, too, people have voted for peace.

Gen. Singh also said two division-level exercises would be held in the Punjab and Rajasthan sectors soon. This will be a way of implementing the recently-worked out Army doctrine.

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THE STATESMAN

দুই কাশ্মীরের আলিঙ্গন

রাজনীতিক
মনমোহনের
সদিচ্ছা-বর্তা
মুশারফকে

রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

৭ এপ্রিল: এ এক অন্য মনমোহন। সঙ্গীতির বাসযাত্রা, জঙ্গিদের হুমকি, ট্যুরিস্ট সেন্টারে হামলার বাতাবরণে দাঁড়িয়ে পরিচিত প্রশাসক তকমাটা খসিয়ে ফেললেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী। আত্মপ্রকাশ ঘটল এক দুঁদে রাজনীতিকের। যাঁর গলায় বাসযাত্রা সফল করার জন্য পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের অকুণ্ঠ প্রশংসা।

সেই বাসযাত্রা, যার হাত ধরে ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের অন্য উত্তরণ ঘটল বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে। সেই বাসযাত্রা, যাকে দেখা হচ্ছে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের অগ্রপথিক হিসাবে। মুশারফ তো বটেই, আজ গোটা বিশ্বকে মনমোহন বোঝালেন, কাশ্মীর প্রশ্নে দিল্লিও সমান ঐকান্তিক। সীমান্তের ওপার থেকে প্রশংসা যার উল্টো অভিযোগই ভেসে আসে।

কংগ্রেস সভানেত্রী সনিয়া গান্ধী তো এ দিন জানিয়েই দিলেন, অধিকৃত কাশ্মীরে যাওয়ার আরও সড়কপথ খোলা হতে পারে শীঘ্রই। আর এই পথেই শান্তি ফিরবে বলে ভারতের বিশ্বাস। কারওয়ান-ই-আমন (শান্তির রথ) বাসের যাত্রার আগে শের-ই-কাশ্মীর স্টেডিয়ামে সংক্ষিপ্ত বক্তৃতায় রাজ্যের জন্য একগুচ্ছ প্রকল্প ঘোষণা করেন মনমোহন। রাজ্যে কেন্দ্রে ৬৮০০ অঙ্গনওয়াড়ি মঞ্জুর করেছে বলে জানান তিনি। তাতে নিযুক্ত হবেন ১৪ হাজার মহিলা। রাজ্য পুলিশে গাড়া হবে পাঁচটি সংরক্ষিত ব্যাটেলিয়ন। সিআইএসএফ, সিআরপিএফ এবং বিএসএফে ২০-৪০% চাকরি থাকবে যুবাদের জন্য।

প্রধানমন্ত্রী আরও জানিয়েছেন, রাজ্যের ৪২০০ কোটি টাকার যোজনা বরাদ্দের ৯০ শতাংশই আসবে কেন্দ্রের তহবিল থেকে। বাগলিহার জলবিদ্যুৎ প্রকল্পের উল্লেখ করে তিনি বলেন, "চার থেকে পাঁচ বছরের মধ্যে আমরা রাজ্যের প্রতি গ্রামে বিদ্যুৎ পৌঁছে দেব।" ভূস্বর্গে পর্যটক টানতে ১৬ কোটি টাকার প্রকল্প হাতে নেওয়া হবে বলে প্রধানমন্ত্রী জানিয়েছেন।

এ সব যদি হয় সন্ত্রাসবাদে রোঁকা তরুণদের মূল স্রোতে ফেরানোর উদ্যোগ, তবে মুশারফের গুণকীর্তনটা রাজনীতির মোক্ষম চাপ। এক দিকে, জিকেট দেখতে মুশারফের ভারতে আসার আগ্রহ এবং সেই সূত্রে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে কথা বলতে চাওয়া, অন্য দিকে, ভারতের নিরাসক্তি। সব মিলিয়ে ধারণাটা হচ্ছিল, কাশ্মীর সমস্যা মেটাতে ততটা আগ্রহ নেই দিল্লির। কাশ্মীর নিয়েও মুশারফের সঙ্গে কথা হবে জানিয়ে প্রাথমিক সংশয়টা খারিজ করেছিলেন মনমোহন। আজ আরও পরিষ্কার করে বললেন, "ছোট হলেও এই বাসযাত্রা কাশ্মীর ও সমগ্র ভারতের পক্ষে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। মুশারফ হাত না বাড়ালে ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের এই নতুন অধ্যায় সম্ভব হত না।"

বাস পৌঁছল শ্রীনগরে: মন মাতানো সুর, বাহারি ফুল আর আবেগের বৃষ্টিতে ভাসলেন সকলে। মুজফফরাবাদের বাস শ্রীনগরে এসে পৌঁছল আজ রাতে। অতিথিদের জন্য বিশেষ সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান জুড়ে তখন 'মিশন কাশ্মীর'-খ্যাত 'বুমরো বুমরো'। এই ঐতিহাসিক ক্ষণে 'দু'দেশের রাষ্ট্রনায়কদের অভিনন্দন জানিয়েছেন ভারতে মার্কিন রাষ্ট্রদূত মালফোর্ড। দাবি উঠছে, মুজফফরাবাদ নয়, বাস চলুক একেবারে রাওয়ালপিণ্ডি পর্যন্ত। শুনে পাক বিদেশমন্ত্রী কাসুরি বলেছেন, "আগে হ্যাঁটা তার পর দৌড়া। তবে চিন্তাটা ভালই।"



শিকড়ের টানে। ওই কাশ্মীর থেকে এই কাশ্মীরে। নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায় আমন সেতু পেরোচ্ছেন মুজফফরাবাদ থেকে শ্রীনগরগামী যাত্রীরা। — এ এফ পি

সাতান সেকেডের
পথ পেরোতে
লাগল সাতান বছর

অগ্নি রায় • কামান পোস্ট (নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা)

৭ এপ্রিল: শিকড়ে ফেরার টান শেষ পর্যন্ত দশ গোলে হারিয়ে দিল জঙ্গি হানার আশঙ্কা আর মৃত্যুভয়কে।

আমন সেতু (কামান পোস্ট) পার হয়ে এপারে আসা আবিদা মাসুদি যখন উবু হয়ে বসে ভারতের মাটিকে চুমু খেলেন, তখন উপস্থিত অজস্র ক্যামেরাই নয়, ইতিহাসও তার নিজস্ব ফ্রেমে দৃশ্যটি বন্দি করে রাখল। আজ সন্ধ্যায় আতঙ্ক, বাডবাদল, অন্ধকার এবং প্রাণের ভয়কে অগ্রাহ্য করে বুড়া-বাচ্চা-মহিলাকে সঙ্গে নিয়ে কাশ্মীর যে ভাবে রাস্তায় নেমে এল, সেটাও কে কবে দেখেছে!

দেখলাম, দুগু পায় ওই আমন সেতু পেরিয়ে আসতে লাগল ঘড়ি ধরে ৫৭ সেকেণ্ড। ভাবা যায়, এই দূরত্বটা পেরোতে লেগে গেল ৫৭ বছর!

আজ সকালটা অবশ্য অন্য রকম ছিল। শের-ই-কাশ্মীর স্টেডিয়াম থেকে যখন ১৫ জনকে নিয়ে আমাদের বাসটি ছাড়ল, প্রত্যেকেরই চোখেমুখে টেনশনের ছাপ। গত কালের আশুন্ আর হামলার স্মৃতি তখনও দগদগে। এই রাজ্যে সেলুলার ফোনের সংযোগ খুবই বিরল এবং টিমটিম করে চলে। তারই মধ্যে খবর এল, পাটানে নাকি 'ফায়ারিং' হয়েছে। তবে বাসকে তা ছুঁতে পারিনি। কালকের হামলার পরে আজ সকালে বাসযাত্রী ছিলেন ২১ জন। বাসে উঠেও ২ জন নেমে যান। সরকারি সূত্রে জানানো হয়েছে, তাঁদের কাগজপত্রে কিছু গোলমাল ছিল।

রাস্তা যত নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার দিকে এগিয়েছে, ততই খরস্রোতা হয়েছে আগাগোড়া সঙ্গে থাকা বিলম্ব নদী। তার সঙ্গে বেড়েছে আশঙ্কাও। আর এই সব ক্ষেত্রে ফিল্ম-নাটকে যা হয়, এখানেও হুবহু তা-ই। অর্থাৎ ঘন কালো মেঘে ঢাকা আকাশ।

তবে আতঙ্ক নয়, আজকের নাটকের ক্লাইম্যাক্স — শিকড়ে ফেরার উৎসব।

নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পেরিয়ে মুজফফরাবাদে যাওয়ার আগে যেমন বলে গেলেন প্রাক্তন ডেপুটি কমিশনার খালেদ হুসেন, "কালকের হামলার পরে আমার বিবি নাসিম একটু দুর্বল হয়ে পড়েছিল। আমি বলেছি, মৃত্যু যার হাতেই লেখা থাক, আমরা যাবই।" খালেদ ১৯৪৭-এর পরে এপারে চলে এসেছিলেন। "এই প্রথম শ্বশুরবাড়ির লোকজনের সঙ্গে দেখা হচ্ছে", বললেন খালেদ। তা-ও সেটা বিয়ের ২৫ বছর পরে! তাঁর এই অবাক-বিবাহের বিস্তারিত তাড়াহুড়োয় জানা হল না।

আর জনতে গিয়ে ধমক খেলা মুজফফরাবাদ থেকে আসা আবিদার কাছে। নিরীহ প্রশ্নটা ছিল, আপনার বাড়ি কোথায়? কাঁথিয়ে বললেন, "কেন এ দিকের কাশ্মীরই আমার বাড়ি।"

কামান পোস্ট পেরিয়ে বাসগুলো সবে তখন চুকেছে এবং সালামাবাদের গ্রামে পাহাড় কেটে সদ্য তৈরি করা ট্যুরিস্ট রিসেপশন সেন্টারের সামনে দাঁড়িয়েছে। চার পাশে বাজছে ব্যান্ড-বিউগল-টোলকও। গ্রাম উজাড় করে মানুষ এসেছে অতিথি বরণে। আর সেনাবাহিনীর ঘেরাটোপের মধ্যেই জানালার ফাঁক দিয়ে উঁকি মারছে অতিথিদের উদগ্রীব মুখগুলি। আর এ সবে মধ্যাহ্নে একটি কিশোরী ব্যস্ত হয়ে খুঁজছে তার মামাকে। সেই মামা, অর্থাৎ লাহোর হাইকোর্টের অবসরপ্রাপ্ত বিচারপতি মহম্মদ শরিফ ৫৭ বছর পরে দেশে ফিরছেন, (বাড়ি বারামুলায়) এবং ভাগ্নীকে কখনও চোখে দেখেননি। তাতে কী? দেখলাম, চিনতে তাঁর আদৌ অসুবিধা হল না। দু'জনকেই যে হুবহু একই রকম দেখতে!

বৃদ্ধা বেগম জমরুদা শরিফ তো হাউহাউ করে কাঁদছেন। ইনিও ফিরছেন সেই দেশভাগের পরে। এখন অশক্ত, ছইলচেয়ারে করে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখা পেরোলেন। বারবার বলছিলেন, "এ আমার দেশ। আমার এই অধিকার কে অস্বীকার করতে পারে?" আবার পরক্ষণেই বলছেন, সবাই বলছিল, "পথে বিপদ আছে, যেও না। সুকর আন্না, এসে পৌঁছেছি।" বেলা গড়ানোর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মেঘ কেটে যেমন মাঝেমধ্যেই রোদ উঠেছে, তেমনি জেগে উঠেছেন উপত্যকাবাসীও। সকালে যাওয়ার পথে দেখেছিলাম, রাস্তার দু'পাশে দোকান-বাজার-ওষুধের দোকানও বন্ধ। আর ফেরার পথে ছবিটা একেবারে অন্য। উরি-বারামুলা-পাটান-শিরি, সর্বত্র কাতারে কাতারে মানুষ আমাদের হাত নাড়িয়ে শুভেচ্ছা জানিয়ে গেলেন।

আবিদা মাসুদির মতো সকলেরই ঠিকানা আজ কাশ্মীর। শুধু কাশ্মীর।

● চাকোটিতে খেঁইহারি নিরাপত্তাকর্মীরাও...পৃঃ ৫

০৪ APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Militants attack government complex, bus passengers safe

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 6. A day before the bus to Muzaffarabad is to be flagged off, militants today attacked the Tourist Reception Centre here accommodating the 24 passengers. Two members of the *fidayeen* (suicide) squad were killed and seven persons, including a policeman, were injured. Forty-five persons, including the would-be passengers, were evacuated unharmed.

Even as the State Government was giving the final touches to the gala event, two heavily armed militants sneaked into the highly guarded complex in the heart of Srinagar. The venue is hardly a few metres from the Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium where the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is to flag off the bus tomorrow. The stadium had been sealed off for the last few days. Eyewitnesses told *The Hindu* that around 3.55 p.m. a deafening sound rocked the area and soon after there was heavy firing. "I was sitting in [my] office and I heard a cracking sound. It was followed by gunshots and the building in which my office is located caught fire," said Muneebul Hassan Malik, Assistant Director, Tourism.

The militants, who had hurled grenades and entered the building, soon took positions and began firing from all directions. The police, the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force who were guarding the complex cordoned off the area.

The Director-General of Police, Gopal Sharma, said that "the militants set it [the building] on fire in order to create chaos and confusion." The entire building, housing a number of departments including Tourism, Wildlife, Fisheries, State Road Transport Corporation, J&K Tourism Development Corporation, Northern Railways, Post Office, SBI, JK Bank and Indian Airlines, soon caught fire. The building, a wooden structure constructed in the 60s went up in flames and thick black smoke covered the sky.

The authorities evacuated 45 persons, including the 24 passengers. Many government employees were trapped inside. One woman who was rushing



THE INFERNO: The heavily-guarded Government complex in Srinagar housing the passengers of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus was set ablaze by militants on Wednesday. — Reuters

out received bullet injuries and was shifted to hospital. Six others were also wounded, Mr. Sharma said.

Amid the gunfire and explosions, two shocked employees of Indian Airlines were seen consoling each other. "We jumped out of the office window after breaking open the iron grill," Latif Ahmad, told this reporter soon after he came out. "We have no news of another colleague who is still in there and could not jump."

Theatre director M.K. Raina, who is in town to direct tomorrow's cultural programme, was also in the building. "I was sitting in Beg. Sahib's [M.S. Beg, Director General, Tourism] of-

fice when bullets started coming through but I took shelter in the bathroom," he told *The Hindu*. Mr. Beg was not in the office. The blaze gave the fire servicemen, who did a great job to save adjacent buildings, a tough time. Many of them had a narrow escape as the huge building was crumbling. "They have done an excellent job," said a senior officer.

Claim responsibility

The four militant organisations, Al-Nasireen, Save Kashmir Movement, Al-Arifeen and Farzandan-e-Millat, have owned responsibility for the attack. A spokesman for the outfits told a news agency that their mem-

bers were behind it. The attack that followed repeated threats by these outfits came at a time when Srinagar was literally under a security cover.

The security forces were posted in all the lanes and by-lanes of the areas adjacent to the S.K. Cricket Stadium. Scores of people, relatives of those working in the building, waited for news of their loved ones. When Dr. Singh visited Srinagar in November last, militants were tracked to a hillock near the S.K. Stadium.

The State Government has not changed any of the festivities connected with the programme. It continues to illuminate Srinagar as the cul-

tural troupes from Leh, Kargil, Jammu, Gurez and Srinagar have been lodged under police security to perform for the passengers from Muzaffarabad.

