

NATIONAL CONFERENCE | Abdullah Jr is elected party president for second term Centre insincere to Kashmiris: Omar

MUZAFFAR RAINA

SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 19

SOON after his election as National Conference (NC) president for the second consecutive term, former Union minister Omar Abdullah today sought an apology from the Centre alleging it was insincere to Kashmiris.

Omar was the unanimous choice of the party delegates for the NC president post. Immediately after his election, he targeted the Centre. "Aap ka imaan saaf nahin hein (The Centre's conscience is not clear)," the NC president said, counting the "wrongs committed by New Delhi against Kashmiris. "From the day Shiekh sahib (his grandfather) was arrested by a constable to this day, a lots of wrongs have been committed. The Centre should apologise to Kashmiris." He said, "If you have courage, invite us for talks. If you want to listen to what our heart wants, then know that... we want you to leave Kashmir," he said.

Omar recalled his meeting with the Home Ministry and said that he was told that the



Omar Abdullah after being elected as National Conference president at the NC headquarters in Srinagar on Monday. Express photo by Javeed Shah

"Centre is willing to discuss its autonomy demand". "But when I met them three months later, I was told that I should not go by their words but by their deeds," he said.

Omar said violence in the state cannot stop unless the Kashmir issue is resolved. "If you think bloodshed will stop

without resolving the issue, you are mistaken. I may not like it, but it is a reality," he said. "People here are ready for talks... you do not wait for the infiltration, Fidayeen attacks and car bombs to stop before starting the talks." Omar said there was a consensus among political par-

ties here that the Kashmir issue cannot be resolved by the gun. He said the Centre should involve more and more people of the state in talks for resolving the issue.

But he regretted that the Centre was holding talks with separatists who want a solution outside the parame-

ters of the Indian Constitution, but not with the NC which favours a solution within the Constitutional framework.

On the Centre's opposition to the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) discussing Kashmir, he said, New Delhi should have no objection to it. "They (Centre) are saying that Kashmir is our internal issue but if so, why are they talking to Pakistan about it. We are fed up with lies, tell us the truth," he said.

NC patron and former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, speaking on the occasion, said there can be no solution to Kashmir unless Kashmiris are involved in the process. He favoured a round-table conference involving both separatist and mainstream parties who can put forth their proposals. "The best proposal can be presented before the government of India," he said.

Earlier, amid cheers and slogans, NC leader Abdul Rahim Rather announced Omar's election and said 2,476 delegates out of 6,662, elected recently by the party members, had proposed his name for the post. Omar later won uncontested.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2005

New challenges in Kashmir

The great earthquake that devastated large parts of undivided Kashmir in October has had seismic consequences not just for its victims but also for political processes on both sides of the Line of Control. Jihadist groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba have succeeded in leveraging the goodwill garnered by their well-funded earthquake relief effort to execute a series of high-profile terrorist strikes in India. Many believe this coming spring will see a new wave of violence – one that could put pressure on a *détente* process that is key to building an abiding peace in South Asia. In order to find a way out of what can, unchecked, snowball into the next India-Pakistan crisis, it is necessary to have a nuanced understanding of just what is going on in Jammu and Kashmir. India-Pakistan *détente* has yielded demonstrable results. Once the bilateral crisis of 2001-02 was defused, violence in the State has been in steady decline. Pakistan seems to have realised that high levels of jihadist violence in the State pose a threat not just to India, but also to its own interests. On the other hand, the conviction of the Pakistani Army and its Islamist allies that low-grade covert warfare is needed to secure concessions on J&K means an end to violence is not in sight. While terrorist violence has declined, it remains a brutal, life-shaping reality for ordinary people in and outside the State. If the peace process is to flower, it must be insulated from the pressures continued terrorist violence will bring to bear on India-Pakistan *détente*.

What then can be done? Indian policy from the mid-1990s has been predicated on the assumption that, stripped of political legitimacy within J&K, terrorism cannot survive. Experience has shown this assumption to be dangerously flawed. Dialogue with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference is stalled because the organisation has no authority over terrorist groups, and thus cannot deliver even a limited de-escalation in return for political concessions from New Delhi. While carrying on a broad-based dialogue within J&K is vital to strengthening democracy, it is no substitute for fighting terrorism resolutely. On this front, the challenges are formidable. Although terrorist groups have demonstrated growing technological sophistication, Indian counter-intelligence and operational infrastructure remain grossly inadequate. Lashkar commanders are increasingly using secure satellite phone-based communication technologies that Indian intelligence organisations do not have the resources to decrypt. Despite the expanding reach of the cellphone network in J&K, no investments have been made to upgrade the Intelligence Bureau's communications capabilities in the State. The J&K police lack even such basic tools as a computerised online record base on suspects. Investments in modernising the security apparatus must be made – starting now. Policy-makers must start fighting violence more intelligently if peace is to have a real chance.

13 DEC 2005

Protests, hunger strikes mark Human Rights Day in Kashmir

Rallies to submit memoranda at the United Nations office in Srinagar

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11/12



ALL FOR RIGHTS: Supporters of the Hurriyat Conference (Moderate Group) demonstrating on Saturday, the Human Rights Day, at Lal Chowk in Srinagar. - PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Demonstrations, seminars and hunger strikes by separatist organisations and the High Court Bar Association marked International Human Rights Day in Kashmir on Saturday.

Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabir Ahmed Shah and chairman of the National Front Naeem Ahmed Khan led the protesters who chanted slogans against "human rights excesses."

Mr. Shah and the moderate Hurriyat leader Javed Mir led

separate rallies to the United Nations office at Sonwar here to submit memoranda.

Leaders of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front observed fast to "express solidarity with the people subjected to custodial killings, disappearances, torture and arrests," while hardline separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani addressed a seminar organised by the Bar Association.

Hitting out at the Pakistan Government and the moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq,

Mr. Geelani said whatever was happening vis-à-vis the resolution of the Kashmir issue was in the interest of India and people were falling in a "trap."

He said: "All these road maps and proposals such as self-governance and self-rule are in no way in the interests of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Vague terms are being floated to divert the attention of the people from the righteous cause of self-determination."

Criticises OIC

Criticising the Organisation

of the Islamic Conference, an association of 57 nations, he said it did not take into account the "gross human rights violation at the hands of security forces in Kashmir," while drafting the Makkah Declaration denouncing terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Expressing solidarity with the "victims of state terrorism," JKLF acting chairman Bashir Ahmed Bhat and other leaders of the front observed a hunger strike.

"The world is talking about the resolution of Kashmir but

our people are continuously subjected to custodial killings, disappearances, torture, arrests, rape and molestation, and there is no let-up whatsoever in the human rights abuses," Mr. Bhat said. The world community should pressure India to stop the abuses, he said. "We challenge New Delhi's presence here. Once Indian troops withdraw human rights abuses will stop automatically," Masarat Alam, a hardline separatist leader of the Muslim League said.

The police took into custody at least 50 activists.

INTERVIEW ■ Delhi interested only in talking to those who speak of *azadi*, no one wants to listen to us, says NC chief

Omar submitted autonomy proposal to US team

RAKESH ROCKY
JAMMU, DECEMBER 5

ONCE a strong critic of Pakistan, National Conference leader Omar Abdullah today feels that it is that country rather than the Centre which is readier to consider autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir.

"Delhi is interested only in talking talk to those who speak of *azadi*," Abdullah told *The Indian Express* today. "If people in Pakistan want to hear us out on autonomy why shouldn't we talk to them? *Delhi mein kot hamari baat sunne ko taiyaar nahin hai* (no one in Delhi is willing to listen to us)."

The former minister of state for external affairs said, "If things go well I will visit Pakistan in January-February next year to meet the leader-ship." His father and NC patron, Farooq Abdullah, disclosed that the party had also submitted proposals on autonomy of the region to a US delegation led by Dan Burton in Delhi recently.

"The US delegation told Omar that they would study the proposals and talk to Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf," said Farooq. Both the Abdullahs said their party was strongly in favour of including all the three regions of the state as well as the displaced Kashmiri Pandits in the talks on the Kashmir issue. They also said that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) should clarify their propagating of "self-rule". "They should clarify what they want—self-governance, pre-1953 status or complete *azadi*," said Omar.

As for autonomy for the state, Farooq wondered what had happened to the committee that was announced by Home Minister Shivraj Patil in January. "We had met Patil and he had announced the formation of a committee that would discuss the various aspects on autonomy," he said. He also demanded that the Indian government go public with what Pakistan has proposed about self-governance. "People of the country should know this," said Farooq.

MUZAFFAR RAINA
SRINAGAR, DECEMBER 5

WHEN he died 23 years back, Kashmir had plunged into grief. People from all corners of the state had streamed in to take part in the funeral procession. The whole of Kashmir mourned for weeks.

But today, on the 100th Birth Anniversary of Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the people of the valley seemed alienated from the event. Sheikh Abdullah, the tallest ever Kashmiri leader, the Lion of Kashmir who became a household name and whose party, the National Conference, ruled the valley for decades, seems to be a forgotten name.

When a few hundred men and women gathered at his mausoleum on his centenary birthday, it seemed to be a security exercise rather than a meeting to express love and affection. The people seemed completely alienated from the



JAVEED SHAH

Omar Abdullah pays homage to grandfather Sheikh Abdullah

man and his legacy—the National Conference that ruled J&K for decades. From the house at Saura where he was born, now in ruins, to his grave, the entire stretch had security forces on alert to prevent any militant attack. The house and the one he constructed for himself later,

some metres away, are in ruins. They were set ablaze by militants in the early nineties. "Nobody comes here... we are here on duty," said Mohammad Saleem, a police sub-inspector on guard at the house. Abdullah, people here say, lived there till 1975.

"Yes, I know it is his cente-

nary birthday today but nobody is celebrating it... everybody is busy..." said Mohammad Ashraf Dar, a senior government officer at the Agriculture University in Saura.

Musaddiq Ali, a youth, said, "... What should we remember him for?"

Many elders here, however, admire Abdullah as "an unparalleled leader". Wadi Mohammad Shiekh, a 90-year-old shopkeeper, says Kashmiris owe their prosperity to Abdullah. "In our days, 10 people had a single pair of trousers but he (Abdullah) changed that. He introduced land reforms and today every Kashmiri owns land and a house," he said.

Like his birthplace, Abdullah's burial place at Naseem Bagh in Hazratbal is a highly secured area. Dozens of policemen have a tough time protecting it from becoming "militants target" and on several occasions, militants had

tried to blow it up. Abdullah is considered the architect of Kashmiris' struggle against Dogra autocracy, and supported Kashmir's accession to India and ruled the state till 1953. He later waged "a movement for self-determination for Kashmiris" which ended in the 1975 accord after which he again took over the reigns of power.

As most people today remained away from celebrations on this "auspicious day", the NC had organised a "grand show" to show their respect for the "revered leader". The family of Sher-e-Kashmir still enjoys political clout here.

However, only a few hundred people, mostly aged party activists, turned up. In other places, the party tried to make the importance of day felt by illuminating some parks and lakes. A blood donation camp and a seminar was organised but it did not generate much enthusiasm among people.

Teacher dies protecting student

Terrorist leaves his cargo behind

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Bangalore, Dec. 29: A pair of jeans found near the spot of yesterday's attack has led police to conclude that the terrorist is six feet tall.

It seems that the gunman had left behind everything he was carrying as the police found an AK-56 rifle, a bag, chest pouch, magazines and grenades.

The lone terrorist had opened fire last night on delegates to a conference on operations research being held at the JN Tata auditorium across CV Raman Avenue from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc).

M.C. Puri, professor emeritus of mathematics at Delhi IIT, died in the attack and four others were injured. All four are out of danger.

At the crack of dawn, weary policemen who had spent the night combing the campus, once again started their work — marking the spots, combing the bushes and looking for evidence.

Daylight unveiled a grimmer picture of the tragedy with bloodstains, gashed tree barks and trampled bushes telling a tale of people running helter-skelter.

Investigators are saying the attacker possibly did not jump into a waiting Ambassador to escape, as thought earlier. They said the rifle was found in a street behind the campus.

"If he ran towards an Ambassador at the front gate, how did the weapon end up in the ditch behind the establishment?" one wondered.

The police now believe the terrorist climbed over a small gate on the main road to enter the auditorium compound, put his bag on the ground and pulled out the AK-56. He slipped on a monkey cap and strapped on a chest pouch con-



Policemen stand guard at the Indian Institute of Science on Thursday. (Reuters)

taining four grenades and magazines.

He then moved towards the auditorium porch, lobbed a grenade and started running away. Once he came across people, he began firing. He continued to run but, finding a dead alley, swung around and came right back, this time not firing. He threw the weapon into a ditch and jumped over the compound wall, melting into the darkness.

The police have found the bag, chest pouch, magazines, grenades and the pair of jeans — blue, stone-washed, size 34

and sporting a popular label. The pouch had three live grenades, three magazines with 30 bullets each and a paper napkin. Four dates were found in the bag.

Bangalore woke up with its confidence in the city as a peaceful place shattered, as terrorism announced its arrival. Delhi and Mumbai have known terrorist violence several times over. Calcutta got its taste in the attack on the American Center in 2002. Chennai itself hasn't seen a terrorist attack, but Sriperumbudur, where Rajiv Gandhi

was assassinated, is only 40 km away.

"This is the first time it is happening," said chief minister Dharam Singh, Bangalore's shocked realisation finding voice in his words.

Singh said more than one person might have been involved in the operation, admitting it to be a terrorist attack.

Intelligence reports suggested a single terrorist, who was not trained too well, an indication that he belonged to the Jaish-e-Mohammad, and not the Lashkar, which uses its men for more lethal impact.

Politicians in vanishing act

AYSWARIA VENUGOPAL

New Delhi, Dec. 29: Mukesh Chander Puri died trying to protect his student Lalitha from a terrorist's bullets.

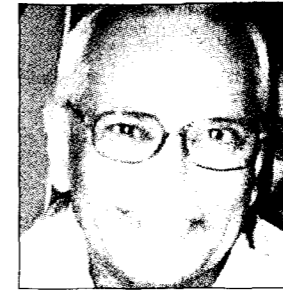
Lalitha's narration of this final act of bravery has left the math professor's family and friends emotionally overwhelmed.

But outside his immediate family — wife Raksha and son Saurav who are simply broken by the tragedy — there is a touch of anger that until 24 hours after the shooting, no politician had turned up at the Puris' door at Mount Kailash Apartments to mourn.

Till Thursday evening, only a former Delhi mayor had visited the family.

"We don't need their crocodile tears. All of them want to know when the body is arriving just so that they can get their publicity," said Naresh Jagota, Raksha's cousin.

Even getting the body back from Bangalore did not prove easy for the family, which, in frustration, was considering bringing it over by Jet Airways. After several requests



M.C. Puri

by the family, it was put on an Indian Airlines flight (IC903). "The body is coming by the evening flight and in these cases, we don't even take charges," said an airline spokesperson.

At the airport, M.S. Bitta, a Congress leader with no standing in the party, became the first politician to show up.

Back in the house, V.K. Bhalla, Puri's brother-in-law, related how Lalitha described his final moments.

"Lalitha, who had gone with him to Bangalore, told us that he died while trying to save her life. She was walking in front and when he saw the gunman approach, he just pushed her to the ground and

We don't need their crocodile tears. All of them want to know when the body is arriving just so that they can get their publicity

— NARESH JAGOTA
(a relative)

took the bullets himself.

Saurav, who had gone to Bangalore to collect the body, was told that his father had taken two bullets — one just below his right collarbone and another which pierced his lungs, entered his liver and got lodged in the intestine.

Professor emeritus at Delhi IIT, Puri died at a conference he had attended every year for 30 years since it began.

Among those waiting for Puri's body to return, there was one who still thought that it was another homecoming — his grandson. "Amogh refuses to believe that his nana is not coming home. He thinks that his grandfather will come and

take him to Goa. Prof. Puri was his father, mother, grandfather, everything. He was very fond of the boy," said Bhalla.

Puri had planned to take his grandson on a vacation to Goa and tickets for the whole family had been booked for January 3. "He had even showed Amogh the tickets before leaving. He had told Amogh 'I have never taken you out for a vacation. I will take you to Goa'," Bhalla added.

He narrated how unassuming Puri was, citing the instance of the marriage to his sister. "He married my sister with one rupee and a handkerchief. He told us that he wanted a simple marriage. There were just eight persons at the wedding and he came on a motorcycle."

"The Mata ka Mandir at New Friends Colony where we were going to do his *chautha* even gave us back the small deposit when they found out who he was. They said he gave his life for the nation."

The cremation will take place at 11 am tomorrow at the Lodhi Road crematorium.

■ Attack on IISc, Page 6

Explosives disappear from ship

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 28

OVER 100 tonnes of explosives, loaded in Mumbai, are missing from a merchant navy ship. The ship had left with the consignment for Afghanistan, but returned on Monday without it.

The captain's explanation: the explosives had to be dumped into the sea because of bad weather. The government's suspicion: the 100 tonnes of gelatin have been sold to a third party. The captain and his crew have been detained and are under interrogation.

The ship, MV Egnia, had been carrying the gelatine for a Border Roads Organisation (BRO) project in Afghanistan. The explosives, sent in six containers by a Secunderabad-based company, had been loaded on to Egnia from December 14 to 20. The ship set sail on December 22, on its way to Bander Abbas in Iran, from where the explosives were to be routed to Afghanistan. The captain claimed that the first container had fallen into the sea accidentally on December 20. The next morning, the coast guard summoned the ship back to the Mumbai port. The reason is not known yet, but the ship cut short its trip. On Christmas day, a coast guard vehicle intercepted it and escorted it back to Mumbai port.

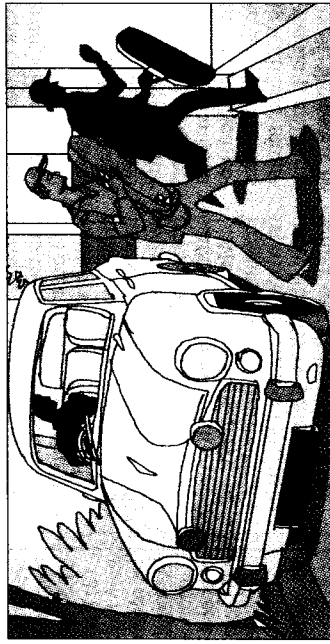
Not one of the six containers remained aboard. The captain claimed that on December 20, after one container had fallen off, the sea turned choppy and the crew was forced to dump the remaining five containers into the sea. All this happened within India's "exclusive economic zone".

Samsu Sheroff, director of the shipping company Unimarine Ltd, insists that the containers are lying on the seabed. But the government and sleuths are not convinced. The defence and home ministries have set up a joint investigation team with personnel from the navy, the coast guard, the Mumbai police and central intelligence agencies. A home ministry official said the interrogation of the captain and the crew had "revealed a lot".

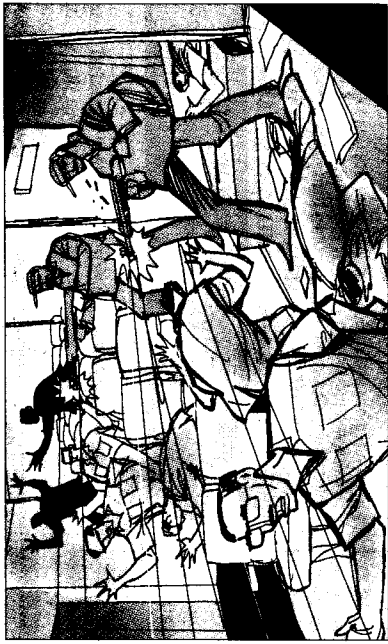
Sources said what was jarring in the captain's version was the way he described the condition of the sea. "It would take a very rough sea indeed to make it necessary to offload," an officer said. Sleuths are also looking for the shipping agent who had booked the consignment.



A policeman inspects the spot where one of the victims fell.



The terrorists arrive in a white Ambassador.



They throw grenades at the conference hall and start shooting.

TERRORISTS SCIENCE HUB

29/12 9.58 Karnataka Hi-Fi

IIT professor killed, 5 injured as gunmen storm Bangalore's IISc

There were warnings

B.R. Srikanth
Bangalore, December 28

TERRORISTS STORMED Bangalore's Indian Institute of Science (IISc) campus, where some of the country's best brains had gathered for a conference, and opened indiscriminate fire, killing a delegate and injuring five. The Lashkar-e-Tayyeba is believed to be behind the attack.

Retired IIT Delhi professor M.C. Puri died on the spot. Among the injured are two more professors from Delhi — Dr Sangeetha and Dr Sonia. The others are IISc professors Venkatesh, Vijay Chandru and Pankaj Gupta.

Around 7.30 pm, a white Ambassador reached the JN Tata auditorium on the IISc campus, venue for a conference on 'Operational research applications in infrastructure development'. DGP B.S. Sial said two men jumped out of the car and lobbed grenades at the auditorium, one hitting the target and the other hitting a tree. A minute later, they started firing from their automatic rifles on the scientists. Another few moments later, they fled. No one could remember what the attackers looked like as it was dark.

The police found three magazines of automatic weapons and a grenade on the spot.

In spite of the sophisticated arms and the nature of the attack, the police are unwilling to commit themselves that terrorists were involved. Asked if it was a terror attack, the DGP said, "I leave it to your thought process and ingenuity. As a common man, I can say some terrorist is involved," but police commissioner Ajai Kumar Singh said: "It is too early to say whether this is a terror attack or targeted attack. As of now, it is not a terrorist attack."

The attack came two days after the Delhi police had arrested four men, three of them in Bengal, and unearthed the Harkat-ul-Jehad's plans to attack vital areas in Bangalore and Hyderabad. The police have sealed all exit points and sounded an alert in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Chennai.



A police dog sniffs for clues on the spot.

The attack also coincided with the arrival of Abu Salem in the city for a series of tests. Security for the gangster, already tight to begin with, has been tightened after the attack. In New Delhi, home ministry officials met to discuss whether the underworld had any role in the attack. This was in view of Salem's presence in Bangalore. As far as terror is concerned, IISc had been on the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba's hitlist for a year.

The Centre did not rule out a terror attack but, like the police, they would not commit themselves either. Union home secretary V.K. Duggal said it could have been either a militant attack or an act of mischief. "The picture can be clear only tomorrow. All I can say now is that this incident is bad news for the people of Bangalore," he said.

Puri, the victim, was an Emeritus professor of mathematics who had won several awards for his work on the subject.

Of the injured, Dr Sonia has been rushed for treatment of an eye injury. "She's in a state of shock and cannot speak," another scientist said.

SOBHANA K
New Delhi, December 28

"WE HAD been afraid about something like this happening for a long time," said Joint CP Karnal Singh, minutes after he heard about the attack at IISc, Bangalore.

For the past two years, the 'chatter' — the intelligence agencies' term for intercepts — between terror outfits based in PoK and across the LoC had suggested that Bangalore had become a potential terrorist target. The interrogation of arrested terrorists had further corroborated the intelligence.

Apart from India's traditional symbols of power like Parliament, the Red Fort, India Gate, the Gateway of India (Mumbai) and the Indian Military Academy (Dehradun), Bangalore and Hyderabad too have seemed to be on the terrorists' radar for some time.

In March, three LeT terrorists were gunned down and one was arrested in Delhi. Two of the module's members were later arrested from Dehra Doon, with maps of the IMA and of software companies in Bangalore.

In July, the police arrested an AMU-educated engineer who had worked for Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). Maps of HAL facilities in Kanpur and Bangalore were recovered from him.

In August and November, three Harkat-ul-Jehad terrorists were arrested. They had been trained to attack Bangalore's Software Park and Hyderabad's Hi-Tech city.

Kashmir women's group backs Geelani's stand

19-15 30/11

“Pakistan’s proposal will only strengthen India’s rule”

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Separatist outfit Duktaran-e-Millat (DeM), on Tuesday endorsed Hurriyat Conference leader Syed Ali Geelani’s stand on the Pakistan proposal of “self rule” in Kashmir, saying the plan would only further strengthen “New Delhi’s rule in Kashmir.”

Duktaran acting chairperson Umi Zuha said at a press conference here that Mr. Geelani was justified in criticising the plan for self rule and economic self reliance.

“Not acceptable”

“Mr. Geelani is the only voice representing the real wishes of the people of Kashmir. It is time to strengthen his hands. No such proposal is acceptable to the people of Kashmir who are fighting for their genuine rights,” she said.

Hits out at Pakistan

Though a strong advocate of Kashmir’s merger with Pakistan,

the DeM chief did not spare the Musharraf Government.

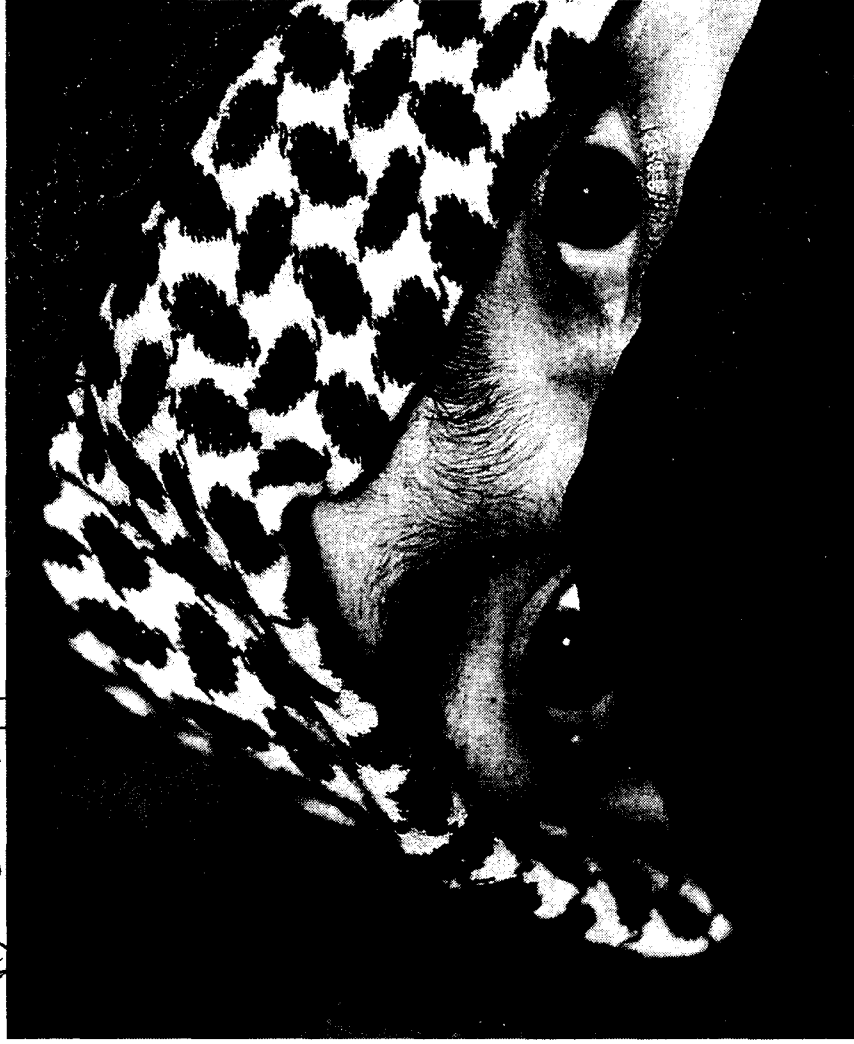
She said it had softened its stand vis-à-vis Kashmir.