They will also taste the Wazwan, the traditional high-calorie Kashmiri feast and will be state guests.

More reports on Page 12

মনমোহন-মুশারফের সঙ্গে আলাদা বৈঠক চান ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব

অগ্নি রায় • শ্রীনগর

৫ এপ্রিল: পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের আসন্ন দিল্লি সফরের সময়েই প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ এবং মুশারফের সঙ্গে পৃথক ভাবে বৈঠকে বসতে চাইছেন ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব। প্রবীণ ছরিয়ত নেতা আব্দুল গনি বাট আজ এক সাক্ষাৎকারে এ কথা জানিয়েছেন। এই সপ্তাহের শেষে ছরিয়তের কার্যনির্বাহী এবং সাধারণ কাউন্সিলে বিষয়টি নিয়ে আলোচনা করে চূড়ান্ত প্রস্তাব নেওয়া হবে বলে জানানো হয়েছে।

ছরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব 'আলোচনার মাধ্যমে সমাধানের' এই রাস্তায় শেষ পর্যন্ত পা দেবে কি না, তা নির্ভর করছে সামগ্রিক ভাবে নেতাদের একমতের উপরে। তবে এখনও পর্যন্ত যা পরিস্থিতি, তাতে বরফ গলার যথেষ্ট ইঙ্গিত থেকে যাচ্ছে।

গনি বাট আজ বলেছেন, "ভারত-পাকিস্তান দু'দেশই ইতিবাচক দিকে এগোচ্ছে। সেখানে আমাদেরও অবদান থাকা দরকার। আমরা চিন্তা ভাবনার ক্ষেত্রে যুদ্ধ না করে পরিস্থিতি খতিয়ে দেখতে চাই। বিষয়টি নিয়ে ছরিয়তের জাতীয় কাউন্সিলে আলোচনা হবে। তার পর মনমোহন এবং মুশারফ, দু'জনকেই প্রস্তাব দেব। ওঁরা রাজি থাকলে দিল্লি গিয়ে কথা বলব।"

এই প্রথম ছরিয়তের পক্ষ থেকে প্রধানমন্ত্রীকে চিঠি লিখে আলোচনার প্রস্তাব দেওয়ার কথা ভাবা হচ্ছে। বাটের বক্তব্য, "সমস্ত স্তরেই পরিবর্তন

হচ্ছে। ভারত-পাকিস্তানের মধ্যে এক পক্ষ নমনীয় হলে অন্য পক্ষকেও হতে হবে। আমাদের তরফ থেকেও কিছুটা নমনীয়তা আসা প্রয়োজন। আমরা তাই ঐতিহ্যগত অবস্থানের উর্ধ্বে উঠে সমস্ত সম্ভাবনা খতিয়ে দেখার কথা ভাবছি।" পাকিস্তানের ক্রিকেটাররা ভারতের মাঠে দাপাচ্ছেন, বাস চালু হচ্ছে, এমনকী এই মুহুর্তে পাক শিশুরাও শ্রীনগরে ঘুরতে এসেছে। এই পরিস্থিতিতেই ছরিয়ত নিজেদের মতো করে কাজে লাগাতে চাইছে। এবং কিছুটা নাগা নেতাদের ঢঙেই, তাঁরা সরাসরি একেবারে প্রধানমন্ত্রী পর্যায়ের বৈঠক চাইছেন।

বাটের কথায়, "কাশ্মীর সমস্যা অত্যন্ত জটিল। দু'টি পরমাণু শক্তিধর দেশ এই সমস্যায় জড়িত। তাই অত্যন্ত সাবধানে বিষয়টি দেখতে হবে।" সরকার তাঁদের ডাকবে কিনা তা নিয়ে নিশ্চিত নন বাট। তবে তিনি মনে করেন, নিজেদের কথা বলতে পারলে তাঁদের অনেক সমস্যার সমাধান হবে।

বাস যাত্রা নিয়ে কাশ্মীর উপত্যকা জুড়ে তুমুল আলোড়ন-আবেগের স্রোতে সামিল হতে পারেননি কাশ্মীরি নেতারা। ছরিয়তের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা সদস্যের কথায়, "বাসও আমাদের অভাব অনুভব করবে। আমরা বাস সংযোগের বিরুদ্ধে নই। আমরা মনে করি একটি বিরাট প্রক্রিয়ার তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ অংশ এটি। তাতে আমরা অংশ নিতে না পারলে একটা অন্য অর্থ হয়। তবে এই নিয়ে এখনই কোনও বিতর্ক তৈরি করতে চাই না।"

উঠে আসার আগে বাট ফের জানানেন, "আমাদের কর্মসূচি হল দক্ষিণ এশিয়ার বৃহত্তর স্বার্থে কাশ্মীর সমস্যার গ্রহণযোগ্য, সম্মানজনক, স্থায়ী সমাধান খোঁজা। তার জন্য প্রয়োজন আরও বেশি আদানপ্রদানের।"

06 APR 2005

ANADABAZAR PATRIKA

Manmohan forms task force on J&K development

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 4. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, has constituted a task force to prepare a long-term plan for the social and economic development of Jammu and Kashmir.

C. Rangarajan, former Reserve Bank Governor, is its Chairman and the other members are: Haseeb Drabu, Sunil Mittal, Sunil Kant Munjal, S.H.H. Rehman, Moosa Raza, G.C. Srivastava, T.N. Thakur, Analjit Singh and D. Subbarao. Mr. Subbarao will be the Member-Secretary.

Dr. Singh announced the decision to appoint the task force six months ago when he first visited Jammu and Kashmir.

The task force has also been asked to suggest ways to find the financial resources, at the local, national and international levels.

Besides addressing economic issues, it could also be asked to analyse other issues, if so desired by the Prime Minister.

Dr. Singh has asked the task force to submit an interim report within six months and the final report within one year.

Dry run of bus put off

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, APRIL 4. The second dry run of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus today was put off following alleged threats from four militant organisations. The first dry run was conducted on March 18.

The decision came even as officials were preparing to take the 19-seater bus to Kaman Post, last point at the Line of Control (LoC), and a battery of mediapersons waiting outside the traffic police headquarters here.

The Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic), Rauful Hassan, said: "It has been postponed due to some technical reasons and I do not know anything more."

However, informed sources said that in the wake of threats by militants it had been decided to put off the dry run as it would involve comprehensive security arrangements on the 118-km road to Kaman Post.

A trial run was conducted from Kaman Post to Baramulla and the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (North), Kashmir Raja Aijaz Ali, said it was suc-

cessful. With just two days remaining for the bus service to start, the JKSRTC today distributed tickets and they were collected by police on behalf of the passengers. At least 10 passengers are reportedly under tight security at the tourist reception centre.

Fear seems to have gripped some of the passengers. "It has turned out to be a nightmare for them even as they are happy about the prospect of seeing their daughter after 18 years," said Salima, a neighbour of Fatima Bhat and her husband Mohammad Abdullah, would-be passengers.

"We cannot take the risk of leaving them at the mercy of militants," said a senior police officer. The militants' threat to "turn the bus into a coffin" has forced many people to go into hiding, he added.

Security in stadium

Tight security arrangements are being made for the inaugural journey on April 7 when the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, will flag off the bus. Sher-e-Kashmir Stadium, venue of the inaugural function.

Kashmir peace bus

Not a political bandwagon

Rather than fuel controversy over Pakistan's denying visas to J&K politicians wanting to take the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus, it would be prudent of New Delhi to ponder over having actually approved their move. The purpose of reviving the bus service was to facilitate families divided by the Line of Control meeting again without having to travel via Amritsar/Lahore. That route was not merely circuitous, it involved expenses beyond the reach of many. The bus link, albeit strictly-controlled and limited, was aimed at redressing specific difficulties. Difficulties that political leaders would not encounter should they get permission to visit PoK. So seeking places on the bus — even if an additional vehicle was used that day — was at the cost of the common man.

Yet there were complexities far beyond politicians depriving the common folk. Pakistan has never recognised the political parties in J&K and their leaders as representing the people of that troubled region — perhaps only the hard core secessionist elements of the Hurriyat might acquire that status in Islamabad's eye — so the proposed all-party goodwill trip actually amounted to raising vexatious questions on disputed basics. Surely the purpose of the peace bus was to arouse precisely the opposite brand of emotions. Pakistan's position on the status of pro-Indian leaders in J&K is no secret, indeed one of the visa applicants admitted that common sense told him it would not be granted at this stage. It must also be remembered that Pakistan was reluctant to revive the bus service, travel documents became a sticky issue, and at the root of all that lay Pakistan's larger position on Kashmir. As well as its apprehensions over according the LoC a status beyond what it originally was — a cease-fire line. Without in any way endorsing Pakistan's Kashmir case, many independent bystanders would concur with Islamabad's contention that the visas were denied to avoid complications. The bus trip should not run into avoidable potholes arising from matters very remote from family reunions. New Delhi must re-evaluate its backing the politicians' visa applications against that intricate backdrop. Conceded that it was nobody's intention to stoke such embers, but was not distinct insensitivity exhibited by the move? Why risk a welcome confidence building measure becoming cause for another spat? Maybe some of the J&K politicians were unaware of the potential for trouble, but South Block cannot seek similar refuge. All too often have positive starts been frustrated by politicians' haste and hype.

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THE STATESMAN

জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের জন্য টাস্ক ফোর্স গড়ল কেন্দ্র

মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘন নিয়ে সরব প্রণবও

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ এপ্রিল: জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে সন্ত্রাস দমনের নামে মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগের ঘটনায় সরকার 'অস্বস্তি'তে ভুগছে বলে স্ট্রীকার করলেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। এবং এই প্রেক্ষিতে সেনাবাহিনীর প্রতি প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়ের পরামর্শ: 'আমাদের বুঝতে হবে যে আমরা নিজেদের দেশের মধ্যেই কাজ করছি।' মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগ সেনাবাহিনীর ভাবমূর্তি ক্ষয় করার পাশাপাশি জঙ্গি-মোকাবিলার ক্ষমতাও কমিয়ে দেয় বলে মনে করছে মনমোহন সিংহের সরকার।

সেনাপ্রধান হিসাবে দায়িত্ব নেওয়ার পরপরই যোগীন্দর যশবন্ত সিংহও কিছু দিন আগে একই সুরে জম্মু ও কাশ্মীর বা উত্তর-পূর্ব ভারতে নতুন কৌশলের কথা বলেছিলেন। তাঁর বক্তব্য ছিল, জঙ্গিদমনের ক্ষেত্রে সামরিক অভিযানের 'মানবিক মুখ' থাকা দরকার। অভিযানের ফলে 'পারিপার্শ্বিক ক্ষয়ক্ষতি' যাবে কম, হয়, তা দেখতে হবে। এর পরে প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীও আজ বললেন, মানবাধিকার লঙ্ঘনের অভিযোগ সরকারের পক্ষে অস্বস্তিকর। সেনাবাহিনীকে এই বিষয়ে সতর্ক থাকতে হবে। প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর বক্তব্যে পরিষ্কার, মনমোহন সিংহ সরকার জঙ্গি-অধ্যুষিত এলাকাগুলিতে সাধারণ মানুষের মন পেতে সক্রিয় হতে চাইছে। প্রণববাবু আজ সেই উদ্দেশ্যেই বলেছেন, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে 'অপারেশন সন্ডাবনার' মতো সাধারণ মানুষের মন জয় করার প্রচেষ্টাকে আরও ত্বরিত করা দরকার।

আদতে সরকার যা চাইছে, তার

সঙ্গে সেনাবাহিনীর ইচ্ছার কোনও সংঘাত নেই। কারণ, সেনাবাহিনীর শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব দীর্ঘ দিন ধরেই বলে আসছে, সন্ত্রাস দমনের অভিযানে সেনাবাহিনীকে যথাসম্ভব কম ব্যবহার করা হোক। কারণ, সেনাদের অন্য দেশের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই করার পাঠ দেওয়া হয়। নিজের দেশের মানুষের উপরে গুলি চালানো সেনাবাহিনীর পক্ষে কষ্টকর। তা ছাড়া, পুরোদস্তুর যুদ্ধে সেনাদের অস্ত্রশস্ত্র ব্যবহারের যতটা ক্ষমতা বা অধিকার থাকে, দেশের ভিতরে 'কাউন্টার ইনসার্জেন্সি অপারেশন'-এর সময়ে তাদের হাত-পা অনেকটাই বাঁধা থাকে।

নতুন সরকার আসার পরেই অবশ্য স্পর্শকাতর এলাকাগুলিতে সাধারণ মানুষের মন পেতে বিভিন্ন চেষ্টা শুরু হয়েছে। মণিপুরে কাংলা দুর্গ দীর্ঘ দিন ধরে সেনাঘাটি হিসাবে ব্যবহৃত হয়ে আসছিল। প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের উপস্থিতিতে গত বছর এই ঐতিহাসিক দুর্গ তুলে দেওয়া হয় রাজ্য সরকারের হাতে, জনগণের জন্য। কাংলা দুর্গে সেনা উপস্থিতিতে মণিপুরের মানুষ রাজ্যের উপরে সেনার সার্বিক দমনের প্রতিরূপ হিসাবেই গণ্য করতেন। কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের এই প্রচেষ্টার পিছনে সুস্পষ্ট কৌশলও রয়েছে। সন্ত্রাস দমনের ক্ষেত্রে সাধারণ মানুষের সমর্থন অত্যন্ত জরুরি বলে মনে করা হয়। সাধারণ লোক ক্ষেপে গেলে সন্ত্রাসের মোকাবিলা করা নিরাপত্তারক্ষীদের পক্ষে আরও কঠিন হয়ে দাঁড়ায়।

আবার সরকারের উদারতা যুব সমাজের একাংশকে সন্ত্রাস থেকে সরিয়ে আনতেও সাহায্য করতে পারে বলে সরকার আশা করছে।

সন্ত্রাস মোকাবিলায় কড়া-ই থাকছে দিল্লি

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ৪ এপ্রিল: ভারত-পাক সম্পর্কের স্বার্থে সীমান্তে শিথিলতা দেখানো হচ্ছে ঠিকই। কিন্তু সেই সুযোগে জঙ্গিরা যাতে নাশকতা চালাতে না-পারে, তা নিশ্চিত করতে চাইছে কেন্দ্র।

পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফের আসতে দু'সপ্তাহও বাকি নেই। শ্রীনগর-মুজফ্ফরাবাদ বাস চালু হচ্ছে তিন দিন পরে। দু'দেশের মধ্যে এই সত্তাবের পরিবেশ এবং নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখায় ঘেরাটোপ শিথিল হওয়ার পরে সন্ত্রাসবাদের মোকাবিলা কী ভাবে হবে, তার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় কৌশল গ্রহণের কথা বলেছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়। আজ সেনা কমান্ডারদের বৈঠকে উদ্বোধনী বক্তৃতায় প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রীর বক্তব্য, দু'দেশের মধ্যে সম্প্রীতি বাড়লেও কড়া হাতে সন্ত্রাসবাদের মোকাবিলার প্রয়োজন রয়েছে।