“They are part of the process aimed at burying the freedom movement in Kashmir. We want to request the leadership of Pakistan to leave us (Kashmiris) to Allah’s mercy and it will be good if Pakistan distances itself from the process aimed at harming the interests of Kashmiris.”

“Struggle will continue”

Ms. Zuha said the “struggle for the right to self-determination will continue at any cost.” Criticising the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, she said, “It is not playing a good role in the given circumstances. Whoever is even considering such proposals is helping American backed political drama.”

Ms. Zuha is heading the organization in the absence of Asiya Andrabi, who is in jail for several months now.



Umi Zuha, acting chairperson of Duktaran-e-Millat. — PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

JKLF okays United Kashmir proposal

Kavita Suri in London

Nov. 28. — The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has “conditionally and cautiously” welcomed the proposal of an United States of Kashmir that was recently presented by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, the head of the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference.

The JKLF welcomed the proposal on the demilitarisation of Jammu and Kashmir while rejecting the proposal to give the Kashmiris “home rule” or “internal autonomy” as was proposed by Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf.

Addressing the media in Rawalpindi in Pakistan, Mr Amanullah Khan, the chairman of the JKLF, said today that the proposal of an United States of Kashmir was at par with the JKLF’s own concept of the formation of a democratic, federal and secular republic in the divided Kashmir. The idea was floated a decade ago as a proposal, but it was only in June 2003 that it surfaced in the form of a roadmap.

The main difference between the one proposed by Mirwaiz and the one by

the JKLF was, Mr Amanullah Khan said, that while the former proposed a joint control of India and Pakistan on the United States of Kashmir, the JKLF wanted it to be completely independent, having friendly relations with both its neighbours.

As such, the JKLF supports the idea of United States of Kashmir only if it is completely independent and not under foreign control, Mr Khan said and called upon Mirwaiz and his faction of the Hurriyat to realise that a joint Indian-Pakistani control over Kashmir could be “very very dangerous”.

Commenting on the proposal of demilitarisation of the entire Kashmir, Mr Khan said that though it would lessen the miseries of Kashmiris on the Indian side, it would present no solution to the Kashmir issue if it was not followed by the re-unification and complete independence of the whole of Kashmir. As for home rule or self-government, it was “meaningless” without sovereignty, he said.

The state of Jammu and Kashmir had its own President, Prime Minister and National Flag till 1953, he pointed out.

Burton talks Kashmir

NEW DELHI, Nov. 28. —

The US Congress would support the Indo-US nuclear deal provided India worked out a “definite separation” of its military and civilian facilities, US Congressman Dan Burton said here today. “I am leaning towards the nuclear agreement (signed by Dr Manmohan Singh and Mr George W Bush on 18 July),” Mr Burton, heading a US Congressional delegation to India, said.

The Republican from Indiana, dubbed an India baiter, will also meet the Prime Minister. He made it clear that he would raise Kashmir, nuclear proliferation and alleged human rights violations with Dr Manmohan Singh. “We are glad that the Prime Minister and President Pervez Musharraf are working out differences. But we still have differences. We will talk to the Prime Minister about these,” he said. — SNS

Editorial:

Visa for Burton! page 6

THE STATESMAN

29 NOV 2005

J&K attacks reveal major influx of ultras

By M Saleem Pandit/TNN

Srinagar: A car bomb exploded in Srinagar on Wednesday around the same time a CRPF convoy was attacked. The day before, a 24-hour gun-battle with fidayeen ended with two people dead and a wannabe suicide bomber in police clutches. Bombs went off in Delhi killing Diwali shoppers and terrorists struck in Srinagar in a bid to blow up chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad's inauguration.

These bloody acts, security officers, say is proof enough to show that scores of terrorists, waiting across the LoC for an opportune moment to sneak in, actually calmly walked across as military defences on the frontier fell after the October 8 earthquake. The military had initially pooh-pooed the idea that the LoC had melted in parts and people were ambling across. But that was not borne out by accounts of many Kashmiris, on a visit to relatives in PoK, who actually walked across the LoC unchallenged.

Ask Javid Ahmad Pathan, Syed Ali Hyder or Syed Rafiq Hussain, who had taken the bus to Muzaffarabad. "I walked from Muzaffarabad to Kaman Post and saw no troops. Pakistani troops stopped me, but I showed them travel documents and they let me go," said Javid Pathan, who reached home on October 22 after trekking down from Chakhoti in PoK for three days.

Hyder and Hussain, who is the sarpanch of Noor Khan village in Uri, have the same story to tell and insist that Pakistan Army men, who were also devastated by the quake, asked some prefatory questions and let them go. They did not confront any Indian soldier as they trudged into Kashmir. Pakistan Army, intelligence reports now say, not only allowed legitimate travellers like these three to pass through without let or hinder, but actually pushed through as many as 200 terrorists belonging to the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad into Kashmir from Rajwar, Karnah and Keran and even Uri sector in north Kashmir.

"About 200 militants were waiting to cross into this side of Jammu and Kashmir from Kupwara and Uri before the quake. They had assembled in Leepa Valley camp in PoK," another senior intelligence officer told TOI. "Constant vigil and barbed-wire fencing along the LoC was making it difficult for militants to cross over. But the damage to pickets and fencing helped armed militants in infiltrating the Valley," he said. Exact casualties aren't known, but at least 50 Indian soldiers were killed in the quake and dozens of bunkers and outposts were destroyed.

A senior intelligence officer posted at the LoC told TOI, "Troops foiled several infiltration bids in Gulmarg and Mechil sectors after the quake, but 20-odd terrorists of Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad sneaked in from Rajwar, Nowgam and Keran sectors." The officer said frequent terrorist strikes in the Valley and blasts in Delhi were meant to send a message that terrorists camps were still operational in PoK despite reports of the death of hundreds of militants in various camps due to the quake.

Four killed in car bomb blast

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar: At least four persons were killed and 40 others injured in a powerful car bomb explosion outside the Jammu and Kashmir Bank headquarters at Dalgate here on Wednesday. Al Arifeen, a shadow group of the

Panic gripped the entire city during the rush hour when most government and private employees were on their way to work. The blast site is the busiest junction in Srinagar and is used by thousands of people to reach their offices every morning. Three of the dead

have been identified as Ghulam Rasool Wani, a bank employee, Abdul Hamid Naquash and Nazir Ahmad.

Wasim Qureshi, superintendent of SMHS, said, six of the critically injured had been shifted to the Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences as they had severe injuries in their heads and chests.

Five minutes before the blast at Dalgate, terrorists at-



A woman injured in the explosion is treated in a Srinagar hospital

Lashkar-e-Toiba, has claimed responsibility for the blast. An explosives-laden Maruti car parked opposite the main entrance of the bank's headquarters exploded at about 10.20 am just as the bullet-proof ambassador car of former state minister Usman Majid was passing through. The explosion damaged several private vehicles.

Security agencies said the blast was triggered by a remote control device and the target was Majid, the Bandipora MLA. Majid, a minister in the Mufti cabinet, was formerly a terrorist and had surrendered before the army. He was a close aide of Mohammad Yousuf Parray or Kuka Parray, a top terrorist who became Sonwari MLA after surrendering and who was killed by terrorists in 2003.

tacked a CRPF convoy at Awantipora on the national highway, killing one CRPF man and leaving three others injured.

CRPF spokesman R K Singh said, "Terrorists resorted to indiscriminate firing on a CRPF convoy at Awantipora market. Deepak Sharma, a jawan, died on the spot while three others were wounded." He said security forces had cordoned the area to launch a combing operation but nobody had been arrested so far.

Meanwhile, the death toll in Tuesday's blast at a political rally in Tangmarg rose to six. Authorities have announced a red alert in the Valley as several Maruti cars have gone missing in the city and one of them had been used for Wednesday's explosion.

17 NOV 2005

GenNext roots for peace

New-age Kashmir leaders want a lasting solution

ARUN Joshi

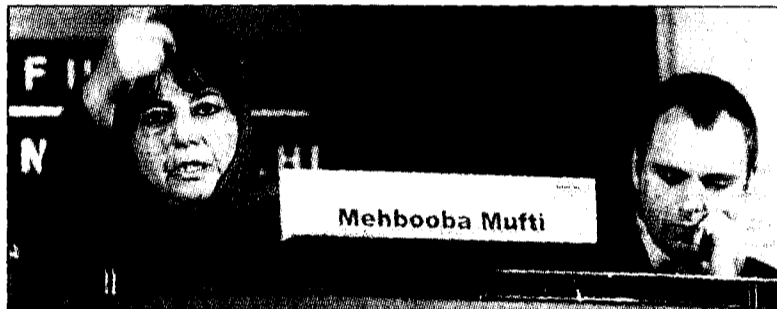
New Delhi, November 16

THERE WERE clear indications at the HT Leadership Summit on Wednesday that the next-generation of Kashmir's leaders would indeed like to find and try new cures for the state's old wounds. The GenNext leaders promised to unbolt the doors to the winds of change and let in new ideas.

But their words sounded like blasts from the past, as if straight from the bitter speeches of their "betrayed" fathers and grandfathers.

However, the first-ever confluence of mainstream and separatist leaders — National Conference president Omar Abdullah, PDP chairperson Mehbooba Mufti and All Parties Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq — looked larger than life when all of them said a resounding 'no' to violence in all its manifestations, and asked India and Pakistan to dismantle the walls of distrust.

But then there was a loud reminder that the will of Kashmiris must be taken into account in any durable solution. The trio played blame games, each trying to outdo the others in a no-hold-barred match of



Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah at the HT Leadership meet on Wednesday.

PHOTOS: ARVIND YADAV/HT

one-upmanship. The charges against Delhi — both in terms of rhetoric and illustrations drawn from history — had far more thrust. The references to Islamabad's role by contrast were more cautious.

Omar Abdullah was the lone exception. He made it clear that the external hand was more responsible than internal discontent for Kashmir's woes.

However, when their turn came to speak, all of them chose Delhi as their whipping boy. They burrowed deep into the post-1947 history of Kashmir. They recalled the Sheikh-Indira accord of 1975 and the subsequent breach of promise, the rigged elections of 1987 and the Centre's failure to reduce troops in Kashmir to argue that Delhi, more than anybody else, was responsible for the current situation in Kashmir.

Omar Abdullah said while some signs of new thinking had emerged on the external front with the post-quake opening of certain points along the LoC and the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, similar efforts on the internal front lacked speed and visibility.

But when it came to the "new ways", the trio stuck to old guns. The Mirwaiz wanted the dialogue process to pick up and Del-

hi to throw indicators on the ground to convince militants that only dialogue, not guns, can offer a solution. He underlined his difficulty as a dove. "It's more difficult to be a moderate than to be a hardliner."

The PDP chief, who had set the ball rolling by reeling off the accomplishments of her father Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's three-year-rule, focused on the dipping violence graph, the withdrawal of Pota and an increased sense security among the people. She said there was a need pick up the thread from where her party had left it, and saw a solution somewhere between the Prime Minister's stand of "no redrawing of boundaries" and President Pervez Musharraf's call for "demilitarisation" of Jammu and Kashmir.

Complete coverage on Page 3

Suicide strike in Srinagar

Four killed in shootout, militants holed up in Lal Chowk hotel

HTC and Agencies
Srinagar, November 14

FOUR PEOPLE were killed and nearly a dozen wounded when a *fidayeen* (suicide) squad of the al-Mansoorian militant group struck at Lal Chowk, the hub of commercial activity in Srinagar, on Monday. A spokesperson of al-Mansoorain outfit claimed responsibility for the attack. However, in the evening, Islamic Front, another militant group, claimed that the attack was jointly carried out by its cadres and al-Mansoorain. The militants have been barricaded in a hotel, and efforts are on to track them down.

The attack came on a day when the fourth point along the Line of Control was opened for quake relief operations for the residents of Pak-occupied Kashmir.

"Militants lobbed a grenade at a security picket in Lal Chowk and then fired with automatic weapons, triggering a fierce gunbattle," said a police spokesman.

VALLEY BLEEDS Unintentional attack: Militants

UNDER FIRE for launching attacks in crowded business areas, militant outfit al-Mansoorian changed tack saying it didn't intend to strike in Lal Chowk locality and the action was the result of a "chance encounter" with security forces. The outfit's spokesman Abu Usama said a suicide squad of al-Mansoorian was on its way to Pampore to attack the local police station there.

"We had no intention to carry out an attack in Lal Chowk and our activists were in fact on way to Pampore in Pulwama district to mount an attack on the local police station there," he told a local news agency. **PTI, Srinagar**

leaving behind my shop open," he said.

The CRPF men guarding the camp, however, frustrated the militants attempt to barge into the camp. "They ran and took shelter into a nearby hotel (Peak View)," said a CRPF official.