কাশ্মীরের উন্নয়ন নিয়েও সরকার ভারনচিন্তা শুরু করেছে। জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের জন্য আজ একটি টাস্ক ফোর্স গঠন করেছেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ। সামাজিক ও আর্থিক উন্নতির উদ্দেশ্যে গঠিত এই কমিটির শীর্ষে রয়েছেন রিজার্ভ ব্যাঙ্কের প্রাক্তন গভর্নর সি. রঙ্গরাজন। প্রধানমন্ত্রীর দফতর সূত্রের খবর, কাশ্মীরের উন্নয়ন নিয়ে দীর্ঘমেয়াদি পরিকল্পনা নেবে এই কমিটি। ছ'মাসের মধ্যে প্রাথমিক রিপোর্ট জমা দেওয়ার পরে টাস্ক ফোর্স পরের বছরের গোড়ায় পূর্ণাঙ্গ রিপোর্ট তুলে দেবে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর হাতে।

নয়াদিল্লি-ইসলামাবাদ সম্পর্ক যখন নতুন মোড় নিয়েছে, তখন সেনা কমান্ডারদের সম্মেলনকে যথেষ্ট তাৎপর্যপূর্ণ ধরা হচ্ছে। এক দিকে,

পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সুসম্পর্কের জেরে নিয়ন্ত্রণরেখার ঘেরাটোপ শিথিল করে দেওয়া হচ্ছে। অন্য দিকে, এই 'শিথিল সীমান্তের' সুযোগে যাতে জঙ্গিরা নাশকতামূলক কাজকর্ম চালাতে না-পারে, তা দেখার দায়িত্বও রয়েছে। প্রণববাবুর বক্তব্য, সরকার সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছে পাকিস্তানের সঙ্গে সমস্ত বিষয়ে কথা চালানো হবে। দু'দেশের মানুষের মধ্যে যোগাযোগ বাড়ানো হবে, আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়া হবে। এই পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে কী ভাবে সন্ত্রাসের মোকাবিলা হবে, তার রূপরেখা তৈরির কথা বলেছেন প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী। এ দিকে সংবাদসংস্থার খবর, বাসযাত্রীদের উপরে হামলার যে হুমকি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীগুলি দিয়েছে, তার আজ 'অপ্রয়োজনীয়' বলে বর্ণনা করেছে পাকিস্তান। তাদের বিদেশমন্ত্রক সূত্রে আরও বলা হয়েছে, ওই বাস এবং তার যাত্রীদের নিরাপত্তার সমান দায়িত্ব রয়েছে তাদেরও।

৯ এপ্রিল ভারতে আসছেন চিনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী ওয়েন জিয়াবাও। তিনি যা ইঙ্গিত দিয়েছেন, তাতে সীমান্ত সমস্যা সমাধানে আরও কিছু সিদ্ধান্ত হতে পারে। চিনের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক স্বাভাবিক করার এই প্রচেষ্টার সামরিক প্রভাব কী হতে পারে, তা নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলোচনার কথাও বলেছেন তিনি।

সেনাবাহিনীর আধুনিকীকরণের পাশাপাশি অপ্রচলিত শক্তির বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিরোধ জোরদার করার কথা বলেছে সরকার। প্রণববাবুর মতে, যুদ্ধ নয়, দেশের সামনে আরও বড় চ্যালেঞ্জ ধর্মীয় উন্মাদনা, সন্ত্রাস, অস্ত্র পাচার, পরমাণু বা রাসায়নিক অস্ত্র। সরকার চাইছে, লড়াই করার ক্ষমতা না-কমিয়ে ঘেরাজের বাড়তি 'মোদ' বরাদ্দে।

Kashmir will figure in talks, says Musharraf

Agencies
Islamabad, April 2

PAKISTAN PRESIDENT Pervez Musharraf has said he will discuss the Kashmir issue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when he visits New Delhi. He is arriving on April 16 to watch the last one-day Indo-Pak cricket match the next day.

The Kashmir issue will figure in the talks between him and the Indian leadership, state-run PTV quoted Musharraf as telling members of the Cabinet of South-west Baluchistan province in Quetta. Earlier, addressing the centenary celebrations of the Command and Staff College in Quetta, he said Pakistan had put in place a strategy to gain defensive deterrence with India in the nu-



Pervez Musharraf
K-fixation

clear field and efforts were on to achieve the same in the conventional field.

A strategy of defensive deterrence was in place and "we have already achieved all goals in the unconventional field to implement this policy," Musharraf said, without directly referring to Pakistan's nuclear and mis-

sile programme. In the conventional field, efforts were in hand to address all imbalances, the official APP news agency quoted him as saying.

Outlining the accomplishments of the country since he took over power through a military coup in 1999, Musharraf said Pakistan today was better placed both politically and diplomatically.

Referring to Opposition demands that the army go back to barracks and let the country be ruled by elected governments, Musharraf said the army is already in barracks and only he was out at the helm of the nation.

Day-to-day administrative decisions were being taken by the elected government, and he intervened only to help implement crucial decisions, he said.

03 APR 2005 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Militants renew threat to bus passengers

HTC/Agencies
Srinagar, April 2

FOUR KASHMIRI militant groups on Saturday issued new death threats to people planning to travel on the cross-border buses that will soon connect the Indian- and Pakistani-controlled parts of Kashmir for the first time since 1947.

The militant outfits have rejected the appeal of the leader of the breakaway Hurriyat Conference Syed Ali Shah Geelani not to target passengers travelling on the inaugural Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus on April 7. A statement signed by the commanders of the four rebel groups and faxed to the media in Srinagar said, "We once again warn those people who are riding the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus that they should desist from it because they have no right to mock the blood of the martyrs and should not play with their own lives for the sake of frolic."

The statement said that to "deter these people from becoming traitors, the groups called their homes and warned them individually too."

The "homes of those who ignore this could be targeted," the statement added.

The rebel groups that signed the statement are: Al-Nasireen, the Save Kashmir Movement, Al-Arifeen and Farzandan-e-Millat.

Rebel groups have also

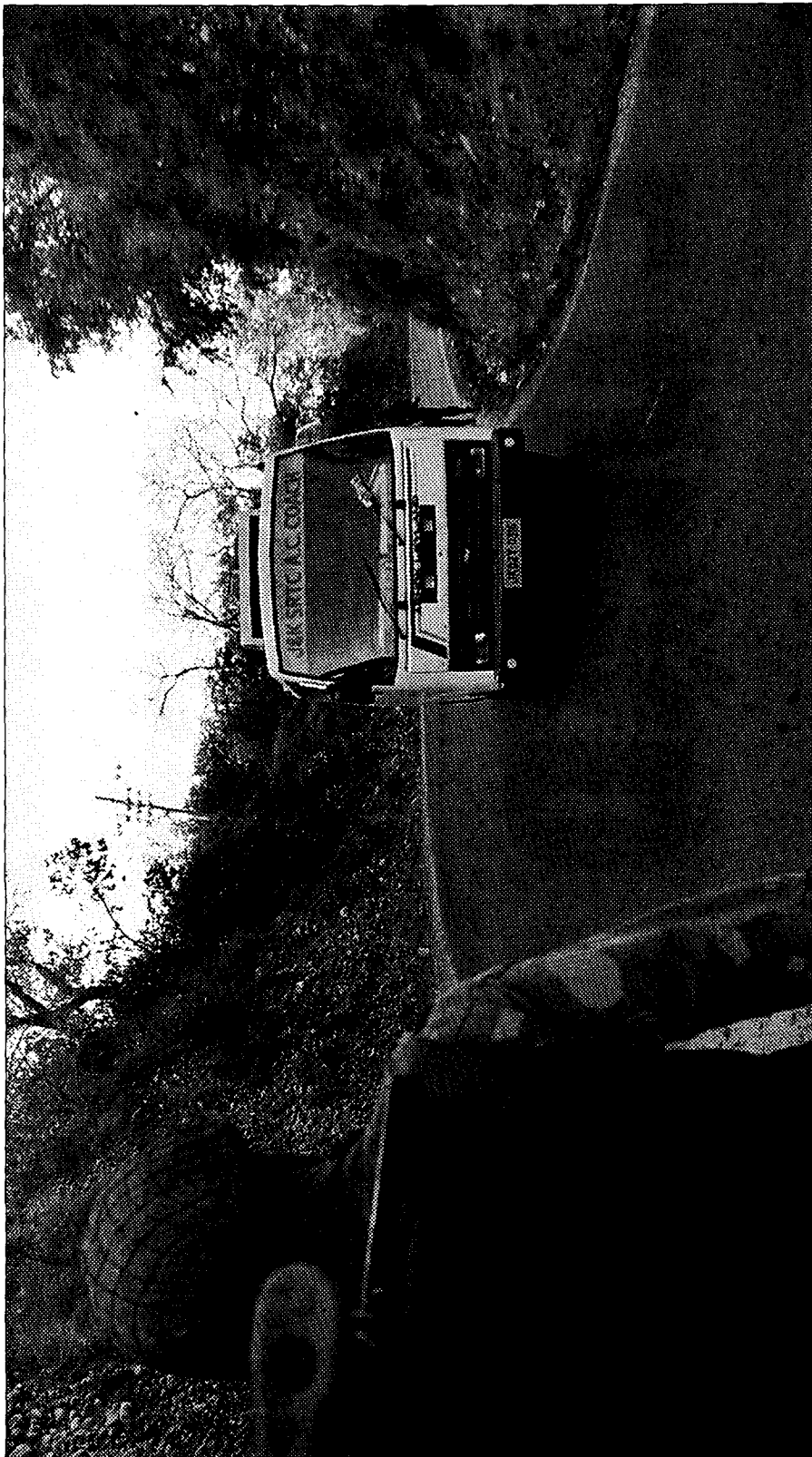
called for a general strike on April 7, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is scheduled to flag off the inaugural trip of the twice-monthly bus service.

Geelani while addressing a Kupwara gathering on Friday had said, "Mujahideen, by issuing threats to the passengers travelling on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road will create a wrong notion."

Centre reviews security: The Union home ministry on Friday asked the Jammu and Kashmir government to provide adequate security to the 29 passengers taking the first bus to Muzaffarabad on April 7. The move follows the release on Wednesday of the original list of 40 passengers by four militant groups along with the threat to blow up the bus.

Earlier in the day, Union home minister Shivraj Patil chaired a high-level meeting called to review security arrangements for the bus service. Among those present were senior officials from the Intelligence Bureau and the ministry's Internal Security division; chiefs of the BSF and CRPF; director general, Military Operations and Military Intelligence; and the Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir N.N. Vohra.

The meeting also discussed the "strong possibility" of militant outfits trying to target some passengers before the start of the bus service. Sources said that in



HISTORY-BOUND: The bus slated to undertake the inaugural run to Muzaffarabad on April 7 is on its way to Srinagar from Jammu on Saturday.

view of this intelligence input, the Centre was keen that security cover for the passengers remain in place till April 7.

"Since law and order is a state subject, we asked the state government to deal

with security arrangements for the passengers. The Centre is in no mood to take any chances on this issue," a top ministry official said.

Late in the evening, the state government assured the home ministry that it had initiated the exercise to ensure the safety of the passengers. The meeting also reviewed security arrangements along the 160-kilometre Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route, of which more than 80 kilometres falls on the Indian side.

Security along the route has been divided into two phases: one will be handled by the army, the second by the CRPF and BSF. Ministry sources said the CRPF and BSF would deal with the stretch between Srinagar

and Baramulla, after which the army would take over till Uri and the LoC. The stretch between Baramulla and Uri is described as "dangerous" due to difficult terrain, which is why it has been given to the army.

AP

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

সফরের আগে সেই কাশ্মীর মুশারফের মুখে

ইসলামাবাদ, ২৩ মার্চ: তাঁর ভারত সফরের আর এক মাসও বাকি নেই। এর মধ্যে আবার কাশ্মীর প্রশ্ন সামনে নিয়ে এলেন পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট জেনারেল পারভেজ মুশারফ। কাশ্মীরই দুই দেশের দ্বন্দ্বের মূলে, এই কথা স্মরণ করিয়ে দিয়ে তাঁর বক্তব্য, এই সমস্যা না মিটলে শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস পরিষেবার মতো আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থাও গুরুত্ব হারাবে।

ভারত-পাকিস্তান ক্রিকেট ম্যাচ দেখতে ১৭ এপ্রিল দিল্লি যাবেন মুশারফ। এরও দশ দিন আগে, ৭ তারিখ থেকে চালু হচ্ছে শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস। আজ এখানে পাকিস্তানের জাতীয় দিবসের কুচকাওয়াজে যোগ দিতে এসে তিনি এই প্রচেষ্টাকে সাধুবাদও জানান। একই সঙ্গে বলেন, সমস্যার মূলে কী রয়েছে আগে খুঁজে বের করা জরুরি।

মুশারফ বলেন, “কাশ্মীরের দুই অংশের মানুষের মধ্যে আবার যোগাযোগ স্থাপনে এই নতুন বাস পরিষেবা খুবই জরুরি। কিন্তু মনে রাখতে হবে, এটা কাশ্মীর সমস্যার সমাধান নয়। একে শুধুই আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থার ক্ষেত্রে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদক্ষেপ বলা যেতে পারে।” একই সঙ্গে তাঁর বক্তব্য, দুই দেশের মধ্যে মূল সমস্যাগুলি না মিটলে এই ধরনের আস্থাবর্ধক ব্যবস্থা

গুরুত্ব হারাবে। তাই কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানে পথ বের করাটা প্রয়োজন।

গত বছর সেপ্টেম্বরে নিউ ইয়র্কে তাঁর সঙ্গে মনমোহন সিংহের আলোচনার পর যে বিবৃতিটি প্রকাশ করা হয়, তাকেই ভিত্তি করতে চাইছেন মুশারফ। তিনি এ দিনও বলেছেন, ওই বিবৃতি ভারত, পাকিস্তান এবং কাশ্মীরি জনগণ—সকলের কাছেই গ্রহণযোগ্য।

মনে করা হচ্ছে, ভারত সফরে তাঁর সঙ্গে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের কথা হলে কাশ্মীরকে যে তিনি তুলে ধরবেন, তারই আগাম ইঙ্গিত দিয়ে রাখলেন পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট। অন্য দিকে,

বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহ সম্প্রতি বলেছেন, মুশারফ যে প্রসঙ্গই তুলবেন, তাই নিয়ে আলোচনায় তৈরি ভারত।

কাশ্মীরিদের প্রতি তাঁর সহানুভূতি যে একটুও কমেনি, তা-ও এ দিন স্পষ্ট করে দিয়েছেন মুশারফ। তিনি জানিয়ে দিয়েছেন,

কাশ্মীরিদের ‘কূটনৈতিক ও রাজনৈতিক’ সমর্থন জোগানো বন্ধ করবে না পাকিস্তান। আজও মুশারফের সাফ কথা, “কাশ্মীরিদের লড়াইয়ে আমরা পাশেই আছি।”

নিজের দেশে সন্ত্রাসবাদ নিয়েও মুখ খোলেন মুশারফ। তিনি বলেন, পাকিস্তানের বিপদ দেশের ভিতরেই। বাইরে থেকে নয়।—পি টি আই, রয়টার্স



25,000 still missing as search goes on

Zorawar Singh Jamwal
Jammu, March 3

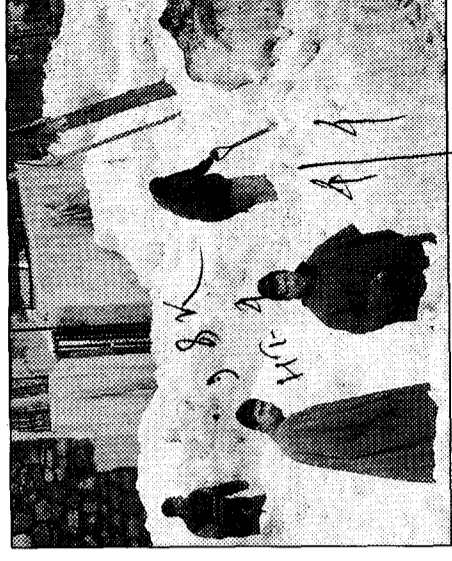
EVEN AS the casualty figure crossed the 300 mark in Jammu and Kashmir, the state government could make no headway in the search for around 25,000 people who have gone missing in the snow-hit hills of Doda district of Jammu province.

Those missing include about 9,000 women and 4,000 children, official sources revealed.

Though chief minister Mufti Sayeed, deputy chief minister Mangat Ram Sharma and other ministers visited Novapachi, Doda and Banihal on Thursday, they had to be satisfied by only aerial survey of snowstorm-hit Marwah, Dachan, Wadwan, Paddar, Machial, Neeltop, and Bulandpur.

While official sources disclosed that due to inclement weather no link could be made so far in over 50 mountain-locked hamlets containing over 25,000 lives, National Conference legislator Sajjad Kitchloo apprehended that hundreds may have perished by now beneath heavy snow.

"I fear that the total death toll, just in Doda district, may cross the total casualty that has been reported in different districts of the state so far as no signs of life could be traced during the aerial survey," said Kitchloo. "Even sorties by IAF helicopters could not spot people. Even sorties by helicopters could not spot people except some smoke at different points," the NC legislator added.

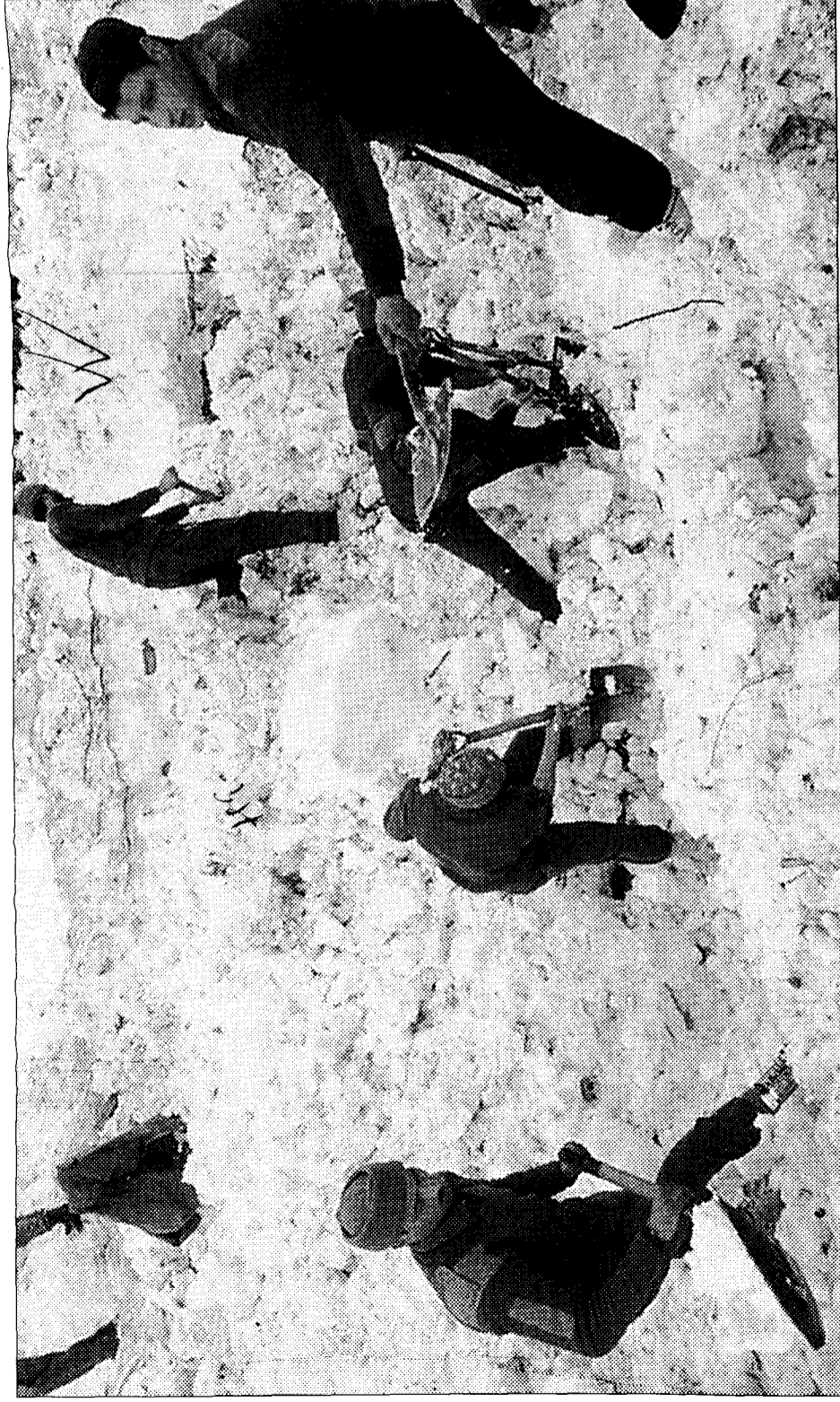


Kashmiris trudge along the snow-covered roads of Wzoor, 79 km from Srinagar on Thursday. AFP

Highway not yet safe

MILD SHOWERS of 120 kms from Jammu, Banihal town is seen buzzing with people carrying sacks of grains, fresh vegetables and milk cans. They are also carrying spades with them because there's still snow on the highway that eventually leads to Ramban town, Banihal town and Nowgam village.

Other stretches, in the absence of snow, look vulnerable to rain and could quite easily slide taking away the huts that stand in their way. Locals and police men swung into action and mobilised the supplies from all shops.



DIGGING IN: Policemen look for the dead in Qazigund district of Jammu and Kashmir on Thursday. PTI

Indo-Pak bus service on track, forms today

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 3

FORMS FOR those who wish to travel on the intra-Kashmir Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus will be available from Friday, official sources indicated.

The forms, to be made available at locations notified by the Jammu and Kashmir government and duly filled, would have to be sent to the RPO in Srinagar by the middle of the month. After that, official sources indicated, the list of 35-40 people wishing to travel from Srinagar would be sent to Pakistan.

By the end of March, the list of travellers from both countries would be ready and the bus service would begin on April 7, as scheduled. Officials discounted any talk of delays saying they were working to ensure that the service began on time. But the number of people travelling is likely to be limited to 35 or 40. The frequency of the service will likely be once a

Hurriyat and Pandit begin peace talks

Agencies
Jammu, March 3

THE HURRIYAT Conference has started an "internal dialogue" with the Kashmiri Pandit leadership to facilitate their return to the Valley in the backdrop of peace talks between India and Pakistan.

The dialogue has been initiated by Hurriyat as part of the "internal dialogue" between different regions and communities of the state to ascertain views and find a mutually acceptable solution to the Kashmir issue also to facilitate the return of pandits to their homes, Democratic Freedom Party president and Hurriyat contact committee in charge Syed Salim Geelani said here.

"As a part of this process, we have already started talking to Kashmiri pandit leaders in Jammu who had to leave their homes in the Valley for one or other reason," he said adding that the senior leadership would discuss with Kashmiri pandit leaders in Jammu next month, followed by another meeting at Srinagar.



A policeman at Shaitan Nullah on Thursday. AFP

Snow melts, crackdown begins

ALTHOUGH one month may be too short a period to draw definitive conclusions, the Army believes that it finally has the edge over the militants' might.

A 1:21 kill ratio is unheard of in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorist operations worldwide. Last year's ratio for the same period was 1:5.4. In the early 1990s, when militants' violence was at its height, the kill ratio was a shocking 1:1 in regions like Doda.

HTC, Srinagar

Although one month may be too short a period to draw definitive conclusions, the Army believes that it finally has the edge over the militants' might.

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from Srinagar would terminate at the LoC point beyond Chakoti, after which passengers from India would have to get off and walk across the LoC.

After crossing the bridge, they would get on to the Pakistani bus, from Muzaffarabad, for the rest of the journey along the Uri Road, officials said. Unlike the Delhi-Lahore bus, which actually crosses the Wagah border, this bus will initially not cross the LoC, for "operational" reasons, official sources said.

Alert in Bangalore after arms haul

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, MARCH 7. A day after the Delhi Police announced on Sunday the unearthing of a terrorist plot to target information technology (IT) firms here, the Bangalore Police revealed that three country-made pistols, a carbine and 149 rounds of live ammunition were found abandoned at the Cantonment Railway Station in the city on Sunday. The police said the two developments may be unrelated, but the Bangalore Police Commissioner, S. Mariswamy, today declared a state of alert in the city.

By afternoon today, armed Border Security Force personnel were found posted at the Bangalore City and Cantonment railway stations. Later in

the day, police pickets were posted outside major IT firms too. However, there was no perceptible anxiety among people in the city: life went on as usual.

The seizure

The State Railway Police seized the arms, packed in two bags, last evening, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (Railways), M.V. Murthy, told presspersons here on Monday.

A passenger who arrived by the Brindavan Express from Chennai or the Karnataka Express from New Delhi that stopped at the station between 1.30 p.m. and 2.15 p.m., could have left the bags there, he said. Five large knives with scabbards, clothes of men and women and an Urdu magazine were also found in the bags. Mr. Murthy

speculated that the weapons could have been made in Jharkhand or Bihar. They were wrapped in a newspaper printed and published from Jharkhand.

He said the police were yet to ascertain who had brought the weapons, but added that the available information did not suggest the involvement of any terrorist outfits, including the Lashkar-e-Taiba, which had reportedly planned to attack IT firms in the city.

Earlier seizure

The Railway Police had, on March 4, arrested Sanjay Singh of Jharkhand at Londa Railway Station in Belgaum district and seized from him three country-made pistols. Sanjay Singh had told the police that he was carrying the three Jharkhand-made

weapons for sale in Goa, Mr. Murthy said. After Sanjay Singh's arrest the police had tightened vigil at all railway stations in the State.

Special team

A special team has been constituted under the leadership of the Deputy Superintendent of Police, M. Krishnappa, to probe the latest case and the team will visit Jharkhand and Bihar, he said.

The seized ammunition is for 9 mm, 7.65 mm and .32 mm bore. The .32 mm is a prohibited bore and is used only by security officials. The three pistols had the etching: "Made in USA." Informed sources in the Bangalore Police said they suspect the weapons were meant for delivery to the underworld here.

সরকারি ভবনে জঙ্গি হানায় হত ৬ কাশ্মীরে

রশিদ আহমেদ • শ্রীনগর

২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি: প্রাকৃতিক দুর্যোগের মধ্যেই আজ রাজ্যের প্রশাসনিক সদর দফতরে হামলা চালানো জঙ্গিরা।

শ্রীনগরে রাজ্য বিধানসভার পাশেই ওই ভবনে চালানো হামলায় প্রাণ হারিয়েছেন তিন জন নিরাপত্তাকর্মী এবং এক জন সরকারি কর্মচারী। পরে আক্রমণকারী দুই জঙ্গি নিরাপত্তাবাহিনীর হাতে মারা যায়। আহত হয়েছেন আরও দুই সেনা। নিহতদের মধ্যে আছেন সি আর পি এফের এক মহিলা কর্মীও।

আল বদর মুজাহিদিন নামের একটি জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী হামলার দায় স্বীকার করেছে। নিহত দুই জঙ্গি পাকিস্তানি নাগরিক বলেও জানানো হয়েছে।

কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী শিবরাজ পাটিল আজ এই হামলার ব্যাপারে আলোচনা করেন রাজ্যের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী মুফতি মহম্মদ সঈদের সঙ্গে। গোয়েন্দাদের কাছ থেকেও রিপোর্ট চাওয়া হয়েছে। স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের ধারণা ভারত-পাক সম্পর্ক ইতিবাচক দিকে মোড় নেওয়ায় মরিয়্যা হয়ে হামলা চালাচ্ছে জঙ্গিরা। এর আগেও দেখা গিয়েছে দুই দেশের মধ্যে শান্তি প্রয়াস চলাকালীন জঙ্গিরা এ ধরনের হামলা চালিয়েছে। কালই রাজ্যের তুয়ারবিধ্বস্ত এলাকা পরিদর্শনে গিয়েছিলেন সনিয়া গাঁধী, প্রতিরক্ষামন্ত্রী প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়-সহ কেন্দ্রের শীর্ষ কর্তারা। বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহের পাক সফরও সফল। দুই দেশের পারস্পরিক সম্পর্কের এই উন্নতিতে হতাশ জঙ্গিরা ভবিষ্যতে আরও বড় ধরনের হামলা চালাবে বলেও আশঙ্কা গোয়েন্দাদের।

আজ বিকেল চারটে নাগাদ ওই দুই জঙ্গি গ্রেনেড ছুড়তে ছুড়তে রাজ্যের প্রশাসনিক সদর দফতরের মূল দরজা

দিয়ে ভিতরে ঢুকে পড়ে। দফতরের নিরাপত্তাকর্মীদের দিকে এলোপাথাড়ি গুলি চালায় তারা। দফতরটিতে ওই সময় প্রায় ৩০০ জন লোক ছিলেন। সেনা ও নিরাপত্তারক্ষীদের সঙ্গে জঙ্গিদের চার ঘণ্টার গুলির লড়াইয়ে অনিশ্চিত হয়ে পড়েছিল তাদের ভাগ্য।

সম্প্রতি রাজ্যের সরকারি দফতরগুলিকে আক্রমণের লক্ষ্য হিসেবে বেছে নিয়েছে জঙ্গিরা। মাস খানেক আগে শ্রীনগরের আয়কর ভবনেও একই ভাবে হামলা চালায় জঙ্গিরা। শ্রীনগরের এই বাড়িটিতেই ডিভিশনাল কমিশনার, ডেপুটি কমিশনার-সহ রাজস্ব বিভাগের বেশ কয়েক জন গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কর্তার দফতর।

হামলার কিছুক্ষণের মধ্যেই ডি আই জি এইচ কে লোহিয়ার নেতৃত্বে বিরাট পুলিশ বাহিনী ও সি আর পি এফ জওয়ানেরা বাড়িটি ঘিরে ফেলেন। কিন্তু কড়া নিরাপত্তা বেষ্টনী পেরিয়ে কী ভাবে ওই জঙ্গিরা বাড়িটিতে প্রবেশ করল তা নিয়েও প্রশ্ন দেখা দিয়েছে।

আজ বিকেলে শ্রীনগরের ডালগেট এলাকায় বি এস এফের টহলদারি চলাকালীনই একটি বিস্ফোরণে আহত হন এক জওয়ান। এ ছাড়াও আজ সারা রাজ্যের বিভিন্ন এলাকায় সেনা-জঙ্গি সংঘর্ষে প্রাণ হারিয়েছে পাঁচ জঙ্গি, আহত হয়েছেন ১৪ জন জওয়ান। সোপোরে একটি জোরদার বিস্ফোরণে আহত হয়েছেন ১২ জন পথচারী ও দুই বি এস এফ জওয়ান।

উদ্ধার ৬০০ যাত্রী। লাদাখ এলাকা থেকে আটকে পড়া প্রায় ছ'শো যাত্রীকে উদ্ধার করেছে বিমানবাহিনী। ১৫ দিন তুয়ারপাতের ফলে আটকে ছিলেন এরা। কাল ২৮ জনকে ও আজ ৩০৫ জনকে সেনা বিমান সরিয়ে নিয়ে যায়। প্রবল শৈত্যপ্রবাহ ও তুয়ারপাতের ফলে রাজ্যে মৃত্যু হয়েছে ২৫৬ জনের।

ANADARAZAR PATRIKA

25 FEB 2005

Met warning went unheard

■ 'We informed PCR, authorities, traffic police, state media...'