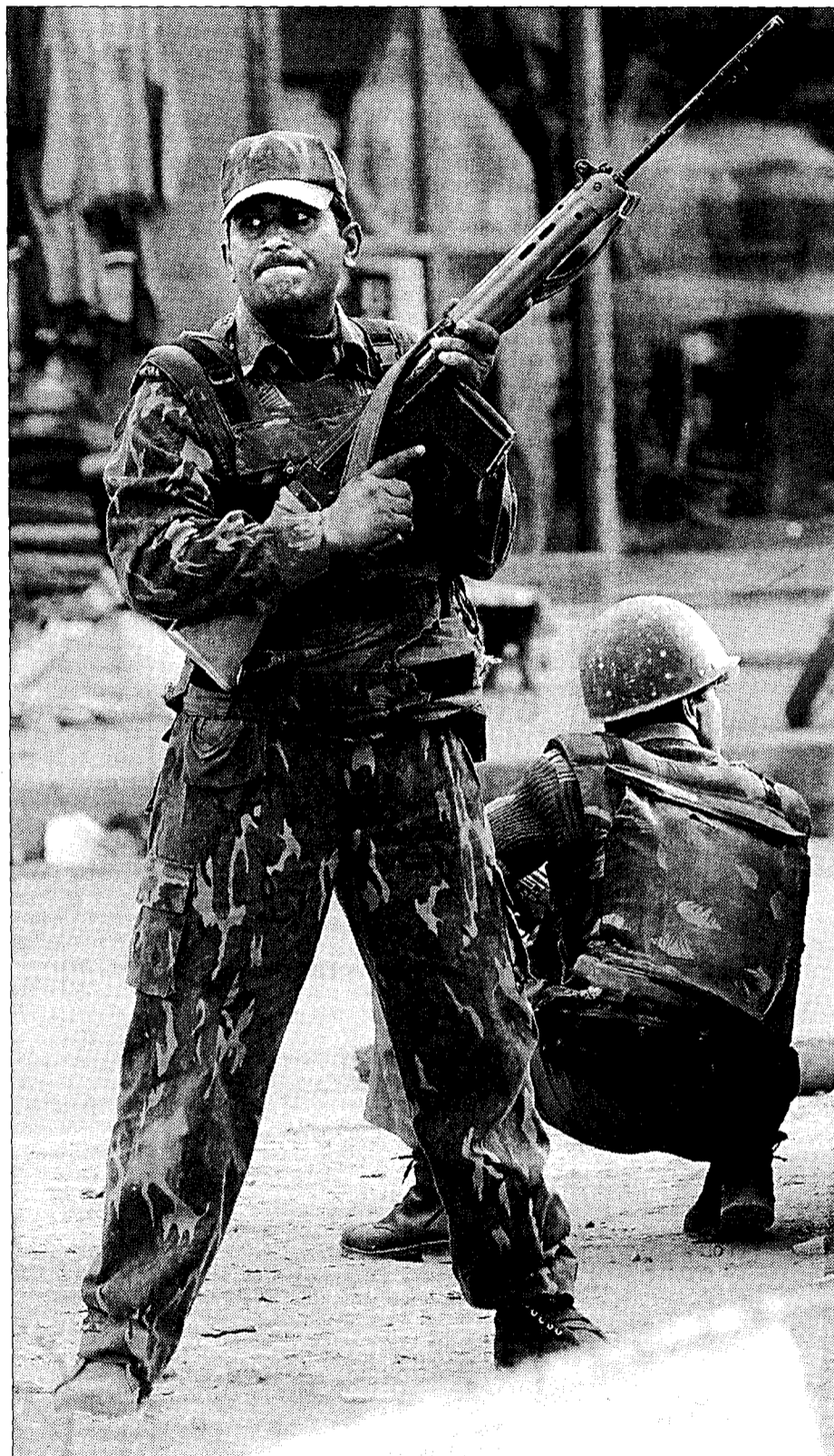
Rashid Rahil, a journalist associated with an Urdu daily, said, "I was watching from my office, which is bang opposite the CRPF camp. Two persons, one in uniform, were lying in a pool of blood, while five or six others were bleeding heavily and were running for cover."

The slain CRPF men were identified as Dhananjay and Ganshyam of 131 battalion. The two civilians killed in the attack were Ghulam Mohammad Lone of Chanpora (Srinagar) and Mohammad Yousuf Bhat of Kulgam (Anantnag).

One of the injured persons was a Japanese

The attack brought normal life to a complete standstill. According to witnesses, militants armed with grenades and rifles attempted to storm a CRPF camp, housed in a dilapidated cinema hall at 3 p.m. in Lal Chowk. "They lobbed a hand grenade. This was followed by rifle shots," said Mohammad Yaqoob, a shopkeeper in the locality.

"There was chaos, and I ran far safety



Security personnel take up position during the encounter at Lal Chowk on Monday.

journalist Takishi. He was hit by a bullet in his neck. Doctors treating him in the SMHS hospital said that his condition was critical because he was bleeding profusely.

"We have identified the spot where militants have taken positions," said inspector-general of CRPF (operations) S S Sandhu.

Meanwhile, police assisted by paramili-

tary forces launched a rescue operation to evacuate civilians trapped in a hotel at Lal Chowk where the ultras believed to have taken positions.

"The firing has stopped and we are trying to rescue trapped civilians from the area particularly from inside a hotel where the militants are believed to be hiding,"

senior superintendent of police Muneer Khan said. He said although a number of civilians were evacuated from shops and adjoining buildings near the scene of the gunfight with the help of armoured vehicles, those trapped in the hotel and adjacent building at Pladium chowk were being rescued. Once the rescue operation is over, a search operation would be launched to neutralise the militants whose number was not clear, the police officer said.

However, official sources said the firing was coming from two directions which indicated at least two militants are involved in the attack. Witnesses said shopkeepers and pedestrians ran for cover after the blast and firing in the crowded Lal Chowk. "I dragged my daughter in a shop after I heard a loud explosion and the gunfire. Both of us were crying," said Farida Jabeen, a witness. She said dozens of people also took shelter in shops.

This is second *fidayeen* attack in Lal Chowk in the past five months. Earlier militants on July 30 engaged security forces in a 48-hour-long gunbattle in the locality which ended with the killing of two militants and two policemen.

Hizb-ul militants killed

Elsewhere in the state two Hizb-ul Mujahideen militants and a former special police officer were killed in separate incidents, a police spokesman said.

The two Hizb-ul militants identified as Shahjahan alias "Muzamil" and Dilawar alias Shahdab were killed in a gunfight with security forces during search operations at Gambahari-Gool in Udhampur district on Sunday night, the spokesman said. An A-K assault rifle, two magazines, 50 rounds, a modified Insas rifle, two magazines and 35 rounds were recovered from the slain militants, the spokesman said.

In another incident, he said a group of militants intruded into the house of one Ali Mohammad at Ratnipora in south Kashmir Pulwama last night and fired indiscriminately on his daughter Haseena Akhter.

Akhter, aged about 22, was rushed to hospital where she was declared brought dead, the spokesman said. Akhter, a former SPO, had left her job reportedly after she received threats to her life from militants some time back, official sources said.

Chief minister's appeal

Chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad on Monday asked security forces to ensure the safety of civilians while undertaking anti-militancy operations. "All the necessary steps should be taken by security forces to ensure that no injury or death is caused to civilians in cross firing," he said. Advocating adoption of better operational procedures, Azad advised security forces that anti-militancy operations should be conducted with professionalism and proper planning so that no collateral damage is caused in terms of life and property.

Violence continues in Kashmir despite a slow-moving peace process by India and Pakistan. The two nations, however, have agreed to open five crossing points, as a humanitarian response to the Octobe 8 devastating earthquake.

AFP

Split in J&K National Panthers Party

Two of its four legislators set to form a separate outfit

Staff Reporter

JAMMU: Bringing an end to several days of suspense, two MLAs of the Bhim Singh-led Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party are all set to form a separate outfit.

The Panthers Party has four legislators in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

Both the legislators, Harsh Dev Singh who is Bhim Singh's nephew, and Yash Pal Kundal were Ministers in the Mufti Government till a month back.

Since the 2002 Assembly elections, differences between Mr.

Bhim Singh and Mr. Harsh Dev Singh were an open secret. The party was virtually divided into two camps — one led by Mr. Bhim Singh and the other by his nephew. The differences escalated a week back after the new Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, assumed office.

Mr. Bhim Singh decided that none of his legislators would join the Azad-led Government. He also gave a ultimatum to Mr. Azad that he would withdraw support to the coalition Government if the recommendations of the Wazir Commission were not implemented and a fresh Delim-

itation Commission was not appointed soon.

Both form part of the Common Minimum programme of the coalition government.

Crisis

The threat to withdraw support and the decision not to participate in the Azad-led Ministry brought about a crisis in the Panthers party with the two camps trading allegation and counter-allegations. Both started organising separate meetings to demonstrate their strength.

Mr. Bhim Singh replaced Harsh Dev Singh — from the post

of Legislative Party chief — with Balwant Mankotia who is also his nephew. He also set-up a committee against Mr. Harsh Dev Singh and Mr. Kundal in connection with the anti-party activities and indiscipline. Ultimately, matters worsened Mr. Harsh Dev Singh-led camp disassociated themselves from the Panthers party.

Mr. Harsh Dev Singh said that the party's new faction would extend unconditional support to the Azad-led Govt. so that the priorities spelt out in the Common Minimum Programme could be realised at the earliest.

HD - 14/11

JAISH SUICIDE ATTACK NEAR MUFTI'S HOUSE IN SRINAGAR

Car bomb 'gift' for CM kills 6

9-87- 187 87-1



(Clockwise from above) A woman wails after the car bomb exploded in Nowgam on the outskirts of Srinagar on Wednesday; The wreckage of the explosives-laden vehicle; A handout picture of the man suspected to have detonated the bomb at Govindpuri in New Delhi on Saturday. — AFP

Statesman News Service

JAMMU, Nov. 2. — Hours before Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad was sworn in as chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, militants today exploded a car bomb near the residence of the previous incumbent Mufti Mohammad Sayeed at Nowgam Chowk on the outskirts of Srinagar, killing six persons and injuring 14.

"The car bomb is our first gift to Ghulam Nabi Azad," a man, identifying himself as Abu Quduma and claiming to be a spokesman for the terrorist group, Jaish-e-Mohammad, told a local news agency.

He identified the bomber as Mohammed Mubashir Hussain, a resident of Abbaspora village in Rawalakot in Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir.

A source said the Jaish-e-Muhammad suicide bomber driving an explosives-laden car when a constable, Nissar Ahmad, asked him to stop at Nowgam Chowk.

The man refused and fired at the policeman. As the constable



stood up to the threat, refusing to let him move on, he triggered the explosion, killing two policemen, a woman, two civilians and himself.

The wounded were shifted to hospitals. Given that the condition of quite a few of those undergoing treatment at Shri Maharaja Hari Singh Hospital was said to be critical, the toll may go up. One of the slain policemen has been identified as Nissar Ahmad.

The blast was so powerful that several vehicles on the highway suffered extensive damage. The impact caused the body parts to

Azad sworn in

SRINAGAR, Nov. 2. — Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad was today sworn in as the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir. He will lead a 12-member coalition government marking the return of Congress at the helm of affairs in the state after three decades. Mr Bhim Singh-led Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party, which has four MLAs, chose to keep out of the Azad-led government. — PTI

fly 100 metres away from the explosion site.

Such was the panic, that, for a few minutes, no one dared go near the injured. Police and security forces arrived after some time and removed the bodies and rushed the injured to hospitals.

Security across Kashmir has been beefed up following the blast. The state police were apparently expecting a terrorist strike on the day of Mr Azad's swearing-in ceremony. They had set up additional police posts in anticipation.

Pak seeks evidence, page 5

Kashmir link to Delhi blasts

87-1 87-11

NEW DELHI, Nov. 2. — Probe into serial blasts in Delhi threw up a Muzaffarabad (PoK) link and the Pakistan-based Lashker-e-Taiyaba is strongly suspected irrespective of its denial, a police source said here today. Soon after the third blast at Govindpuri in south Delhi, a call was made from a mobile phone there around 6.05 p.m. to another cell phone in Srinagar, the source said. The phone, which received the call in Srinagar, was immediately used to make a call to Muzaffarabad, he said. The phones used in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad are believed to belong to LeT. Delhi police



today issued sketches of a man suspected to have triggered the Govindpuri blast. He has been described to be about five feet five

inches tall, thin-built, wearing a baseball cap with the words 'New York' inscribed on it and had a bandage on his left hand. — SNS

MAN

9 5 NOV 2005

Azad sworn in Chief Minister

PDP leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig takes oath as Deputy Chief Minister

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad was on Wednesday sworn in as the tenth Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. People's Democratic Party leader Muzaffar Hussain Baig took oath as the Deputy Chief Minister along with 11 Ministers, two of them Ministers of State.

At a ceremony attended by Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil, Union Minister of State for Home S.P. Jaiswal, AICC general secretary Ambika Soni, former Chief Ministers Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Farooq Abdullah, the Governor S.K. Sinha administered the oath of office and secrecy to Mr. Azad.

Besides Mr. Baig, his predecessor Mangat Ram Sharma was also sworn in Minister. Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed and Taj Mohiuddin both from Congress, Abdul Aziz Zargar, Qazi Afzal, and Tariq Hamid Qarra from PDP and Nawang Rigzin Jora from Leh and Haji Nissar Ali from Kargil were inducted as Cabinet Ministers. G.S. Charka and Babu Singh both from Congress were sworn in as Ministers of State with Independent charge. Besides Mr. Charka and Mr. Singh, PDP's Qarra is the only new face in the Council of Ministers.



CHANGE OF GUARD: The new Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad (right), with his predecessors Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and Farooq Abdullah at the swearing-in ceremony in Srinagar on Wednesday. — PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

More reports on Page 12

0 8 NOV 2005

No unilateral demilitarisation of Kashmir, declares Delhi

New Delhi: Reacting cautiously to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf's suggestion on demilitarising both sides of Kashmir, India on Tuesday asserted that it could not be done "unilaterally".