BASHAARAT MASOOD
SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 24

HAD the state government heeded the warning from Srinagar's meteorological office two days before the snow tsunami hit south Kashmir, hundreds of lives could have been saved.

"We had already communicated the warning to the state administration," says G.K. Mohanty, director of the Meteorological Department, Srinagar. "We even requested Radio Kashmir and Srinagar Doordarshan to make repeated broadcasts... We informed the divisional commissioner's office, police control room, traffic police and the state media... Even if others are at fault, we get the blame."

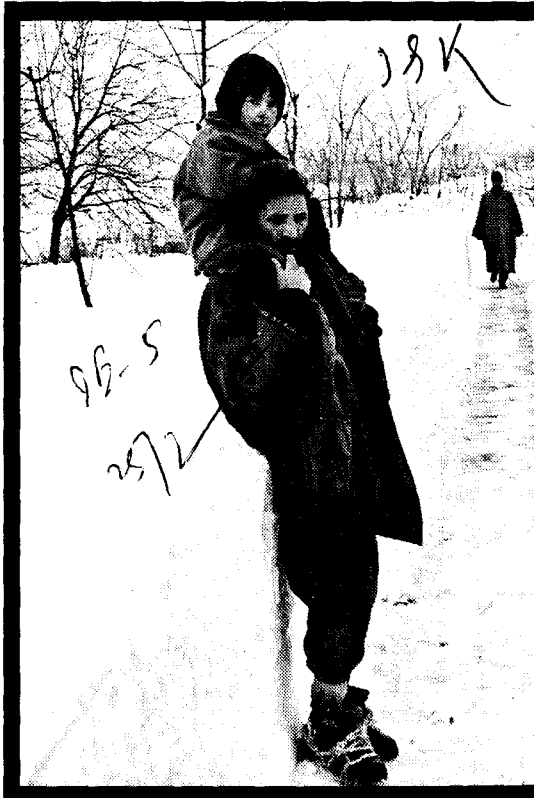
Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's secretary, Nayeem Akhtar, said even if the Met department had warned of heavy snowfall, the weather prediction doesn't help. "We have a thousand villages like Waltengo Nar spread across Kashmir where a similar tragedy can take place. There is hardly anything possible to avert a disaster caused by the nature's fury."

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir Khursheed Ahmad Ganai was not available for comment. However, SSP (Traffic) Rouf-ul-Hassan agrees the weather forecast was "unfavourable". "Who believes in these predictions?"

Hassan insists "nobody is stranded on this side of the (Jawahar) tunnel". "Our jurisdiction is upto the tunnel only. And then the road is closed not because of the snow but due to the landslides." He adds they had mentioned unambiguously that the forecast is not favourable and people should proceed only under pressing circumstances.

The Srinagar-Jammu national highway was closed after the snowstorm and around 4,000 passengers have been stranded on the highway for more than a week now.

Sources in the Met department say the matter could be taken up in Parliament. "He (Mohanty) was communicated from Delhi office that the Centre



TREK FOR SURVIVAL

A man carries a child on his shoulders as he stops for a break in Waltengo Nar. Rescue efforts were intensified on the fourth day as the death toll climbed to 256 while 453 people were rescued. The Jammu-Srinagar highway remained blocked for the seventh day on Thursday. Officials said 14 were killed in Halsidan, 11 in Rangkund, two in Pakerpora, three in Chowgund and one in Reshipora in south Kashmir. *Reuters*

'We read papers, hoping our family's not among dead'

PAWAN BALI
JAMMU, FEBRUARY 24

NAZIM Ahmad is worried and helpless. He knows that his village Norabad in Kulgam, Kashmir, was buried under snow four days ago, but there's no word on his family yet.

Ahmad, who has been stranded at the Jammu bus stand for the past 12 days, prays constantly that his one-storey village house is still standing. "I am told that there is 17-foot snow in my village, and houses have been damaged severely. There is no other man in family, what will my children do?" says the labourer.

Ahmad is among 7,000 stranded passengers from the Valley, cut off from their families who are grappling with the calamity, alone. With more than 250 deaths in Waltengo Nar and Nigeen Nar villages and the toll still rising, hope is dying out here.

Abdul Majid from Anantnag says

his maternal family is based in Waltengo Nar — the village worst hit by the snow tsunami. "We have been reading all local papers, hoping that no name of a family member is reported among the dead," says Majid.

"We were a group of 15 women who had gone to our parents' house in Kolkata," says Yasim, who is married to a shawl-dealer in Godhar village in Kulgam. The National Highway has been closed for more than 20 days and they have not heard from their husbands.

Tourism Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir came under fire when he came visiting today. There were anti-government slogans and shouts in greeting and the minister beat a hasty retreat. Mir was asked to go back, with the crowd asking him to "justify the votes" polled in his favour. Left with no answers, Mir finally said the people should not vote for him again.

25 FEB 2005



Policemen carry away a colleague felled in a gunbattle with militants in Srinagar on Thursday. Two ultras stormed the divisional headquarters of the J&K government, trapping over 200 workers, before the forces shot dead one of them in a joint operation. Three security personnel were also killed in the gunfire. P 9

Exit polls predict hung verdict in Bihar, Jharkhand

Paswan Could Be Key To Power, Lalu Gets The Jitters

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Come February 27, both Bihar and Jharkhand may throw up hung assemblies, if the exit polls are anything to go by.

Railway minister Lalu Prasad may have reason to worry—his Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) may end up with a lower tally than the BJP-JD(U) combine, and with the Congress not projected to do especially well, there could be a possibility of Lok Janshakti Party (LJP) leader Ram Vilas Paswan switching sides to form a government with the help of the BJP-JD(U).

Exit polls are often accurate in the West, but in India they have on several occasions been wide of the mark. So, the scenarios constructed on their basis should be taken with a pinch of salt.

In Jharkhand, while all the exit polls project a hung assembly, two give the BJP-led alliance a clear edge while a third suggests that the Congress-JMM may have the upper hand. But with all of them giving a handful of seats to the RJD and the Left, the incumbent government in Ranchi looks far from secure.

The Aaj Tak-Headlines Today poll conducted by ORG-

BIHAR

| | STAR | ZEE | AJ TAK |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|
| BJP+ | 96 | 77-89 | 101 |
| RJD+ | 85 | 72-84 | 89 |
| LJP | 26 | 34-46* | 22 |
| Cong | 8 | — | 6 |
| Others | 28 | 32-44 | 24 |
| Total | 243 | 239 | 242 |

JHARKHAND

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| BJP+ | 37 | 33-39 | 39 |
| Cong+JMM | 28 | 34-40 | 28 |
| RJD+ | 5 | 0-6 | 4 |
| Others | 11 | 2-8 | 10 |
| Total | 81 | 81 | 81 |

*Figures for LJP+Cong

MARG gives the BJP-JD(U) in Bihar 101 seats against the RJD-Left alliance's 89. The LJP is projected to get 22 seats, putting Paswan in a position from which he can decisively shift the balance in the NDA's favour, if the poll proves right.

For the RJD, on the other hand, it will be imperative to rope in not just Paswan but also the Congress (six seats) and a substantial chunk of the independents and others (24), if it is to remain in power.

The Star News poll conducted by A C Nielsen also suggests that the BJP-JD(U) alliance, with 96 seats, will have a clear edge over the RJD combine's 85. Once again, the LJP, with 26 seats, could put the NDA in power, although only just. The

Congress, with eight seats, can do little to further the RJD's dreams and it could be down to the 28 "others" to decide who is sworn in as CM in Patna.

At first sight, the Zee News poll, done by C Voter, seems to give the RJD the best chance. It estimates that the BJP-JD(U) alliance will end up with between 77 and 89 seats, only marginally ahead of the RJD combine's 72 to 84. The poll gives between 34 and 46 seats to the LJP-Congress.

► It's an open race in Bihar, indicate Zee polls, Page 13

AVALANCHE HAVOC IN J&K

There are only graves here

HD-1
24/2

By Shujaat Bukhari

WALTENGU (SOUTH KASHMIR), FEB. 23. Until now, the few survivors in this remote belt of South Kashmir were busy counting the bodies of those killed in last weekend's avalanches. Today, huge snow cutters managed to clear the long road from Qazigund and the emerging picture is stunning.

Waltengu Naar, as it is called, is a vast area dominated by the Gujjars. These hardy mountain folk were caught unawares by the heavy snowfall. "We have lost everything. We do not know who has survived and who is under the snow," cried Muhammad Hussain, a resident. He has been fighting a grim battle for the last three days using a spade and shovel. Hundreds of locals walked for many hours from nearby villages to help in the rescue work. They say they have buried 151 people so far; the fate of at least 50 people is still not known.

"How can we bury them when there is so much of snow? There is no other option but to have mass graves," says Mohammad Ramzan, a local Revenue Department official. Hutments that once housed poor shepherds have turned into mass graves.

Few to mourn the dead

"We can't have the purifying bath of dead bodies which is mandatory in our religion," say locals.

Frozen corpses are being taken out from the local mosque one by one, draped in white shrouds and lowered into huge graves after brief prayers. The tragedy is that there are no tears because there are few to mourn the dead. Entire families have been wiped out. Most of the few survivors are badly injured and being treated by employees of the Health Department, the only visible government agency in the area besides 50 or so police and Army personnel.

The road from Qazigund has been cleared but the trek to the place of the real damage still takes more than an hour. Master Bashir Ahmad, a resident who owned two houses, narrates

how he lost 22 of his relatives as watches the remains of his houses being levelled. "It was not an avalanche but a fierce snow storm that came with the speed of a rocket and the noise of a train and blew up whatever came its way." His son was rescued only to die later in hospital allegedly for want of medicines. His wife Hajra, was rescued after three days under the snow.

Notwithstanding the presence of 22 policemen led by an Assistant Sub-Inspector and 35 Rashtriya Rifles men, the battle is literally being fought alone by the villagers. Subedar Gumukh Singh aka Gulab said: "A chopper had landed some stuff near the village, but I did not permit its distribution because it was too little and the requirement was too much."

Priorities

According to villagers, the need is to prioritise the requirements. The authorities sent rice, blankets, medicines, utensils and flour in vehicles that literally jammed the yet-to-be-fully operational 15-km road from Qazigund. But what those involved in the digging and relief operations need are spades and shovels, water to quench the thirst and some refreshments, say locals. "We have become the fodder for the government propaganda," said Mohammad Jamal, "No doubt the policemen and soldiers are here. But if they say the security men are busy in the operations they are insulting the thousands of men who pour in daily from far away villages to dig and get the bodies out. We do not know them but we respect them."

"Nobody is providing us the shovels and other necessary implements. We are barely able to open and clear four hutments a day," said Irshad Ahmed from a neighbouring village. "With this process it will take more than six months to clear the area." People from surrounding villages rescued more than 150 villagers on Sunday; five of them died after many hours allegedly for want of treatment.

Sonia makes aerial survey: Page 12

Warning: Flee homes or die

Rashpal Dasgotra
Jammu, February 22

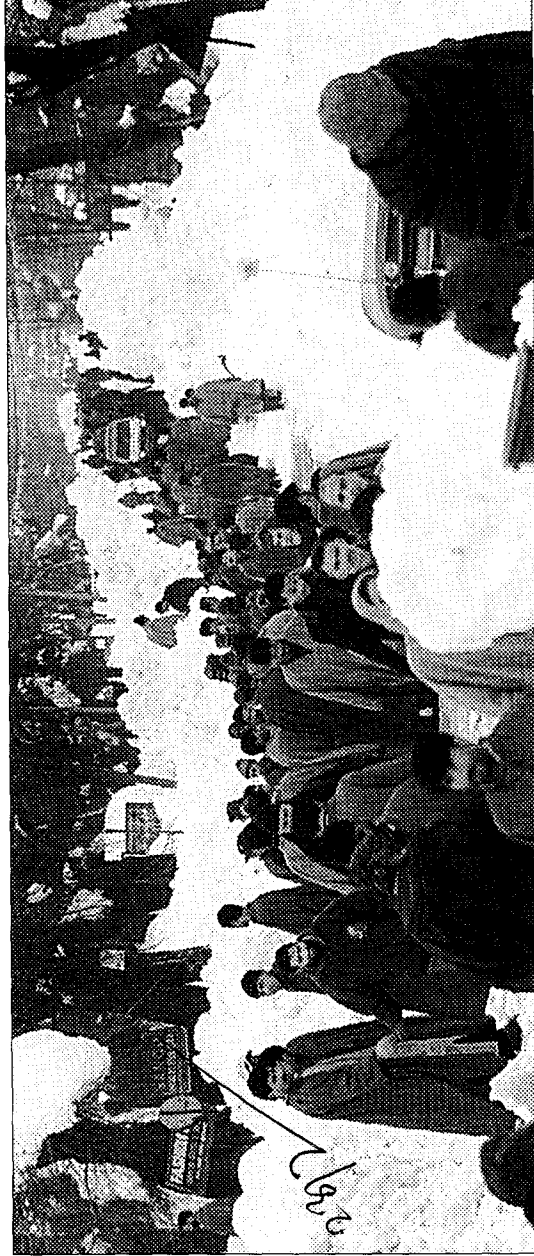
SOME GRIM statistics: the Army has counted 218 dead in avalanche-hit Jammu and Kashmir. With reports of more avalanches sweeping villages and mountainous hamlets, the number threatens to go up to 500.

On Tuesday, the Met Department sounded a warning saying the threat of more avalanches remains. "Due to accumulation of snow and the prevailing clear weather conditions, the danger of avalanches still remains."

The Army also warned people of fresh avalanches and urged those living in mountainous areas to flee. "People living in higher reaches must vacate before they're overtaken by tragedy," Major General Raj Mehta said in Srinagar. He warned that if temperatures go up in the next few days, the snow surface would melt, unleashing fresh avalanches. "Each hill has become loaded with snow and just walking can trigger avalanches," Mehta said.

Rescue operations are on,

28/2
ALERT FOR FRESH AVALANCHES, TOLL MAY TOUCH 500



FAROOQ JAVED KHAN/HT

Stranded passengers and people from adjoining villages on the snow-laden Srinagar-Jammu highway on Tuesday.

with the Army and Air Force trying to save hundreds of villagers buried under the snow.

According to the Army, over 500 have been rescued. Apparently, 100 km of fencing along the LoC has been damaged by snow in the Kashmir region.

Senior Army and Air Force officers carried out sorties in the avalanche-prone areas and dropped ready to eat food material in the inaccessible areas.

Sorties were also conducted from Jammu airbase for Navapachi area of Doda for conducting rescue

operation and Jadan Wali Galli base of Suranakote for maintaining Army posts.

"About 30 tons of ration, including fresh vegetables, have been transported from Udhampur and Jammu airbases to Srinagar. Stranded soldiers were also rescued."

said Group Captain Air Force Station R. Shankar.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Shivraj Patel on Tuesday reviewed the situation. Patil directed senior ministry officials that additional funds should be provided for immediate relief from the Central Relief Fund.

J&K



This is an aerial view of the National Highway near Ramban in Jammu and Kashmir on Monday. Express photo by Naresh Sharma

ALSO SEE PAGE 3

Over 100 killed in Kashmir avalanches

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, FEB. 21. More than 100 people, including 26 children and 18 women, are feared killed in the avalanches that swept a number of villages in the south Kashmir district of Anantnag on Sunday night.

According to officials, the toll could go up as many areas are still inaccessible.

So far, 85 bodies have been recovered in Kund and Dooru areas of the district. Agency reports said that about 230 people were missing. Rescue teams have been rushed on ponies.

The Deputy Police Commissioner, Baseer Khan, and the Superintendent of Police, Syed Ashiq Hussain Bukhari, who are camping in Anantnag, said that 66 bodies had been recovered from Naginpora, Waltengoo and Yechgum of Kulgam and 16 from Bringnar in the Dooru area. These areas are located on the Pirpanchal foothills and witnessed heavy snowfall during the last four days.

Even as the snowfall stopped last evening, the avalanches started during the night and caught the residents unawares.

"A vast area in the Kund belt of Kulgam police district is un-

der a thick blanket of snow," an official told *The Hindu*. "We do not have the exact number of missing persons obviously because there is no way anyone can trek through forests in such weather to inform the administration."

Reports said the avalanches and landslips had almost buried the three hamlets of Naginpora Nar, Panzgam and Watlungu Nar as the belt recorded 10 to 15 feet snowfall. The Kund is located close to Jawahar Tunnel, which connects Kashmir with the rest of the country.

'A huge tragedy'

With the help of the Army, police have launched rescue operations. Mr. Baseer Khan said that 34 persons had been rescued and 38 treated by the medical teams. "With the help of the Army, we have mounted rescue and relief operations. But if the reports coming from the area are true, it is a huge tragedy."

Mr. Bukhari said that entire families had died. The nearest police station was helping organise relief operations.

Officials said the toll was likely to go up as they had no contact with dozens of small

habitations in the jungle belt. In Kapran area of Dooru in the same district, 16 persons were killed.

Reports suggest that two Gujjar-dominated hamlets, Halshannadar and Brangnar, were hit by avalanches during the night. Located almost 15 km from Kapran, the main town, it took many hours for police and other security agencies to reach the spot. "Our team from Dooru has managed to reach the spot. It is being led by the SHO, Dooru Ishfaq Alam. So far, it has recovered 16 bodies with the help of the 49 Rashtriya Rifles and the operation is still on," a senior police officer said.

Administration draws flak

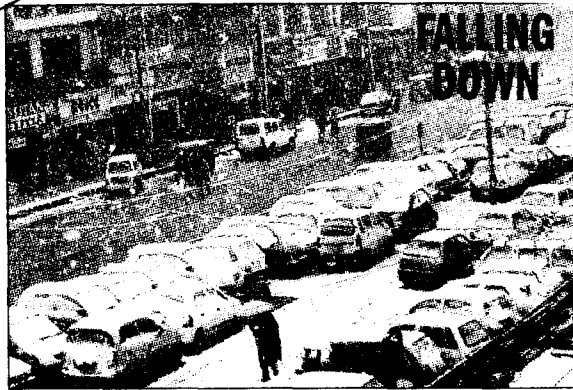
Officials here said the magnitude of the disaster would be known only when the road links with many villages were restored. Hundreds of villages located on the hills are inaccessible now.

The coalition Government, led by the People's Democratic Party, has come under sharp criticism for the way it has handled the situation.

Armed forces to the rescue: Page 13

THE HINDU

22 FEB 2005



The snow-clad Lal Chowk in Srinagar on Saturday

Snow envelops Kashmir valley

Passengers Stranded Along Jammu-Srinagar Highway

By Aarti Tikoo/TNN

Jammu/Srinagar: The Kashmir valley was cut off from the rest of the country on Saturday after the heaviest snowfall in the last 15 years led to the closure of the Srinagar-Jammu highway and cancellation of all incoming and outgoing flights from the Srinagar airport.

Snow, two to seven feet, has covered the entire valley since Friday, compounding the problems of the people, who were already facing an acute power crisis, as all modes of transport went off the roads. Two feet of snow was recorded in Srinagar till noon and it was still snowing heavily. Many trees, electric and telephone polls were uprooted, causing extensive damage to power and telephone cables.

(A PTI report from Jammu said a major tragedy was averted after a pilot aborted the take-off of an Alliance Air Jammu-Leh flight carrying 115 passengers after it developed a technical snag at the Jammu airport, a senior Indian Airlines officer said. However, the officer ruled out re-

ports of any fire in the engine compartment of the plane. As the Alliance Air flight CD-7425 was about to take off from the Jammu airport at about 11 am, Capt P Mishra heard some noise amid vibrations in engine No 2 on the right side, the IA officer said. Mishra immediately aborted the take-off.)

Landslides along Manokamna, the track to the cave shrine at Bhawan, forced the authorities to suspend pilgrimage to Goddess Vaishno Devi's temple. Reports reaching here said heavy rainfall and snowfall in Trikuta hills, where the temple is situated, brought about landslides.

Additional chief executive officer Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board Rohit Kansal told TOI pilgrims had been brought back to the base camp and those at the camp in Katra prohibited from undertaking the 11-km journey uphill to the cave. "The pilgrimage will resume as soon as the road gets cleared. Our engineers and labourers are working to clear the roads and we hope that by the evening, we might be able to resume the pilgrimage," he added.

Come winter, J&K highway turns into a death trap

By Aarti Tikoo/TNN

Jammu: Driving on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway in winter is becoming dangerous with the combined effect of bad weather and the heavy traffic of paramilitary forces' convoys.

During the past two months, loaded trucks, buses and other vehicles were stranded for days on the highway because of snowfall and landslides.

Thirty-five people were killed in a bus accident in Udhampur on Sunday, as the road had become slippery due to torrential rains.

But vehicles cannot stop plying on the highway as it is the only link to Kashmir by road, passing through mountainous curves and terrain in the Pir Panjal ranges. "We can't (avoid it) because it is matter of sending supplies to Kashmir and the people who want to visit relatives in Jammu or Srinagar," says transport commissioner Rajan Bakshi.

DIG traffic police M Niyaz says his men, along with Border Roads Organisation (BRO), always keep themselves ready for clearing the snow on the national highway. "The problem comes only when paramilitary forces' convoys take undue advantage of the situation when we stop trucks

and other civilian vehicles temporarily for clearing the snow. They don't obey our orders, perhaps because of their own professional compulsions. Instead, they overtake vehicles lined up along the highway. And that leads to traffic jam when they reach the point where our bulldozers run," he adds.

Niyaz also complains that the meteorological department does not predict specific weather conditions. "If the meteorological observatories couldn't predict the tsunami, not forecasting avalanches in Jammu and Kashmir is no big deal. At the most, they report heavy snowfall in hilly and mountainous areas and this report is routine for the four months of winter. So we cannot stop transport," he explains.

He says the Met department could prevent accidents due to avalanches and landslides by forecasting them. "But we never get any warnings," he laments.

G K Mohanty, director of the Met department in Srinagar, argues that the department's job is weather forecasting which includes snowfall and rainfall. "We share the forecast with media and state government authorities well in time. Avalanche and landslides are activities included in snowfall and rainfall," he adds.



A snow-clearing machine at work on the Jammu-Srinagar highway on Sunday

6 ITBP jawans die in avalanche

Srinagar: Six Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) jawans were killed in an avalanche near the Jawahar tunnel area on the Jammu-Srinagar national highway on Monday, official sources said.

The avalanche struck early in the morning taking away the hut in which ten ITBP personnel were posted on duty, they said.

Six bodies had been recovered so far and a search was on to trace the remaining four, the sources said.

It has been snowing heavily in the area since

Sunday evening and about seven feet snow had accumulated near the tunnel area. Over 550 vehicles, including 200 light motor and passenger vehicles, were stranded between Banihal and tunnel area due to heavy snowfall which had caused slippery conditions on the arterial road, they said.

Seven others, who were trapped in the avalanche, were rescued by security personnel, official sources said. One more person was still missing, they said. Agencies

PDP retains south Kashmir in civic polls

By Shujaat Bukhari

ANANTNAG/PULWAMA, FEB. 6. The ruling People's Democratic Party secured a majority in almost all the councils and committees in the third phase of the civic polls in the south Kashmir districts of Pulwama and Anantnag today. Braving militants' threats as well as the inclement weather, over 44 per cent of the voters made it to the booths.

Only 69 of the 147 wards in 12 municipal bodies witnessed a contest. There was no contest in 29 wards while a single candidate was elected unopposed in 49 wards. Elections were countermanded in a ward of Pampore where militants killed a candidate.

An official spokesman said the turnout in Anantnag was 34 per cent and 55 per cent in Pulwama. No untoward incident was reported from any part of the region. The authorities had made massive deployments and all the counter-insurgent agencies were part of it. All polling booths were declared hypersensitive. In certain areas, soldiers were seen patrolling in full battle gear.

The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's home-town of Bijbehara, which used to witness boycotts during elections, wore a different look today. There were long queues outside the polling booths, and the National Conference and the Congress accused the PDP of "booth-capturing."

Mohammad Abdullah Nadaf, a former Sayeed loyalist, and his wife, Shaheena, who fought as Congress candidates in Bijbehara, alleged that the PDP encouraged "voluntary withdrawal" and in one case even "purchased the withdrawal-



Voters waiting outside a polling station in Anantnag during the third phase of the municipal elections on Sunday. — Photo: Nissar Ahmad

al" of a candidate. The PDP bagged all the 13 seats in the town.

In Anantnag town, which still has the largest number of militants, there was willing participation at many booths and total boycott at others. No complaints were, however, made about the fairness of the exercise. Festive crowds were seen in the high school run by the Junglat Mupde and Unjman-e-

Nusrat-ul-Islam; over 50 per cent polling was reported there. Unlike in the past, there were no pro-"freedom" demonstrations this time. "We have come willingly," said Manzoor Ahmed, who wants to see the town getting a facelift.

Long queues were seen outside booths in Pulwama and Shopian that recorded 59 per cent and 49 per cent polling. Similar reports were received

from Dooru, Kulgam and Qazigund -- the last named recording over 76 per cent polling. PDP sweeps

Except Dooru, where the Congress leader and Minister for Works, Ghulam Ahmed Mir, has retained his control, the PDP swept the polls in other local bodies. In Anantnag, the PDP won 11 seats while the Congress managed five and the NC three. In Pulwama, the PDP

bagged five seats, with the NC winning three and the Congress one. In the Shopian municipal committee, the PDP got seven, the Congress four and NC one while one remained vacant.

The PDP did not contest in Kulgam township but Independents supported by it won seven seats along with the CPI (M).

Three went to the NC and one to the Congress.

44% turnout in final phase of J&K civic polls

Srinagar: Ignoring militant threats and poll boycott calls by separatists, a moderate 44 per cent voters on Sunday voted in the third phase of civic polls in Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag and Pulwama districts amidst tight security, a government spokesman said.

The polling began on a dull note in chilly and damp weather but picked up as the day wore on with Pulwama recording 55 per cent turnout and Anantnag 33.89 per cent at the end of the polling, giving a combined poll percentage of 44 per cent in the two districts. He said Qazigund and Dooru in Anantnag registered the highest turnout of 76.88 and 65.99 per cent, respectively.

However, Bijbehara, the home town of chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and militancy-infested Kulgam had 32.21 and 37 per cent turnout respectively, he said, adding Anantnag recorded the lowest turnout of 23.52 per cent. In Pulwama district, he said, Pulwama recorded the highest turnout of 59.26 per cent and militancy-infested Shopian only 49.90 per cent.

Tight security arrangements were in place for Sunday's polls in view of militant threats. However, no untoward incident was reported from any part of South Kashmir, the spokesman said. With militants threatening the contestants, no candidate entered the fray for 29 wards—27 in Pulwama and two in Anantnag.



Burqa-clad Kashmiri women outside a polling booth in Anantnag on Sunday

Forty-nine candidates, 29 in Pulwama and 20 in Anantnag, were declared elected unopposed. Of them, 35 belonged to the ruling PDP, eight to its coalition partner Congress and three to opposition National Conference. Balloting took place for 69 of the 147 wards in the two districts. With this, the third phase of civic polls has been completed.

Electorate of North Kashmir's Kupwara and Baramulla districts elected their representatives on January 29 and Srinagar and Jammu in the second phase.

PDP wins, but Cong puts up tough fight

The People's Democratic Party won 22 seats and Congress 17 in the 55 seats that went to the polls for the Anantnag municipal committee. In the 23-member Pulwama municipal committee, PDP won eight seats while NC and Congress bagged three each while nine were declared elected uncontested. PTI

Mixed turnout in civic polls

JAMMU

Omar Wani
Jammu, February 1

FOR THE first time in 27 years, the 3,00,000 strong electorate in the city went to exercise their franchise in the municipal polls on Tuesday. About 50 per cent votes were cast during the first five hours of polling.

The turnout was higher than in the Assembly or Parliament elections. "People are attracted by the candidates of their area," said 76-year-old Kishan Dutt Sharma, a retired government employee, who is now a social worker.

"The candidate at my area exuded a lot of confidence during campaign and I voted for her. I believe she would be able to deliver," he added.

"A lot of money is spent on campaigns nowadays and, for some MLAs, politics has become a business. We have to make sure that the right people are elected," he said.

For 20-year-old Sughanda, who has exercised her franchise for the first time, "the young and the educated must make use of their right to vote".

This will bring good leadership and prevent nepotism on the basis of religion or any relationship with the candidate," she said. Rashri and Bhavna, both 18, are quite excited to have voted. "We will see how the elected candidate performs," they opined.

SRINAGAR

Agencies
Srinagar, February 1

IN SHARP contrast to the first phase of civic polls in Jammu and Kashmir, the second for Srinagar Municipal Corporation witnessed a dull 20 per cent voting with people staying indoors in view of the strike call by separatists.

According to official figures, the average turnout for the 68 wards in the city was 20 per cent which is the highest in any election here since the eruption of militancy in the state in 1990. Though voters from the rural areas and outskirts of the city flocked to polling stations, urban voters decided to stay indoors in view of the boycott call by separatist outfits, including the Hurriyat Conference and the Jammu & Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF).

Of the four zones in the city, south topped turnout figures with 25 per cent followed by east 20 per cent, west 19 per cent and Hazratbal 18 per cent. This was in sharp contrast to the first phase of polls in Baramullah and Kupwara districts, which recorded nearly 60 per cent turnout. Batmaloo, the newly-claimed bastion of ruling PDP, represented the urban mood as the area polled less than one per cent of the total votes polled.

PDP wins civic polls in 2 districts

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Jan. 30. — The People's Democratic Party-led coalition government has swept the first phase of civic polls in the twin border districts of Kupwara and Baramulla in Kashmir.

Out of the 130 wards, PDP won 31, Congress 25 and independents 55, majority of them belonging to Peoples Democratic Forum (PDF). Since PDF is not a recognised party its candidates contested as Independents. National Conference won only 19 wards. The results indicated that the vote bank of National Conference has further eroded in north

Snowfall forces J&K highway closure

JAMMU, Jan. 30. — More than 250 vehicles were stranded today when the only surface link to Kashmir, the 300-km Jammu-Srinagar National Highway, was closed for vehicular traffic due to fresh snowfall on several stretches on the highway, officials said here. — PTI

Kashmir. In 26 wards of the Kupwara district, PDP won seven and National Conference won 3 seats. Independents won 16. Most of the Independents were part of the PDF which is an alliance partner of the ruling coalition in the state.

In 88 wards of Baramulla, PDP won 20, Congress 24, NC 16, Awami League 11 and Independents 16 and PDF 9. Awami League, founded by counter insurgent Kuka Parrey killed by

militants, is also not a registered party and therefore its candidates are treated as Independents.

Congress has strengthened its position and won 24 seats. Congress and PDP had contested 50 per cent of

the seats each though there were some areas where they were having a friendly contest. But overall the Congress-PDP combine won 44 seats in Barmaulla and seven in Kupwara.