"It can't be done unilaterally," external affairs minister K Natwar Singh told reporters after the swearing in of new Chief Justice of India Y K Sabharwal.

"After all, they (Pakistan) are in occupation of our areas," he said when asked about Musharraf's proposal to demilitarise the region to provide comfort to earthquake-affected people on both sides of the Line of Control. Singh also had a word of advice for Musharraf: "Over-verbalsing doesn't help. Every second day there is a statement from that side."

The minister made it clear that he would have to study the Pakistan President's comments and the context in which it was made before offering any definite views.

Asked about Musharraf's proposal, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said, "I am not commenting on anything today." Taking a tough line on Monday, the Prime Minister had forthrightly told Musharraf that there were "external linkages" of terrorists involved in Saturday's blasts and asked him to act against terrorism directed against India.

When Musharraf called the PM to offer condolences for

those killed in the serial blasts, Manmohan reportedly made it clear to him that Delhi expected Islamabad to act against those spreading terror here.

The Pakistan President had called the Prime Minister shortly after telling reporters in Rawalpindi that Pakistan was ready to extend "unequivocal support" to India in the investigation of the "dastardly terrorist" attack, suspected to have been carried out by Pakistan-based militant outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba. Bluntly telling Musharraf that the country was outraged at these heinous acts of terrorism, Manmohan added, "We continue to be disturbed and dismayed at indications of the external linkages of terrorist groups with the October 29 bombing."

Clearly, New Delhi's message to Islamabad is that cross-border terrorism must be stopped forthwith and tangible action taken on the ground to prove it was committed to honouring its pledge to India. Keeping in view India's serious concerns, the Prime Minister once again drew Musharraf's attention to Pakistan's commitment to end cross-border terrorism. He reportedly emphasised that "violence against civilians can never be justified" and terrorism would never weaken India's resolve or its commitment to the country's unity and territorial integrity. Agencies

► More reports on Pages 10 & 11

Cooperate with India, UNSC tells members

By Chidanand Rajghatta/TNN

Washington: Pakistan is under intense international scrutiny over the Delhi bomb blasts with the UN Security Council passing a strongly-worded statement on Monday asking member states to cooperate with India in bringing terrorists to justice. Although the statement does not mention Pakistan by name, the inference seems clear, since New Delhi has publicly accused Islamabad of not acting against terrorism directed at India.

The Delhi-specific directive asking member states to "cooperate actively with the Indian authorities in this regard", is a dead giveaway as to who the advice is aimed at. It also rebuffs Pakistan's attempts to rationalise terrorism in India as actions of freedom fighters.

Not us, says Jaish

UN/Islamabad: Even as the UNSC on Tuesday condemned the blasts and urged its members to "cooperate actively" with India to bring the financiers and sponsors of the attacks to justice, two banned Pakistani militant groups denied involvement in the bombings.

A spokesman for Jaish-e-Mohammed, a group blamed for numerous terrorist attacks in the past, accused India of using the attacks "for political purposes". "There are other armed and trained insurgent groups in India. They can carry out such attacks against India," Hassan Burki said. Agencies

Azad's crown of thorns

If Ghulam Nabi Azad manages to stay focussed on the day-to-day problems of Kashmiris, it will constitute a welcome break with the State's unhappy past.

ON HIS deathbed, the ailing Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah nominated his son as his political heir. Along with the gift of power, the Sheikh delivered a warning: "the crown I am placing on your head," he told Farooq Abdullah, "is made of thorns."

Jammu and Kashmir's new Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad, has been served a warning of the grim realities of governing the State in a less delicate fashion: if an alert Central Reserve Police Force patrol had not detected the bomb planted outside a Srinagar mosque on October 28, his first task would have been commiserating with the relatives of the victims.

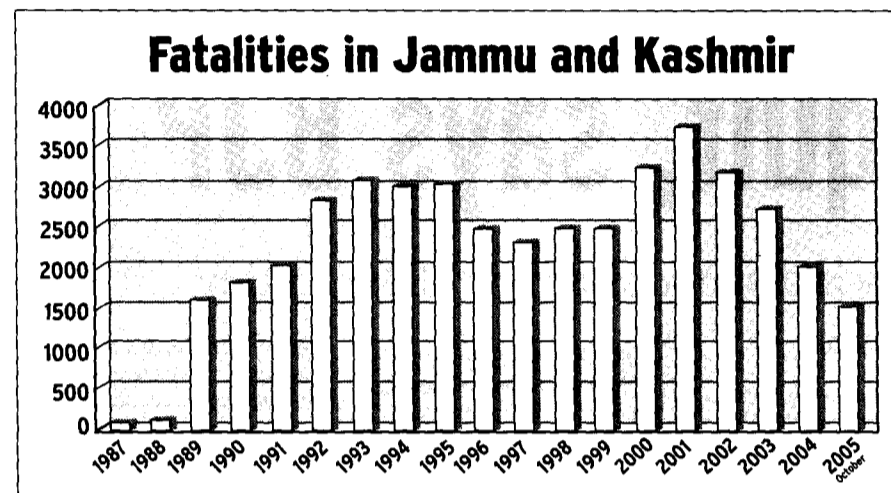
Dealing with violence, however, will be just one of several challenges the new Chief Minister will have to confront. While managing an unruly, often fractious coalition government, he will have to deal with deep ethnic, religious, and regional fissures — and all the while work to rebuild institutions of governance undermined by decades of neglect, authoritarianism, and subversion.

War and peace

Since the India-Pakistan crisis of 2001-2002, violence in Jammu and Kashmir has been in steady decline. Judged by key indices, like the numbers of terrorism-related incidents and fatalities, 2005 saw the trend deepen [see chart]. None the less, Mr. Azad has arrived in office at a time when the *détente* process faces several serious challenges.

For one, the energetic earthquake-relief performance of organisations of the Islamist right, like the Jamaat ud-Dawa and al-Rashid Trust, has won them renewed legitimacy in Pakistan. Groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba are likely to try and capitalise on the situation, a fact the October 29 bombings in New Delhi have illustrated. Battered by criticism of his handling of the earthquake, Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf may find it difficult to confront the Islamists and their armies.

Secondly, no one is certain just where the dialogue between New Delhi and the All Parties Hurriyat Conference is headed. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and



APHC chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq are scheduled to hold a second round of meetings, but some in the secessionist organisation have been backing away from the dialogue. Part of this is the consequence of pressure from terrorist groups. The Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, which rejects dialogue with New Delhi, is promoting itself as an alternate political front. Its new website, www.hizbmedia.com, projects the Islamist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani as the political face of the terrorist group.

Perhaps the most difficult part of maintaining peace in Jammu and Kashmir, though, is likely to be managing competing concerns of the alliance partners. Criticism of the conduct of security forces by the PDP, which draws considerable support from the religious right in Kashmir, is likely to be regular in coming months. Although the PDP rapidly backed off its early efforts to limit offensive counter-terror operations, it now has the opportunity to resume the kinds of polemical assaults on security forces that brought it considerable political rewards in the 2002 elections.

For the Congress, sensitive to national concerns about the situation in the State and to the perceptions of its Hindu constituency in Jammu province, being perceived as weak on terrorism is simply not an option. Each

time human rights abuses take place — and, as the PDP itself discovered, a humane way of fighting a war is yet to be discovered — the Congress will come under siege not just from its opponents but from its allies too.

A marriage of convenience?

Indeed, not a little speculation has centred on just how durable the Congress-PDP relationship will now prove. Some believe the PDP will, a year or two down the road, choose to bring down the government on an issue of emotive significance to its ethnic-Kashmiri audience. Should the Congress then ally with the National Conference to remain in power, the PDP would be able to represent itself as the sole spokesperson of regional concerns and sentiments.

Now confined in the main to southern and central Kashmir, the PDP would no doubt like to emerge as the principal representative of all of Kashmir province. Were it to consider bringing down the alliance at some point in the future, though, it is far from clear if the potential dividends in the future election would justify the risks involved. Powerful north Kashmir-based PDP leaders, such as Deputy Chief Minister-designate Muzaffar Beig and the Tangmarg-area strongman Ghulam Hasan Mir, also need an alliance with the Congress to secure their

flanks against National Conference assault.

Another reason for sticking with the alliance lies in the province of Jammu. With Kashmir province politically divided, any valley-based formation will have to turn to Jammu for an alliance partner should it choose to form a government. Neither the PDP nor the National Conference will be comfortable seeking an alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party — a fact that gives the Congress enormous leverage for the foreseeable future.

For the moment, then, the Congress-PDP alliance is secure: their marriage might be one of convenience rather than love, but in politics, convenience can be a powerful bond.

Development & institution-building

Will Mr. Azad prove able to manage these strains and forge ahead with bringing about real change in the State?

In his early public declarations, Mr. Azad has focussed on the need for ending corruption and building an accountable administration. While Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's regime had started off well, notably setting up a vigilance commission, which built credible cases against several corrupt politicians and bureaucrats, it soon backed off. At least two senior politicians allied with the PDP and a top bureaucrat close to Mr. Sayeed were protected from prosecution — something that did not a little to undermine public support for the PDP-Congress alliance.

Mr. Azad will also have to work to turn the Cabinet into an instrument of political discussion rather than a patronage-seeking durbar. Several important constitutional amendments, including those calling for limits on the size of the Ministry, have yet to be discussed by the Jammu and Kashmir Cabinet. Nor has the Cabinet so far considered the devolution of powers to the provinces, a key promise made by the Congress to voters during the 2002 elections.

If Mr. Azad manages to stay focussed not on what is called the problem of Kashmir but the actual, day-to-day problems of Kashmiris, it will constitute a welcome break with the State's unhappy past.

THE HINDU

01 NOV 2005

Azad set to rule Kashmir

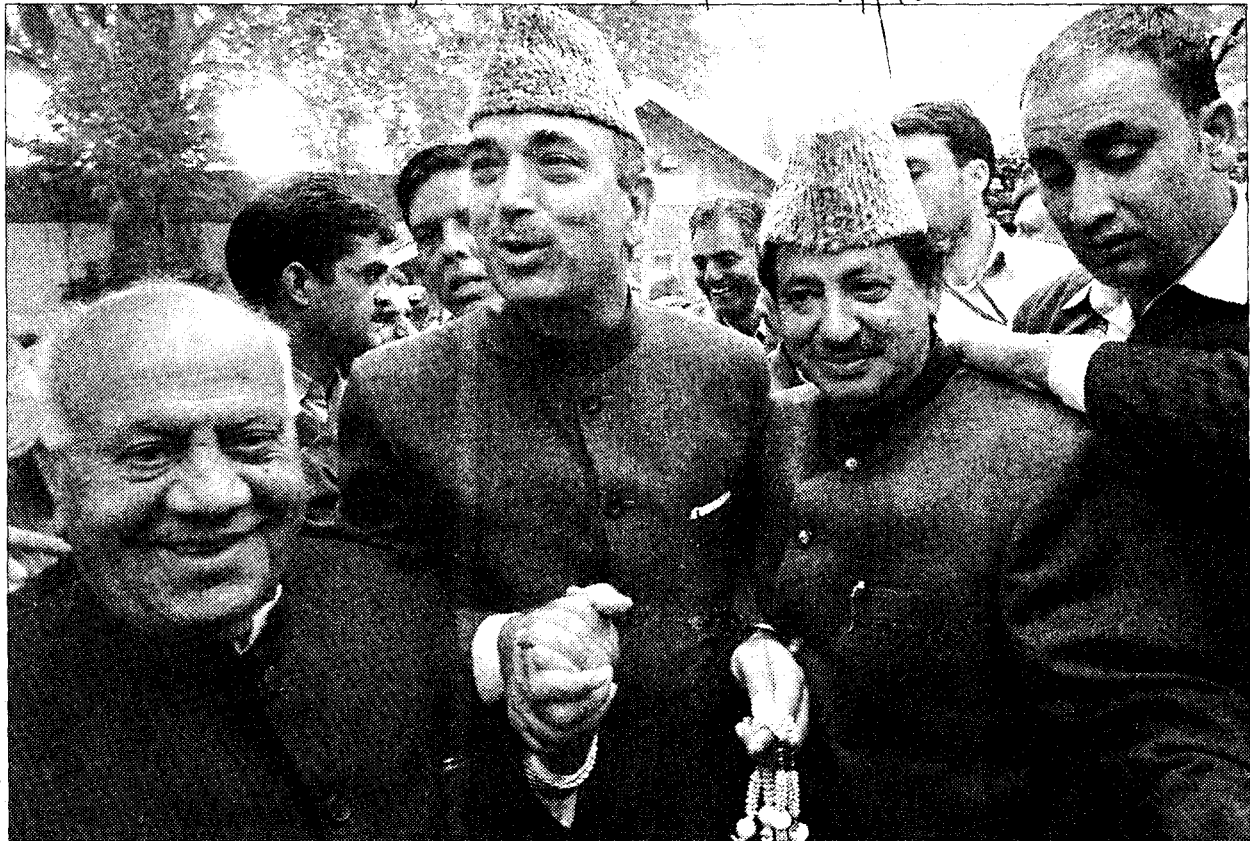
Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR, Oct. 30. — Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad was today elected leader of the Congress legislature party in Jammu and Kashmir after which he staked claim to form the government, paving the way for the Congress' first stint in power in Kashmir in three decades.

People's Democratic Party, which made way for Congress to take over the reins under a power-sharing pact after the 2002 Assembly polls, elected the finance minister, Mr Muzaffar Hossain, as leader of its legislature group. He might be chosen as deputy chief minister.

Mr Azad, (56), chosen by the Congress high command for the top post, was unanimously elected the CLP leader at its meeting here after his name was proposed by the J&K PCC chief Mr Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed and seconded by the deputy chief minister, Mr Mangat Ram Sharma, and Mr Ghulam Rasool Kar. The election of Mr Azad was held in the presence of AICC observer Mr Moti Lal Vohra and Ms Ambika Soni, AICC general secretary in-charge of J&K.

Twenty one Congress MLAs, four Independents from Ladakh and six associate members were present at the meeting. Mr



A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS: Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad (centre), along with Mr Mangat Ram Sharma (left) and Mr Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed, in Srinagar on Sunday. — AFP

Azad, Union urban development and parliamentary affairs minister, later met Governor Lt-Gen. (retd) SK Sinha, along with Congress leaders Mr Vora and Ms Soni, and staked claim to form the government. He is slated to be sworn in on 2 November. The PDP legislators met at Mr Sayeed's house and unanimously elected Mr Baig as their leader. Party

sources said he was likely to be the deputy chief minister in the new dispensation.

Following his election as CLP leader, Mr Azad called on the outgoing chief minister, Mufti Md Sayeed, and was closeted with him for about half an hour. He later said he would keep a small and compact ministry. "It (ministry) will be definitely reduced".

The outgoing Sayeed

ministry has 37 ministers — 16 of Cabinet rank, and 21 ministers of state. Mr Azad said his government would function with the support of all partners, including PDP, and under Mr Sayeed's guidance.

Mr Azad would be the 10th chief minister of the state and the first Congressman to be in the post in 30 years. The last Congress government in Jammu and

Kashmir was headed by Mir Qasim who relinquished power to Sheikh Abdullah under an accord with the Centre in 1975.

Mr Azad said good governance and honest administration will be on the top of his agenda and "from now on, nothing less than honest management of affairs would be tolerated in the state administration," he promised.

THE STATESMAN

Azad to be J&K Chief Minister

HD-1
28/10

Congress leader after 3 decades

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: Union Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad will be the new Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. He will be the first Congress leader to occupy the top post after three decades.

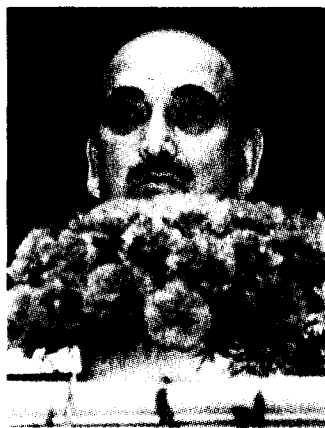
The Congress on Thursday decided to take its turn at leading the State Government as per the 2002 coalition arrangement with the People's Democratic Party following the Assembly elections. Mr. Azad is due to take charge on November 2 — the day the Congress is scheduled to take over from the PDP.

The announcement was made here late this evening by the All India Congress Committee general secretary in-charge of J&K, Ambika Soni, ending five days of hectic parleys and uncertainty. Earlier, the decision was conveyed to Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and PDP leader Mehbooba Mufti by Congress president Sonia Gandhi. Both Mr. Sayeed and his daughter assured Ms. Gandhi of their cooperation to Mr. Azad.

Besides the Congress president, Ms. Soni and Mr. Azad also spoke to Mr. Sayeed and Ms. Mehbooba. It was Mr. Sayeed who suggested that Mr. Azad should take charge on November 2.

Before taking the decision, Ms. Gandhi spoke to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Both Dr. Singh and Ms. Gandhi were emphatic that the change of guard should not affect the relief and rehabilitation work in the earthquake-affected parts of the State, Ms. Soni said.

All other details — such as who would be Deputy Chief Minister and portfolio allocation — would be worked out in



the coming days. The Congress would like to continue along the existing pattern as far as the post of Deputy Chief Minister was concerned, Ms. Soni said. Presently, the post is with the Congress. As to whether portfolios would be swapped, she said no decision had been taken. No date had been fixed for a Congress Legislature Party meeting to elect its new leader either.

The announcement came a couple of hours after 21 legislators — some of whom threatened to resign on Wednesday if the Congress opted to continue with the *status quo* — announced that they would abide by Ms. Gandhi's decision. In a letter to Ms. Gandhi, they denied having tendered their resignation while conceding that a couple of their "emotionally surcharged" colleagues might have expressed a desire to resign before the media.

Staking claim within hours of the clarification, the Congress leaders sought to underline the fact that the decision had not been taken under duress but only after the legislators had reiterated their faith in Ms. Gandhi's leadership.

J&K Cong against Mufti extension

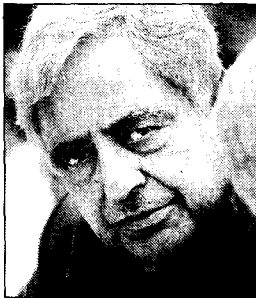
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Srinagar/Jammu: Congress party workers in Jammu and Kashmir have threatened to shut their offices in various parts of the state if the high command decides to let Mufti Mohammad Sayeed continue as chief minister. "Many Congress offices in various parts of the state would wind up in case Mufti is allowed to continue," said Nazir Ahmad Bhat, general secretary of the party. Tired of the party's dithering on the issue, Congress supporters in the state on Tuesday erupted in a wave of anger, shouting slogans in Srinagar the entire day and hurling abuses. Hundreds of workers from across the Valley arrived here to protest what they called a "probable decision in favour of Mufti."

"The decision to let Mufti continue as CM for the next three years would leave party cadres in J&K disillusioned," another general secretary, Mohammad Anwar Bhat, said in Pulwama. "We are not bonded labourers here, the high command should seek our views as well. Allowing Mufti to continue as CM would be like stabbing our workers in the back," he added.

Congress legislators went to the extent of threatening to

quit the party in case its nominee for the CM's post was not given a chance in keeping with the 2002 power sharing agreement. In an attempt to control the crisis, the party high command summoned some top leaders from the state to New Delhi on Tuesday.



MUFTI SAYEED
Rise in revolt

Interestingly, other parties too have joined the issue. NC president Omar Abdullah said Mufti was "power hungry".

"If Mufti had some dignity and honour, he would not seek continuation for even a single day," he lashed out. "On the ground, there will be no implications at all. If the argument were that it would ruin the disaster management work at the moment, the counter is that Mufti's disaster management has been really disastrous." The others—BJP, Jammu Mukti Morcha and other smaller parties—have also come together in calling for the CM's head. "Now that the electorate has shown trust in the Congress, it should keep its word," said

Nirmal Singh, state BJP president.

The anti-Mufti feeling echoed on the streets of Jammu. "Mufti has been anti-Jammu and anti-Hindus. We trust Azad more," said Prem Gupta, a Jammu-based businessman.

27 OCT 2005

Let's have our turn, say Congress MLAs

Hectic lobbying for change of guard in J&K

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: Congress legislators and leaders in Jammu and Kashmir have demanded that the party take its turn to head the coalition government in accordance with an earlier agreement with the People's Democratic Party.

Several MLAs and some associate members had a meeting with AICC general secretary Ambika Soni, who is in charge of party affairs in the State. Pradesh Congress Committee chief Peerzada Mohammed Sayeed and Speaker Tara Chand met Congress president Sonia Gandhi, who continued her consultations as the deadline for the November 2 transfer of power neared.

Ms. Gandhi met Ministers Ghulam Ahmed Mir and Taj Mo-

hiuddin, who briefed her on the earthquake relief work being carried out by the Mufti Government. Ms. Gandhi is due to visit the quake-hit areas shortly to see the rehabilitation work.

Referring to the demand of the party legislators, Ms. Soni said there was nothing wrong in the MLAs wanting the Congress to lead the Government. "It is a natural reaction but all of them have also said that they would abide by the decision that would be taken by the Congress president," she added.

Although the party had asked the PCC chief, the Speaker and Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma to come to Delhi for consultations, some MLAs and associate members have come on their own and are lobbying for a change with the senior party leaders.

Congress sources said reports attributed to the associate members that they would dissociate from the party if the Congress allowed Mufti Mohammed Sayeed to continue as Chief Minister were not correct. These MLAs made no such reference during their discussion with the Central leadership.

Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party chairman Bhim Singh demanded that the Congress convene a meeting of the coordination committee of the constituents of the coalition to decide on the next Chief Minister. The party asserted that under no condition would it accept the status quo.

Mr. Singh said the next Chief Minister should be from Jammu, be a member of the State Legislature and one acceptable to all coalition partners.

মুফতির উত্তরসূরি নিয়ে হিমশিম সনিয়া

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ২৪ অক্টোবর: কাশ্মীরে মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব বদল নিয়ে সোমবারও দিনভর জেরবার কংগ্রেস নেতৃত্ব। আজ গোটা দিন দফায় দফায় দলের শীর্ষস্তরের নেতা, কাশ্মীরের নেতাদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক করেছেন কংগ্রেস নেত্রী সনিয়া গাঁধী। মুফতিকেই বাকি মেয়াদের জন্য মুখ্যমন্ত্রী রাখার সিদ্ধান্ত হয়ে গেলেও দলের একটি বড় অংশ এবং উপত্যকার কর্মী ও নেতাদের প্রবল চাপের মুখে পড়তে হচ্ছে কংগ্রেস হাইকমান্ডকে। এই অবস্থা সামলাতে কিছু দিনের মধ্যে কাশ্মীরে গিয়ে নিজেই মুফতির নাম ঘোষণা করতে পারেন সনিয়া।

আজ মুফতি বৈঠক করেন প্রধানমন্ত্রী মনমোহন সিংহের সঙ্গে। পরে সনিয়ার সঙ্গে দীর্ঘ বৈঠকে বসেন মনমোহন, প্রণব মুখোপাধ্যায়, অর্জুন সিংহ, গুলাম নবি আজাদ, কর্ণ সিংহ, সৈফুদ্দিন সোজ, অম্বিকা সোনির মতো নেতারা। পরে অম্বিকা বলেন, “কাশ্মীরের সব নেতা ইতিবাচক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিতে পরিস্থিতি নিয়ে কথা বলেছেন। তাতে যেমন মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব বদল নিয়ে কথা হয়েছে, তেমনই ডুমিকম্পের পরে ত্রাণকার্য, জম্মু ও কাশ্মীরে জোট সরকারের সাফল্য নিয়েও হয়েছে।”

তবে দলীয় সূত্রে জানা গিয়েছে, মুফতিকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব রাখার সিদ্ধান্তে দলে অসন্তোষ তৈরি হয়েছে। জম্মু ও

কাশ্মীরে সরকার গড়ার সময়ই ওয়ার্কিং কমিটির বড় অংশ চেয়েছিল কংগ্রেসি মুখ্যমন্ত্রী হোক। আজ তিন বছর পরে যখন সুযোগ এসেছে তখন সেই দাবি আরও চড়া স্বরে পৌঁছেছে প্রদেশ নেতৃত্ব এবং উপত্যকার ছোটবড় সব কংগ্রেস নেতার কাছ থেকে। সম্প্রতি লাদাখের স্থানীয় নির্বাচনে কংগ্রেস গোহারান হারার পরে এই ধারণা আরও বন্ধমূল হয়েছে যে এর পরেও উপত্যকায় কংগ্রেসি ঝান্ডা না তুললে তা আত্মহত্যারই সামিল হবে।

কংগ্রেসের সহযোগী ১০ জন নির্দল বিধায়কও আজ অম্বিকা সোনির কাছে চিঠি পাঠিয়ে বলেছেন, অবিলম্বে আজাদকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী করা না হলে তাঁরা কংগ্রেসের সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক ছেদ করবেন।

অন্য দিকে, ইউপিএ-র সমর্থক দল সিপিএমের বক্তব্য প্রাকৃতিক বিপর্যয়ের পরে এখন উপত্যকায় যা পরিস্থিতি, তাতে নেতৃত্ব বদল করাটা বুদ্ধিমানের কাজ হবে না।

দলীয় সূত্রের খবর, ডুমিকম্পে বিপর্যস্ত উপত্যকায় আরও দু'মাস মুফতিকে মুখ্যমন্ত্রী থাকতে প্রথমে অনুরোধ করেছিল কংগ্রেস শীর্ষ নেতৃত্ব। কিন্তু মুফতি চান এখনই সিদ্ধান্ত হয়ে যাক। জোট সরকারের শরিক প্যাটার্ন পাটিও আজ বলেছে, মুখ্যমন্ত্রিত্ব নিয়ে জটিলতা কাটাতে সনিয়া ও মনমোহনের উচিত এখনই শরিকদের সঙ্গে বৈঠক বসা।

Talks on for J&K power transfer

No offer to extend Mufti's tenure

Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI: With the date for transfer of power in Jammu and Kashmir approaching, the Congress leadership continued the process of consultation with party president Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh meeting senior party leaders here on Monday.

For nearly two hours, Ms. Gandhi and Dr. Singh heard the views of leaders who reviewed the performance of the three-year-old People's Democratic Party-led coalition Government, the areas of achievements, progress and delivery on promises made by the alliance and challenges ahead.

The two leaders heard views of Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh, Urban Development Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, senior leaders A.K. Antony, M.L. Fotedar and Saifuddin Soz, Karan Singh and general secretary Ambika Soni, in-charge of party affairs of the State.

"The discussions were free and frank and the scenario in the State since 2002 was reviewed. The achievements of the Government, the policy of healing touch that the coalition has been able to address and the sense of alienation among the people was talked of," Ms. Soni told correspondents.

She said the Congress president would consult others, including Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma and Pradesh Congress chief Perzada Mohammed Sayed to ascertain the views of the State Congress. There is a strong view in the State that the Congress should take its turn to lead the coalition under the 2002 pact that gave the PDP first shot to head the Government for three years. Several Congress MLAs from Jammu and Kashmir have also

• **Achievements of Mufti Government was reviewed**

• **"Mufti did not seek continuance in post"**

arrived here and were doing the rounds of calling on senior party leaders.