Lashkar ultra shot

A self-styled commander of pro-Pakistan Lashker-e-Taiyaba was today shot dead in an encounter with Army troops in Rajouri district.

THE STATESMAN

J&K voters defy rebel threats, 71% cast votes

Masood Hussain
SOPHORE 29 JANUARY

UNDETERRED by the militant violence that preceded the first phase of municipal polls, a veiled teenager Mis Ferooza managed a foothold in politics after getting elected a councillor to civic body of Sopore, the erstwhile Rajdhani of militancy. She was pitted against Congress's allegedly minor teenager for Muslim Pir, one of the township's poorest localities where only 213 of over 1600 voters came out.

"Why will they (militants) kill me? I am not a politician", she said while admitting that militants killed a candidate and left two others — one from her area — wounded in a series of late-evening attack on Friday. Not aware of the strength of the electorate or the people who turned up to the booths,

she was confident of her victory well before officials started counting in the afternoon. And she won, thanks to the one-third reservation for women.

For the next five years, the fisherman's orphan would be adequately paid by the state for taking care of the requirements of her locality. It would also reduce the burden of five sisters on their carpenter brother who rarely gets work, locals said. She said she joined the fray for the social service, not employment or politics. "This is no politics. I belong to the area where we have drains and ditches. We have no electricity and no roads. As a female I know how we manage the water for our kitchen", said Ferooza.

Of the 21 wards, there was no nomination for one ward and nominees of eight seats were declared elected unopposed. But the township offered an honorable

turnout of over 25%. "This is not modest, this is great," an official said. "This poll gave us interesting instances, for example, in Maharajpora we had one brother pitted against another", he added.

Militant violence and the intense boycott campaign had little impact. There were no reports of coercion, the hallmark of all earlier electoral exercises. Officials said the overall percentage is 71% for the first phase with Kupwara polling 86% and Baramulla 56%. Though main parties — NC, PDP and Congress — had failed in getting suitable candidates at every place, it was the independent filling the vacuum.

The biggest surprise of the exercise was the NC playing second fiddle to the coalition partners and Awami League — the party founded by slain counter-insurgent Kukka Parray managing 11 of the 12 seats in Hajan, its only support base.



PEACE MEAL: Women at Baramulla polling station on Saturday. — PTI

J&K ultras target TV, radio sets

Rashpal Dasgotra
Poonch, January 25

TERRORISTS IN Kashmir have a task at hand — destroying TV sets and radios in the twin border districts of Poonch and Rajouri to prevent residents from tuning in to anti-jihad programmes.

Earlier, residents were tuning their TV and radio sets to listen to various programmes of India and Pakistan. But now, they have access to only All India Radio and Doordarshan, which are anti-Pakistan.

"A majority of the programmes on radio and TV are against militancy. As a result many local cadres of terrorist outfits have laid down arms before security forces. Irked by the impact of these programmes, Pakistani ultras are destroying televisions and radio sets," said Ghulam Nabi, resident of Krishna Ghati.

Local support for terrorists has dwindled. Desperate Pakistani terrorists are sounding their bosses back home on the need to improve the reach of pro-jehadi programmes from Pakistan to incline locals towards jihad as Indian programmes are creating impact not only on the minds of people but also on local terrorists. Security forces have intercepted many such messages. "Broadcast specific news related to the Kashmir struggle on Muzaffrabad Television and increase the coverage of radio. Broadcast Sada-e-Hurriyat on all bands including Medium Wave by upgrading bandwidth, start broadcasting on FM Radio," was one such intercepted message from the LeT cadres to PoK.

Terrorists have demanded for printed literature on jihad from across the border for distributing among Mujahids and locals. "Radio and TV are the only links for the people here with the outside world. Motivated people have started helping security forces eliminate terrorists. So, they are destroying these," said an Army officer.

26 JAN 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Mehbooba escapes attempt on life

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Jan. 24. — Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' Democratic Party president Ms Mehbooba Mufti today escaped a bid on her life when militants attacked her motorcade at Khalilpora-Nowshehra in Srinagar. A police man was injured in the attack.



Ms Mufti was campaigning for her party candidate for the forthcoming civic elections. She was accompanied by the housing and urban development minister, Ghulam Hassan Mir. Both leaders went ahead with their campaigning after the attack and urged the people to vote for the PDP.

Sources said militants hurled a grenade towards her cavalcade which, however, fell on the ground after hitting the roof of a vehicle and exploded with a big bang. Policeman Irfan Ahmad was injured. Police tried to initially play down the incident and claimed that it was not a grenade attack. This was the second attack on a civic election rally in Srinagar since last week. A Congress candidate was shot dead by militants at Baramulla recently. Militants have asked people to boycott the polls.

25 JAN 2005

THE STATESMAN

Mortars test LoC ceasefire

HTC and Agencies
Jammu/Poonch, January 18

THE ARMY tonight accused Pakistani forces of violating the 14-month-old ceasefire along the Line of Control by firing 16 mortar shells on Indian positions in the Poonch sector. One of the shells landed on a house in Poonch town's Azad

Mohallah at around 8.30 pm, injuring a girl.

Pakistan denied breaching the ceasefire agreement but said its troops, too, had heard some explosions in the Indian territory. "There was no firing from the Pakistan side," Pakistani army spokesman Major General Shaukat Sultan said in Islamabad.

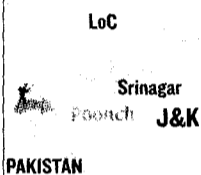
Initially, the Indian army, too, had said it wasn't sure whether the shells had been fired by the Pakistani forces or by militants. Later, an army spokesman in New Delhi, Major General Deepak Samanawar, pinned the blame on Pakistani troops. He said there was no retaliation from the Indian side.

"Yes, it's certainly a violation of the ceasefire," Samanawar told a TV channel. "It is the first time this has happened. But we are exercising full restraint.... We are trying to assess the situation. All our patrols and ambushes have been alerted."

The reports of firing came hours after Pakistan accused India of deliberately scuttling talks on the disputed Baglihar dam, which Islamabad wants India to stop building, and appealed to the World Bank to help resolve the issue.

Some officers in Kashmir speculated that the shelling was "cover fire" for militants trying to sneak into India. The Pakistani army uses mortars extensively.

Line of fire



US bullish on Indo-Pak ties

AMERICA'S TIES with India and Pakistan — and, consequently, its confidence in its ability to secure peace between the Asian neighbours — took centre stage at US secretary of state-designate Condoleezza Rice's testimony before a senate panel today.

Underscoring Washington's close ties with both New Delhi and Islamabad, Rice told the senate foreign relations committee, which held a confirmation hearing on her nomination to succeed Colin Powell: "In Asia, we have moved beyond the false assumption that it is impossible to have good relations with all of Asia's powers.

"The US is cooperating with India, the world's largest democracy, across a range of economic and security issues. This, even as we embrace Pakistan as a vital ally in the war on terror, and a state in transition towards a more moderate and democratic future."

She vowed to use the power of America's strong alliances in Asia to help secure peace and prosperity in the region.

HTC, Washington

Centre forms panel on J&K autonomy

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 17

THE CENTRE on Monday announced the setting up of a three-member committee to hold talks with political parties in Jammu and Kashmir to discuss the autonomy issue. The committee is expected to be headed by Centre's interlocutor, N.N. Vohra.

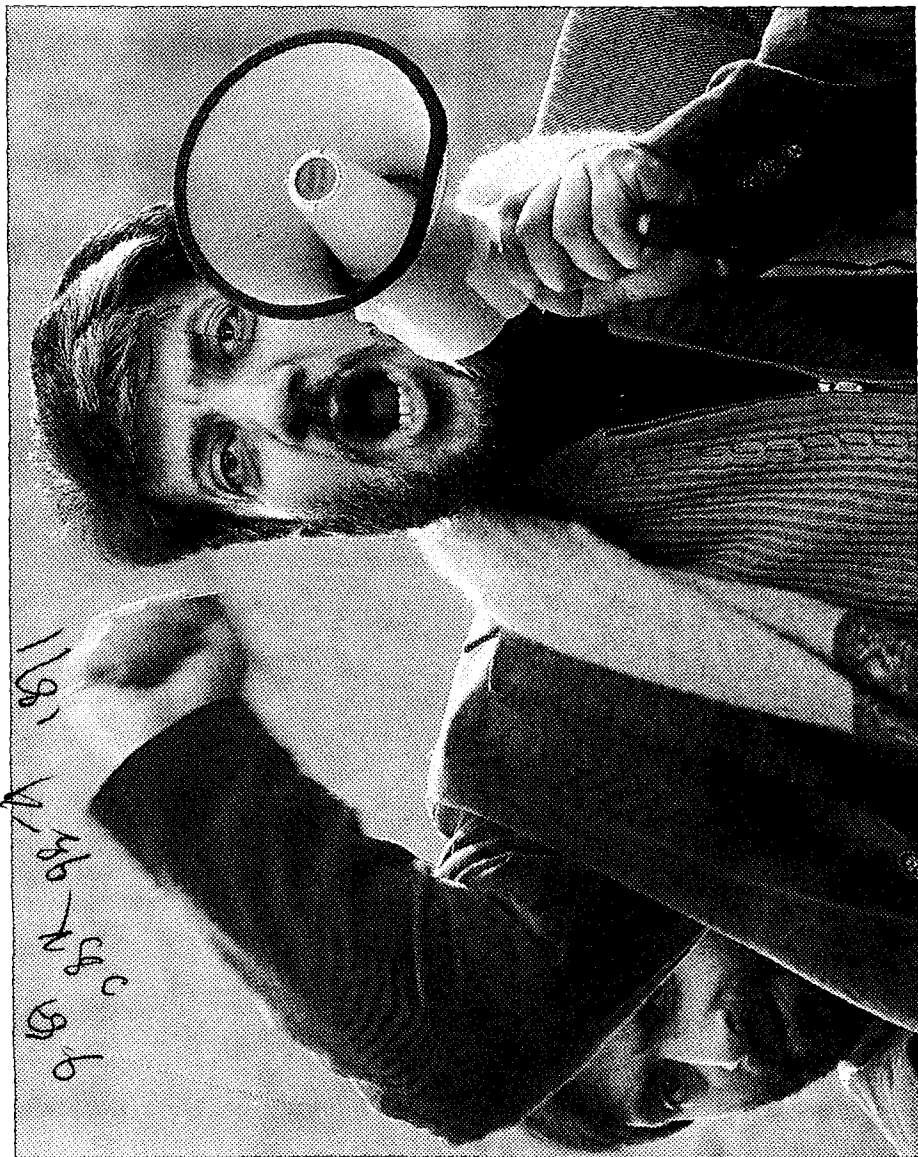
Home Minister Shivraj Patil announced the decision to constitute the committee following a 45-minute meeting with National Conference president Omar Abdullah and former J&K Chief Minister Farooq Abdullah.

Patil said the National Conference had raised the demand for greater autonomy both with him and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when they visited the state. "If the Centre can talk to those seeking independence and accession to Pakistan, why leave out the National Conference's demand, which is within the four walls of the Constitution", Patil added.

The National Conference, which was heading the previous government, had passed a resolution seeking greater autonomy. Patil said the committee would seek the opinion of other political parties, too, and submit its report to the Home Ministry for further consultations.

Earlier, Omar expressed satisfaction over the formation of the committee saying, "It will help the Centre in understanding that autonomy will help in bringing a big change in the situation in the state".

"We have also sought greater se-



AFF

Democratic Freedom Party leader Shabir Shah addresses an anti-election rally in Srinagar on Monday.

curity cover for candidates in the civic polls and drawn the home minister's attention to increasing attacks on vital installations in

the state", he added. Meanwhile, National Conference president Omar Abdullah today said the Union home minister's de-

cision to open talks on autonomy is a clear vindication of his party's ideology and vision.

"We have a clear vision and

agenda... The 2000 autonomy resolution passed by the Assembly will form the basis of discussions. The NC will constitute a committee of three members in a day or two," he told *Hindustan Times* after his meeting with Patil.

The autonomy resolution seeks restoration of the pre-1953 semi-sovereign status to Jammu and Kashmir with its own elected head of state — Sadar-e-Riyasat and Wazir-e-Azaam or Prime Minister — and its complete control over all matters except foreign affairs, communications and defence.

The NC is not rigid on the contents of the autonomy report that was prepared by a panel for over a period of almost three years. "We are open to discussions," Omar said. Monday's decision is seen as a sequel to the November 2004 Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Jammu and Kashmir visit when autonomy popped up as a major issue.

The NC notion that the restoration of autonomy is not an unproductive look-back, but a productive look-ahead, has been recognised. It is also seen as a victory of the NC argument that the autonomy is an antidote to the violent forces of secession, besides offering a sense of pride and dignity to the alienated sections of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Troops pullout

Continuing the process of withdrawal from J&K, 400 troops will be de-inducted from the Uniform Force division in Udhampur district on Tuesday, sources said.

বাড়ছে পাক চাপ, কাশ্মীরে বাড়ছে হিংসা

অগ্নি রায় • নয়াদিল্লি

১৬ জানুয়ারি: কাশ্মীর নিয়ে অর্ধেক পাকিস্তান ভারতের উপর বিভিন্ন মাধ্যমে চাপ বাড়াতে চেয়ে ফের সন্ত্রাসের পথেই চলতে শুরু করেছে। উপত্যকায় ধারাবাহিক ভাবে ঘটে চলা জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপে দিল্লি সেই ইঙ্গিতই পাচ্ছে।

কেন্দ্রীয় স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রকের অনুমান, ফেব্রুয়ারি মাসে সার্বক ভারত-পাকিস্তান পার্শ্ব বৈঠকের আগে দিল্লিকে যতটা সম্ভব কোণঠাসা করতে চায় ইসলামাবাদ। বাজপেয়ী জমানায় যে দ্রুততায় কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনার অগ্রগতি হচ্ছিল তা এখন নিঃসন্দেহে স্লথ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। বিষয়টিতে উদ্বিগ্ন পাক প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ বিভিন্ন মঞ্চে যথেষ্ট সুর চড়াচ্ছেন। সম্প্রতি তিনি এটাই জানিয়েছেন, শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস সংযোগ বুলিয়ে রেখে অন্য কোনও আত্মস্বার্থক পদক্ষেপ অর্থাৎইন। অদূর ভবিষ্যতেই পাকিস্তানে ভারতের রাষ্ট্রদূত শিবশঙ্কর মেননের মাধ্যমে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনা শুরু হওয়ার কথা। কিন্তু সেই ট্র্যাক-টু কুটনীতির পাশাপাশি 'অন্য ভাবে'ও চেষ্টা চলছে ভারতকে চাপে ফেলে শীর্ষ পর্যায়ে আলোচনার টেবিলে বসতে বাধ্য করার।

কয়েক দিন হল বিভিন্ন ইসলামি সংগঠনের সন্ত্রাসে উত্তপ্ত হয়ে উঠেছে জম্মু-কাশ্মীর। কাল থেকে ত্রাস ছড়িয়েছে খোদ শ্রীনগরে। কঠোর নিরাপত্তা গলে স্থানীয় পাসপোর্ট অফিসে ঢুকে পড়ে দু'জন সশস্ত্র জঙ্গি। আল-মানসুরেইন জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠীর দাবি, এই কাজ তাদের। কাল রাত ও আজ সকালেও সেনাবাহিনীর সঙ্গে গুলির লড়াই হয়েছে। মারা গিয়েছেন দু'জন সি আর পি এফ জওয়ান, দু'জন জঙ্গিও। ৫ জওয়ান জখম হয়েছেন। জ্বালিয়ে দেওয়া হয়েছে অফিসের একাংশ। আজ জম্মু ও উদমপুর জেলায় রহস্যজনক ভাবে মারা গিয়েছেন চার জন। তাঁদের দু'জন তীর্থযাত্রী। সন্দেহ করা হচ্ছে জঙ্গি হামলাতেই এই মৃত্যু। কিছু দিন আগে প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাশ্মীর সফরের সময়েও দু'জন জঙ্গি আস্তানা গেড়েছিল প্রধানমন্ত্রীর বক্তৃতা মঞ্চের কাছে। পাহাড়ের উপর পাঁচ ঘণ্টা লড়াই করে তাদের হত্যা করে সামরিক বাহিনী।