The Congress insisted that Ms. Gandhi was holding consultations and any decision arrived by her would be acceptable to all party members irrespective of their individual views on the issue. Congress spokesperson Anand Sharma emphasised that there was no pressure from its ally, the PDP. "We value the alliance with the PDP and have complete understanding and [our relationship] will endure."

He said the exercise being undertaken by the Congress president was neither a review of the decision made three years ago nor was the party having second thoughts but it was a process of consultation.

Asked to comment on news reports that Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed had told Ms. Gandhi on Sunday that his removal from the post could have security implications, Ms. Soni said nothing of that sort was reported by Mr. Mukherjee, who was present during the Sunday meeting. She also asserted that there had been no offer in the form of a short extension of tenure to the Mufti beyond the November 2, completion of tenure. Prior to the meeting, the Mufti called on the Prime Minister and briefed him about the latest situation as also the relief work being undertaken by the State Government in the quake-hit region.

Editorial on Page 10

THE HINDU

21 OCT 2005

Sonia, Mufti discuss power sharing

HD-1
29/10

Decision on change of guard in four or five days

K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI: The Congress on Sunday began the process of consultations on the change of guard in Jammu and Kashmir, with the party president Sonia Gandhi meeting the State Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed.

The Mufti's three-year term under the Congress-People's Democratic Party (PDP) coalition pact expires on November 2. A decision on whether the Congress should take over the reins after the cut-off date would be taken during the next four or five days after Ms. Gandhi's discussions with the State and Central party leaders.

State Congress leaders, including Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma, have been asked to come to Delhi for the discussions. The exercise is expected to be over by October 27-28, top Congress sources said here.

The pace picked up on Sunday afternoon when the Mufti arrived from Srinagar and held discussions with Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Ms. Gandhi's political secretary, Ahmed Patel. PDP president Mehbooba Mufti was also present. Later in the evening, Ms.

• **Coalition pact expires on November 2**

• **Sonia to consult State, Central leaders**

• **PDP for Congress taking over**

Mehbooba held a one-on-one meeting with Ms. Gandhi as did the Mufti. Both leaders informed Ms. Gandhi of the three-year successful run of the coalition government. Mr. Mukherjee and Mr. Patel later joined a meeting Ms. Gandhi had with the PDP leaders.

Sonia reviews situation

"The Congress president today reviewed the situation in the State of Jammu and Kashmir as also the broad national situation with the Chief Minister and the leader of the PDP. The Chief Minister gave his perception of the situation. The Congress president has decided to consult her party colleagues and a decision will be announced shortly," Mr. Mukherjee told correspondents after the meeting.

The Mufti and Ms. Mehbooba were present when Mr. Mukher-

jee spoke to the media outside 10, Janpath, the residence of Ms. Gandhi.

Mr. Mukherjee explained that in 2002 the arrangement between the two parties was that the PDP would lead the coalition for the first three years and thereafter the Congress take over for the next three years.

"Bound by pact"

The Mufti told the press he was bound by the agreement between the PDP and the Congress.

Top Congress sources said that during the discussions on Sunday the Congress did not suggest that the PDP could continue for a short term. The Mufti reiterated that he had no objection to the Congress taking charge of the Government, the sources said.

The State party and its leaders were keen that the Congress make its rightful claim to run the coalition. There had been reports from the State that the Congress may give the PDP-led Government an extended run.

However, the sources said the high command would determine its stand after ascertaining the views of State and Central leaders.

No Infy contribution: Gowda

'Murthy, Krishna trying to destabilise coalition Govt in state'

PRESS Trust of India
Bangalore, October 22

UNLEASHING A no-holds-barred attack on Infosys chief N.R. Narayanamurthy and Maharashtra Governor S.M. Krishna, former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda on Saturday alleged that the forces which were working to destabilise the coalition government in Karnataka have deployed Murthy's resignation as a "last weapon" to achieve their target.

Two days after Murthy quit as chairman of the Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) expressing displeasure over the accusations made against him by Gowda and his questioning the lands allotted to Infosys, the JDS chief said, "Murthy's resignation is being used as a last weapon to bring down the Dharam Singh government by Krishna and his company."

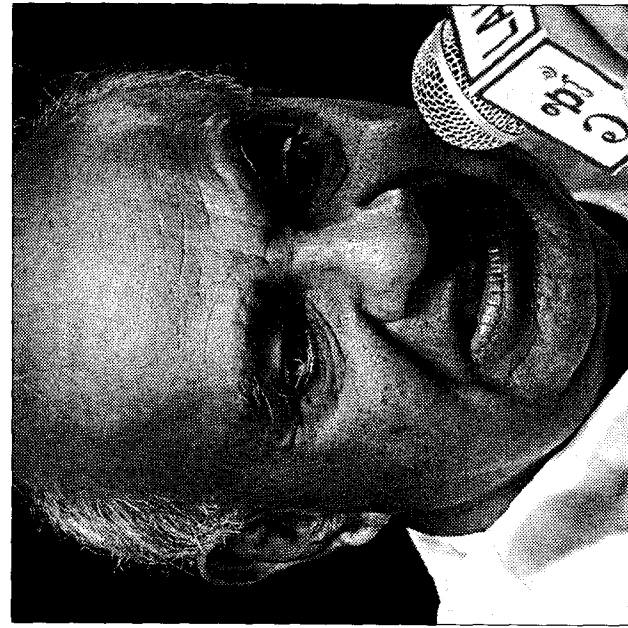
"It is for Congress president Sonia Gandhi to take a decision on the continuance of the coalition government. We will not do any-

thing to destabilise this government as promised to Gandhi," Gowda hastened to add.

Continuing his tirade against Infosys mentor, Gowda sought to belittle the IT major's contribution to the sector, which has attracted several heads of states across the world, remarking, "Its (Infosys) contribution is nothing compared to other majors in the field like Wipro, IBM and others."

Unlike other IT firm heads, Murthy was indulging in "politics at the behest of Krishna," he said and defended his objections over land allotments made to Infosys to the tune of 1145 acres on two locations on the city outskirts, saying "the allotments were beyond Infosys requirements."

"We or the coalition government has not appointed Murthy as BIAL chief. It is for him to decide to continue or quit," Gowda told reporters, angrily reacting to Singh's statement that he would persuade Murthy to



Former Prime Minister H.D. Devegowda at a Press conference in Bangalore on Saturday.

withdraw his resignation Gowda flayed the IT major's demand for 845 acres of land allotment on Sarjapur road which falls in green belt centres."

He wanted to know why the coalition government processed these two applications at a lightning speed, and asked why Infosys wanted to build a five-star hotel in one of its campuses, seeking to vindicate his earlier charge that the company was using the land for commercial purposes.

Rebutting Infosys claims that it has created more jobs, Gowda took a dig at Murthy reeling out statistics on the IT sector employment generation, saying out of three lakh jobs Infosys share is only 22,000.

When other major IT companies such as Wipro still churned out a higher turnover from rented buildings, why was Infosys seeking more land allotment, he asked. Angry over the "attempts" to topple the Congress-JDS coalition government, he said it began "barely two months after it assumed office and is still continuing."

"If IT sector had any problems on Infrastructure bottlenecks, they should ap-

proach the government instead of making it a political issue and political confrontation," Gowda said, apparently referring to the media hype built over infrastructure woes of the city.

Asked whether he would bring these issues to the Congress chief's notice, he declared, "Why should I. Let her know for herself."

Criticising Krishna, his political adversary, Gowda charged that the Maharashtra Governor committed a "constitutional impropriety" by indulging in politics, holding a constitutional post. President APJ Abdul Kalam and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh should take note of Krishna's "activities" and decide on recalling the Maharashtra governor, he said, but declined to put forth such a demand on his own.

On the claims of the Congress government led by Krishna that it created a congenial investment climate in the state, he said more investments flowed during Janata Dal government.

7.8x kg 28/10

Open five cross-points on LoC: Mufti

Statesman News Service
SNA

SRINAGAR, Oct. 21. — The Government to immediately identify five points along the Line of Control to let people on both sides visit their relatives affected by the devastating earthquake of 8 October, J&K chief minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today said the opening of the LoC at these points and allowing people to cross over with relief material for the victims of the quake would be a befitting memorial to the thousands of people who lost their lives to the deadly calamity on the two sides of the LoC.

"I strongly urge the Prime

Minister to urgently identify the five points along the LoC so that divided families could visit each other in this hour of great tragedy," the chief minister said while addressing the Police Commemoration Day function here today.

The chief minister said after the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road in April last that it had been agreed upon by both countries to open five points along the LoC to allow greater movement of people on both sides. The tragedy striking the region, he said, has made it all the more necessary to move ahead on this issue in the right earnest.

He requested Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to take immediate steps for the identification of

these points, saying the places would have to be de-mined and modalities of travel worked out.

"These things would also take some time, so there is the need to proceed further immediately," he added. Mufti Sayeed said while the earthquake has taken a heavy toll of life and property on both sides, the devastation caused on the other side of the LoC is of enormous magnitude.

US assistance

The USA has announced an additional \$50,000 in assistance for Indian and international agencies involved in relief work in Jammu and Kashmir. The announcement was made by US undersecretary of state for political affairs, Mr

Jawahar Tunnel damaged

NEW DELHI, Oct. 21. — The Jawahar Tunnel on Srinagar-Jammu highway has suffered some damages in the 8 October earthquake. The three-km tunnel, considered one of the longest tunnels in Asia, developed cracks as the magnitude of the tremor was too big, officials said. The tunnel, which cuts through the gigantic Peer Panjal mountain range, is guarded round the clock by the Army and has been operational since December 1956. It was built by German engineers. — SNS

Nicholas Burns, at a joint press meet with foreign secretary Mr Shyam Saran in Delhi today.

Kashmir and PoK phone link set up

P.H.
2/8/10

Srinagar: Many a quake-affected person in Jammu and Kashmir had smiles on their faces on Wednesday as they spoke to relatives on the other side of Pak-occupied Kashmir with the opening up of special telecom facilitation centres in the state.

The first phone call at 1.15 pm was made by Abdul Gani, a resident of Basbpora in Baramulla, from the police control room centre here. Gani called up his uncle in PoK and was overwhelmed to know that all his relatives had survived the killer quake on October 8.

Farooq Ahmad, a resident of Srinagar, however, was not as lucky as he was unable to reach his sister in PoK. Ahmad, who had received information about the death of five of his relatives in the horrific earthquake, tried several times in vain to reach his sister.

The state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited has installed toll-free ISD (International Subscriber Dialling) telephones at three Disas-

ter Management Control Rooms in Srinagar, Tangdhar and Uri to facilitate the divided families to communicate with each other and enquire about the welfare of the relatives. The facility, set up at the directive of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh,

will be available only for a fortnight.

Initially only a few families came to the police control room here, but officials said they expected the rush to pick up as the day progressed and news about the facility being successful spread.

Media offices, meanwhile, were flooded with queries on the facility from people anxious to have a word from the other side.

BSNL also set up a free-for-all telecom facilitation centres in

Jammu with a direct phone facility to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The centre set up at the BSNL exchange in Jammu went operational on Wednesday morning, an official said, adding that the facility would be made available to the people from 10 am to 5 pm. Agencies



Mohammad Abdulla uses a phone at a special telecom centre in Srinagar on Wednesday

Quake leaves border porous for terror

400 Ultras In J&K Right Now, 40-50% Of Indian Bunkers Destroyed

By Anand Soondas/TNN

Srinagar: The Indian government, effusive at reports of terrorist camps destroyed in Muzaffarabad after the October 8 earthquake, went to town with the news. What it hasn't said is that there may be close to 400 terrorists lurking around J&K right now, looking for targets that suddenly seem soft in the aftermath of the disaster.

In a startling revelation, a top intelligence officer told TOI on Tuesday that softening of the border, more porous than ever after the quake, has already begun to boomerang on India. "In fact, so ridiculous is the situation that about 60 terrorists injured in the earthquake in Muzaffarabad are trying to reach Srinagar for treatment," he said.

Eighty percent of the terrorists belong to the Lashkar-e-Toiba, the rest

'Not enough tents in world'

Islamabad: A senior United Nations official said on Tuesday there were not enough tents in the world to protect the people, who have been rendered homeless after the October 8 earthquake in South Asia, from the coming winter. Tents are a priority item with around three million people made homeless, many of them forced to live in the open in plummeting temperatures in PoK and parts of North West Frontier Province. Agencies

are from Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammad. "But these two terrorist groups, encouraged by the

diversion of attention and effort to deal with the earthquake and its victims, are trying to push in as many terrorists as they can," the officer said.

There are three crucial factors for the rise in infiltration now. First is the fact that 40-50% of the bunkers and posts on the Indian side of the LoC are damaged or turned into rubble. The figure is 70-80% on the Pakistan side. The BSF lost a "lot of posts" in the Uri sector, one of its senior officers said.

The other aspect is the empathy factor. Both Pakistan and India are going slow on checks at the border. Many Indians who went to Pakistan on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus just walked back into India. At Tarboni, one of the last Indian villages before the LoC in the Kupwara sector, local residents told TOI that their Pakistani relatives



have come to India for treatment. "This is not the time to be strict about these things," Mustafa Mir said in Tangdhar. There are also reports of people from the other side of the LoC coming to border villages like Kamalkote in the Uri sector.

The third reason could be the indoctrinated feeling among terrorists that those "martyred" for 'jihad' during the holy month of Ramadan get a straight ticket to heaven. "This is the best time for the fidayeen to die," the intelligence officer said.