স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রক সূত্রের খবর, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরের ত্রাল-দাচিদাম-দারা পর্বতে সম্প্রতি খোঁজ পাওয়া গিয়েছে একাধিক নতুন বাস্কারের। জঙ্গি সংগঠন জৈশ-ই-মহম্মদ সেখানে তাদের সদর কার্যালয় বানিয়েছে। ওই সংগঠনেরই এক ধৃত জঙ্গির কাছ থেকে পাওয়া তথ্য অনুযায়ী, বিমান বিধ্বংসী কামান-সহ বিভিন্ন অস্ত্র ওই বাস্কারগুলি ঠাসা। পুষ্ক ও রাজৌরিতে সম্প্রতি মৌলানা মাসুদ আজহার এসে এক সপ্তাহ থেকে গিয়েছেন, স্থানীয় জেহাদীদের প্রশিক্ষণের জন্য। তারা শীঘ্র বড় আঘাত হানার জন্য তৈরি হচ্ছে বলে মনে করা হচ্ছে।

নর্থ ব্লকের অনুমান, আই এস আই উপত্যকায় অত্যন্ত সক্রিয় হয়ে উঠেছে এবং অদূর ভবিষ্যতে নাশকতা বাড়ানোর ছক কষেছে তারা। কাশ্মীর নিয়ে মনমোহন সিংহ সরকারের ধীরে চলো নীতিতে তিনি যে সন্তুষ্ট নন, সে কথা বিভিন্ন সময়ে বুঝিয়ে দিয়েছেন মুশারফ। গত মাসে ইসলামাবাদে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে দু'দেশের বিদেশসচিব পর্যায়ে কথা এক ইঞ্চিও এগোয়নি। মেননের মাধ্যমে কথা কোন পথে এগোবে সে ব্যাপারেও কোনও স্পষ্ট সংকেত পায়নি ইসলামাবাদ। বরঞ্চ শ্রীনগরে ও সংসদে প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহ বলেই চলেছেন, দেশভাগ অথবা ভারতের মানচিত্রের পুনর্বিন্যাস ঘটিয়ে কাশ্মীর সমস্যা সমাধানের প্রল্নই উঠছে না। এ কথাও বলা হচ্ছে, আন্তঃসীমান্ত সন্ত্রাস বন্ধ না হলে, অর্থাৎ মুশারফ প্রাক্তন প্রধানমন্ত্রী বাজপেয়ীকে দেওয়া কথা না রাখলে কাশ্মীর নিয়ে আলোচনার সম্ভাবনাই নেই। পি টি আই লন্ডন থেকে জানিয়েছে, বিদেশমন্ত্রী নটবর সিংহও মেনে নিয়েছেন যে, আত্মস্বার্থক ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার গতি স্লথ হয়েছে। আলোচনা ঠিক পথেই এগোচ্ছে এটা বলে নটবর জানিয়েছেন, স্লথতার বিষয়টি নিয়ে তিনি আগামী মাসে পাক নেতাদের সঙ্গে, খুব সম্ভবত মুশারফের সঙ্গেও, কথা বলবেন। ভারত ৭২টি আত্মস্বার্থক ব্যবস্থার কথা বলেছে।

সব মিলিয়ে কুটনৈতিক অস্বস্তি বেড়েই চলেছে পাকিস্তানের। সার্ক-এর আগেই ভারতকে নরম করার (তা সে চাপ দিয়েই হোক, অথবা আলোচনা বা নাশকতা) কোনও সুযোগই ছাড়তে চাইছে না ইসলামাবাদ। কাল স্বর রীতিমত চড়িয়ে মুশারফ বলেছেন, শ্রীনগর-মুজফফরাবাদ বাস চলাচল নিয়ে স্পষ্ট সিদ্ধান্ত না হলে ভারত-পাক অন্যান্য আত্মস্বার্থক পদক্ষেপের প্রল্নই উঠছে না। পাকিস্তানের একটি কাগজ বলেছে, মুশারফ বেশ কিছু পাক সংগঠনের প্রতিনিধির সঙ্গে বৈঠক করে জানিয়েছেন, "ভারত হরিয়ত নেতাদের বাসে আসার অনুমতি দিলে আমি মুজফফরাবাদে তাঁদের স্বাগত জানাব।" প্রসঙ্গত, হরিয়ত নেতাদের ভিসা দেওয়া নিয়ে দিল্লির টালবাহানার নীতিকেও ভাল চোখে দেখছে না পাকিস্তান। হরিয়ত নেতৃত্ব বিষয়টি নিয়ে পাকিস্তানের কাছে নালিশও জানিয়ে রেখেছেন।



শ্রীনগরে পাসপোর্ট অফিসে লড়াই চলছে জঙ্গিদের সঙ্গে। সরকারি ভবন থেকে উদ্বিগ্ন চোখে দেখছেন জওয়ানেরা। রবিবার। — রয়টার্স

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ANA

J-K siege ends, 2 militants killed

2 CRPF jawans also dead in the gunbattle, cache of arms found

MIR EHSAN
SRINAGAR, JANUARY 16

SECURITY forces stormed Srinagar's indoor stadium complex killing two militants in a fierce gunbattle that lasted almost a day.

Two CRPF personnel, including an officer, were killed in the shootout.

On Saturday, heavily armed militants belonging to the Al-



Mansoorian attacked the regional passport office, housed inside the stadium complex.

DIG Kashmir, H K Lohia who supervised the operation said that troops managed to kill one of the militants hiding inside the passport office during the early morning raid but his accomplice took refuge in building next to the office.

Snipers cornered him in a room and forced him to leave the building. He was shot dead later.

A huge cache of arms including grenades were recovered from the dead militants. Police

Outside the passport office where a day-long encounter came to an end in Srinagar on Sunday. Javed Shah

also found a black Bolero with beacon lights which the terrorists had allegedly used to enter the complex.

One of the militants set ablaze a portion of the passport office. Passport officials have rushed to the spot to assess the damage.

DIG Operations CRPF, Sat Sarwoop Singh said, "Two jawans died while two sustained bullet injuries during the operation."

The dead jawans have been identified as Sub-Inspector Ansari and constable Ved Paul.

Security has been tightened around the complex which is adjacent to the Bakshi Stadium, the main venue of the Republic Day and Independence Day functions.

Srinagar standoff ends with ultra deaths

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

SRINAGAR, Jan. 8. — Security forces today killed two militants holed up in the Income Tax Office in the heart of the city here after nearly 25 hours of gunbattle that also left five people, including four security personnel dead.

The ultras of Al-Mansoorian outfit were killed after security forces launched a room-by-room sanitisation exercise to push them to one side of the building in the Barbarshah locality here, Deputy Inspector General of Police HK Lohia said.

He said after initial difficulty, the security forces successfully took over the first and second floors of the building and killed the militants.

During the process, the body of a civilian employee, Mushtaq Ahmad, who

went missing yesterday, was also recovered.

Mr Lohia said four security personnel, including a Deputy Commandant of BSF, SS Rawat, were also killed in the battle.

The encounter began when the militants stormed the building yesterday afternoon, killing a CRPF jawan and an Indian Reserve Police constable by hurling a grenade.

Rawat, who was among three officers injured in the exchange of fire and grenades with the ultras, succumbed to injuries at the Army hospital last night.

The attack comes less than three weeks ahead of the Republic Day celebrations and civic polls scheduled in the state later this month.

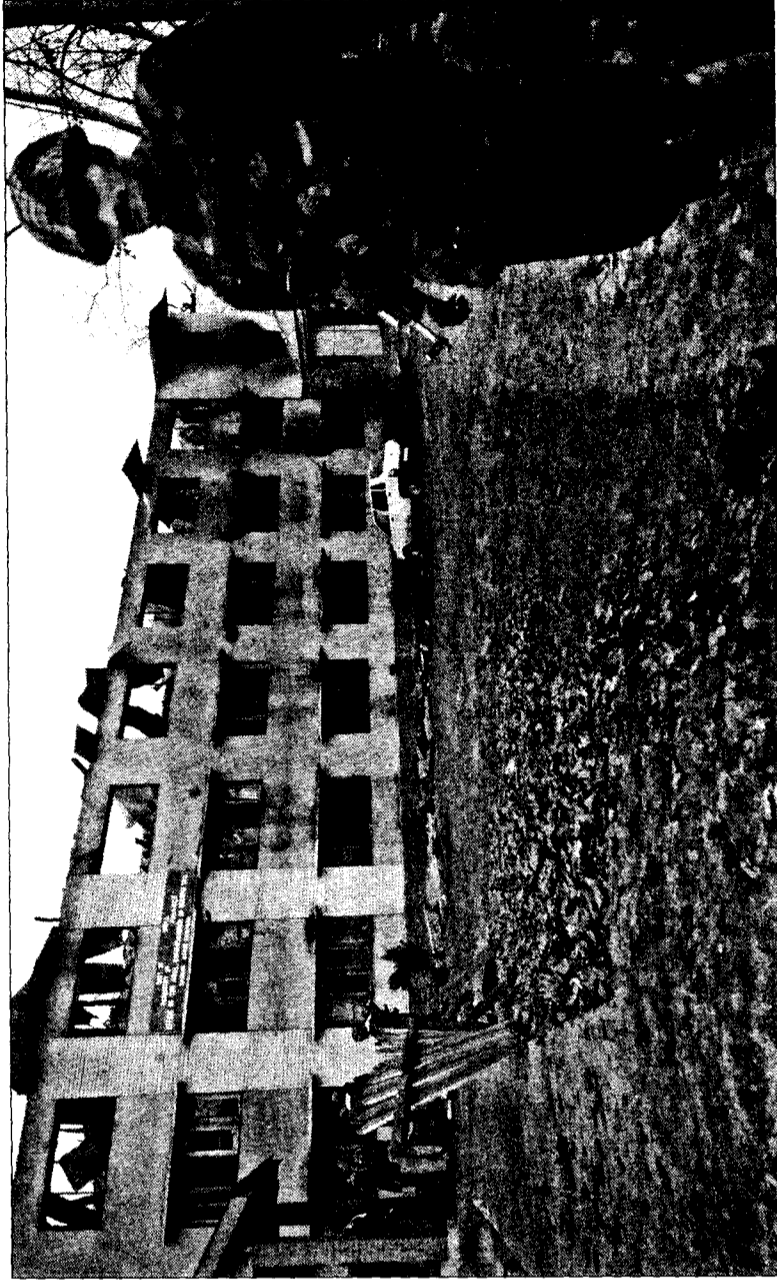
The bodies of ultras were retrieved along with arms and ammunition. Although a CRPF

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spokesman had said last evening that both ultras had been shot dead and the operation was suspended due to darkness, fresh exchange of firing began in the early hours today in which two militants were killed. A constable also lost his life and three others including an assistant sub-inspector sustained injuries.

Yesterday, security forces had rescued nearly 30 persons, mostly employees of the IT department, from the building which was on fire and the top two floors of the three-storey building were completely gutted.

The security around all government, semi-government and sensitive installations across the city has been beefed up in view of the latest spurt in militant attacks. There have been over a dozen grenade attacks in the past one week.



A BSF jawan outside the gutted Income Tax Office in Srinagar on Saturday. — AFP

Ultras strike Srinagar I-T hub

871 28K
Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR, Jan. 7. — Two militants stormed the Income-Tax office building in the heart of the city today, triggering a fierce gunbattle with security personnel that left three securitymen, including a BSF Deputy Commandant, and both the ultras dead while four others, including three senior officers, were injured.

The extremist outfit Al-Mansoorian tonight claimed responsibility for the attack. A caller, introducing himself as a spokesman of the group, justified the attack to a local daily.

The three-storied building housing the Income-Tax department in Barbarshah locality was set on fire soon after the terrorists stormed it around 3.45 p.m., hurling grenades and firing indiscriminately.

However, people, mostly employees of the I-T department, trapped inside the building were rescued, a CRPF spokesman said. "One jawan was killed on the spot, setting off a fierce gunbattle with security forces in which both the *fidayeen* were killed," he said.

The body of policeman Golam Mohiuddin, who was associated with the security wing, was found in a bunker inside the building. One of his associates was also missing. BSF Deputy Commandant S Rawat, who was among the four security personnel seriously injured, succumbed to his injuries at hospital.

The CRPF spokesman said the news of the killing of the militants



A CRPF officer scales down the wall of the burning I-T building in Srinagar. — AFP

was confirmed by security personnel who entered the building to carry out searches. The search operation in the building was suspended for

the night amidst fears that there could be more arms and explosives lying in the building. It is to resume tomorrow morning, officials said.

“Bilateral engagement only way to resolve Kashmir dispute”

By Luv Puri

JAMMU, JAN 2. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, has said foreign powers have only a limited role to play in resolving the Kashmir dispute and bringing peace in the State.

It was essentially a bilateral problem and the present leadership of India and Pakistan had the requisite intellectual strength to resolve the differences between them in the larger interest of the people.

In an exclusive interview to *The Hindu* here on recently, Mr. Sayeed said: “The foreign countries namely western powers do have an historic interest in Jammu and Kashmir for decades because of several factors.

This interest further increased after the two countries went nuclear and the concern was obvious as they do not want any trouble in the sub-continent.

But at the same time their knowledge of [the] ground reality is limited and their interest beyond a point might add to the complexity of the situation.”

Complex situation

“The two countries are sovereign powers and with their collective wisdom they can cer-

tainly resolve the outstanding issues between them, including Kashmir. One has to understand the complexity of the State of Jammu and Kashmir and nobody knows [it] better than the people of the State. The State of Jammu and Kashmir is a mini India with [a] number of diversities, whether ethnic, linguistic or religious enriching it. We take pride in our diversity and there is no simple and straitjacket solution to the problems of the State. Complex problems have to be solved with a process of dialogue and engagement between the two countries...”

On the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf’s latest statement where he reiterated his country’s old position, Mr. Sayeed said it was due to Gen. Musharraf’s compulsions and the internal political dynamics of his country. (Gen. Musharraf had in last evening’s address to his nation emphasised that he had in no way given up his country’s position on the United Nations Resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir passed on January 5, 1949.)

‘Soften LoC’

According to Mr. Sayeed, the right course of action for the leaders of the two countries would be to soften the Line of

Control and allow the divided families on either side to meet each other.

Evaluating the progress made in 2004, he said: “In the bygone year dialogue between both countries has already yielded rich dividends in the form of confidence-building measures (CBMs) which is reflected in the peace prevailing along the LoC and also within the State.”

Talks with separatists

On the dialogue with various factions of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference or for that matter any separatist group, the Chief Minister said: “The Prime Minister has already made an offer to hold dialogue unconditionally and nobody who desires peace in the State can afford to spurn this opportunity. Leaders should come forward and hold a dialogue as they claim to represent people and have to be sensitive to their sentiment who want peace through dialogue.”

On the human rights situation in the State, he said: “Let me be very clear that my Government has worked to improve the human rights situation in the State and it is [there] for every one to see.”