Army officers accept that there has been a diversion of priority and effort after the earthquake. They said while they are dealing with rescue and relief operations, a considerable amount of thought and strategy is going into how to resurrect the bunkers and deal with lost lives of its own men. More than 90 security officers and soldiers have died in the earthquake.

Happiness over terrorists killed and their camps destroyed in PoK was clearly premature. There have been at least six incidents of attacks by terrorists in the state after the earthquake. Four soldiers of the 158 Territorial Army died in a single day, on October 15, when two fidayeen dressed in Army fatigues barged into their unit at Kathua, Jammu.

J&K minister shot in high-security area

By M Saleem Pandit/TNN

Srinagar: In a brazen attack on Tuesday, two terrorists armed with AK-47 rifles, grenades and explosives shot and killed Jammu and Kashmir's education minister Ghulam Nabi Lone and two security men in Srinagar's highly fortified residential colony for ministers.

The two terrorists sneaked into the government's residential colony at Tulsibagh on Tuesday and first attacked House No. T-20, the residence of CPM MLA Yousuf Tarigami. When the attack was foiled by Tarigami's guards, they scaled the walls and entered Lone's house, where they opened indiscriminate fire, killing the 63-year-old minister. While one assailant was killed, the other managed to escape. Three security personnel were injured in the attack.



Relatives mourn near the body of Ghulam Nabi Lone at his residence in Sopore

"A terrorist armed with AK-47 targeted the minister (Lone) in the lawns after killing a CRPF guard posted at the gate of House No. T-1," said Gulam Mohammad, who had come to meet Lone, and was injured in the shootout.

Lone, who was shot in the ab-

domen, died on way to hospital. Eyewitnesses said the minister's assailant threw his weapons into a nearby house of a Sikh family and fled from the scene.

Two militant groups—Al-Mansoorain, a shadow group of the Lashkar-e-Toiba, and Islamic Jihad Front— independently claimed responsibility for the attack. While Tarigami escaped unhurt, his security guard Abdul Rashid, who foiled the attack, was killed.

Tarigami said the entire incident showed how poorly he was being guarded. "This is not the first time I have been targeted by militants, They have attacked me twice earlier," Tarigami told TOI, adding that the attack was a result of a "security lapse." "How else were militants armed with two AK-47 rifles, six hand-grenades and improvised explosive devices able to reach my doorsteps?"

J&K Minister Lone shot dead

K10-1
19/10

CPI(M) leader Tarigami escapes; outrage in high-security area in Srinagar



GRIEF-STRICKEN: People gather at the residence of the slain Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister Ghulam Nabi Lone in Sopore on Tuesday.
— PHOTO: NISSAR AHMAD

Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR: Jammu and Kashmir Minister of State for Education Ghulam Nabi Lone was shot dead by a militant, while CPI (M) State secretary M.Y. Tarigami escaped unhurt in a similar bid in the high-security Tulsī Bagh area here on Tuesday. Two security guards and a civilian were also killed in the incidents, for which the Islamic Front and Al-Mansoorin have claimed responsibility.

Two militants, believed to be a suicide squad, sneaked into the colony, where the houses of Ministers and legislators are located.

According to one account, one militant, along with some visitors, entered Dr. Lone's

- **Militants believed to be a suicide squad**
- **Scaled the wall of nearby college and entered the high-security Tulsī Bagh area: police official**
- **A security lapse, says Tarigami**

house and fired at Central Reserve Police Force guard Sonu Prakash, killing him on the spot. He then entered the room of the Minister, who was talking to members of the public. Police sources, however, said the panicked visitors ran out soon after the guard was shot. The militant then opened fire, leaving Dr. Lone and two civilians in a pool of blood.

At the same time, the other militant attacked Mr. Tarigami's

house after he was denied entry. On being challenged by security guard Abdur Rasheed, the militant hurled a grenade and fired indiscriminately, killing him. Other security personnel retaliated and engaged the militant until he was killed.

Dr. Lone was taken to the S.K. Institute of Medical Sciences here, where doctors declared him brought dead. An injured civilian, Mohammad Siddique, died there later. The condition of a CRPF

jawan is critical. H. K. Lohia, Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Kashmir range, said the other militant escaped, leaving behind an AK rifle and a grenade. "Both of them had scaled the wall of a nearby college and entered the colony."

Official sources said the real target could have been Mr. Tarigami, whose associate Ghulam Nabi Ganai was gunned down by militants in south Kashmir on Monday. The militant who attacked Dr. Lone first knocked on the door of Agriculture Minister Abdul Aziz Zargar, who was in Tangdhar to oversee quake relief operations. As Mr. Tarigami's office, adjacent to Dr. Lone's house, was closed and as there was activity outside the Minister's house, the militant forced

his entry there. A visibly shaken Tarigami said: "I was at home with my family members and preparing to leave for Anantnag to visit the house of our slain leader when the militant struck." Terming the attack a "security lapse," he said the Government should look into it. A militant had come around 7 a.m. to enquire about him.

Tuesday's attacks took place despite a temporary ceasefire announced by the United Jihad Council, an umbrella organisation of militant outfits, in the wake of the October 8 earthquake.

Editorial on Page 10
More reports on Page 12

BRO 'Restoring very difficult if not impossible'

Road across LoC shut till year-end

MUZAFFAR RAINA

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 13

THE Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road will remain closed for at least two months after massive landslides triggered by Saturday's earthquake wiped out a large stretch.

"There has been sinking of road, breaching of formations and extensive damage to permanent structures like retaining walls and culverts. It will take more than two months to restore the road," Brig S S Dasaka, Chief Engineer, Project Beacon, Border Roads Organisation (BRO) told *The Indian Express*. "It is going to be a very difficult, if not impossible, task," he added.

Sources said the BRO is undertaking re-construction of the road on a war-footing after Army received instructions from the Centre to complete it at the earliest. Besides, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has taken up the issue with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

However, a Beacon survey found that the restoration could take more time as the damage caused to the road was huge.

"Besides, the coming winter can play spoilsport. The damage on the Muzaffarabad side is also heavy and it is unclear how long they (Pakistan) will take to make it traffic-worthy," the officer said.

Lt Gen S S Dhillon, Commander 15 Corps, however, said the winter would not be a problem. "Uri has a different climate, there is not much snowfall there," he said, adding, "But the road is badly damaged and reconstruction



17.5-km stretch from Uri to Aman Setu bore brunt of the quake — 8.5 km from Zero Point in Uri cleared so far

will take a minimum of two months. Even the bridge (Aman Setu) is damaged and it will take some time for Army engineers to reach there."

The 17.5 km stretch of road from Uri to Aman Setu, the peace bridge, has borne the brunt of the quake—8.5 kms from Zero Point in Uri has been cleared so far.

Restoration of the 9 km is an "extremely uphill task," said Brig Dasaka. "On a stretch of 2.25 from Bhim post (14 kms from Uri), there is a continuous slide, with heights ranging from 5-20 mts. This is the most problematic area."

Besides, there are at least 12 more slides on the remaining stretch. "For two kms up to Red Bridge there are five landslides and breach of formation of 200 metres," he said. "Ahead of the Red Bridge and after, there are huge boulders and one of the abutments have changed."

The earthquake has also propped up a permanent problem—an active landslide area has surfaced on a stretch ahead of Bhim Post. "The entire road was a landslide free zone but this new problem has cropped up," sources said. Beacon's problem is they can take up restoration only on one side.

"But we are exploring the possibility of airlifting machinery to start work simultaneously at different stretches," said Brig Dasaka. Beacon has already taken up this issue with the IAF.

As for the money involved, authorities say it would be "substantial".

The road to Muzaffarabad was thrown open to traffic—for the first time after 1947—on April 7 this year following high-level talks between India and Pakistan. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had flagged off the first bus, and it was two days after its 15th run from Srinagar that the earthquake struck.

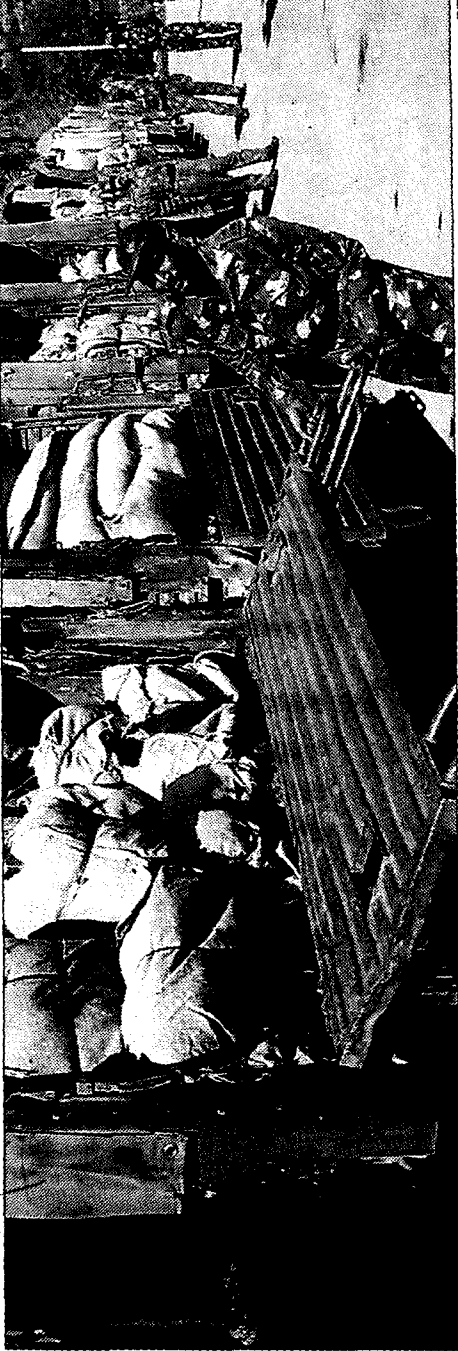
INDIAN EXPRESS

Army hands over relief items

HT Correspondent
Srinagar, October 13

LT-GEN. S.S. Dhillon, commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, said on Thursday that army jawans had reached out to all the earthquake-hit areas, which were inaccessible due to landslides in the Tangdar area of Kupwara district. The army had handed over a huge consignment of warm clothes, tents and edibles to the civil administration for distribution in the affected areas.

Rescue and relief teams, however, had not reached these areas, he added. The consignment, which was handed over to the chief secretary, included 200,000 warm trousers, 100,000 pairs of warm socks, 51,100 warm coats, 15,400 coat outers, 54,000 mattresses, 3,200 blankets and 1,800 sleeping bags. The articles were loaded in a fleet of



Army jawans load trucks with relief material in Srinagar on Thursday.

trucks with banners reading "From jawan to awaam". This is in addition to 1,000 tents and 4,000 blankets that the army had already handed over to the civilian administration. The army has set up

34 relief camps in the affected areas, where 25 generator sets have been installed to provide electricity supply.

Gen. Dhillon said 44 soldiers had died and 267 had been injured in the tragedy. The

state's chief secretary also spoke to the media. Against the requirement of 30,000 tents, only 5,000 tents could be arranged so far, he added. He said that, in Uri, 95 villages — with a population of 125,000

people — and, in Tangdar, 45 villages — with a population of 23,000 — had been affected in the tragedy. He admitted that the people complained about the system of distribution of the relief material.

PTI

J-K | Says PM positive on restoring phone, road links to Muzaffarabad

'Let people cross LoC with relief'

MUZAFFAR RAINA

SRINAGAR, OCTOBER 12

JAMMU and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today asked the Centre to allow Kashmiris cross the LoC with relief material, calling it "a token of love and affection" between people from both sides.

"I have talked to the Prime Minister (Manmohan Singh) about it and I think there should be no objection in allowing people to cross the LoC with relief," said the CM, adding, "People-to-people contact is essential in this time of crisis. People here have contacted me, wanting to take relief to those across."

He said Uri and Tangdhar are the worst-hit areas in the Valley while the rest of the state is normal. "But the tragedy is worse across," he said.

Mufti said that the contact recently established between the two parts of the Valley "should not break".

"I told the Prime Minister that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road link should be restored quickly and he agreed to it."

The PM's response, Mufti said, was "positive", adding, "He said it is a humanitarian problem and politics should not come in the way."

Mufti also said that his government will vigorously pursue with the Centre the issue of telephone connectivity between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad.

"People from Muzaffarabad can call here but we cannot. The Prime Minister has given a positive response to our demand and has said that he will talk to the telecom department about it. I am hopeful the link will be restored," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

PM pledges crores more for J&K

Statesman News Service

SRINAGAR, Oct. 11. — Describing the devastation caused by Saturday's earthquake as extensive, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today announced another Rs 500 crore for relief and rehabilitation.

"After reviewing the damages, I announce Rs 500 crore for the rehabilitation of the quake victims," Dr Singh said, adding this would be in addition to Rs 142 crore already pledged by the Central government.

Addressing the locals after arriving at Tangdhar this morning, Dr Singh assured the victims of all Central help. He said no effort would be spared to rehabilitate those who had survived the tragedy. He said special attention would be paid to children and women rendered orphans and widows, respectively, by the calamity.

He assured that relief material like tents and medical aid was being dispatched to the affected areas.

Chief minister Mufti Sayeed said that rescue work and relief distribution were going on on a war footing and that relief would reach all the victims. Union minister for urban development Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad said Tangdhar would be reconstructed and efforts would be made to make all structures tremor resis-



Dr Singh in Srinagar on Tuesday. — AFP
(More reports on page 4)

Pervez misses the bus again

LONDON, Oct. 11. — Criticising Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for "accepting limited help" from India in the aftermath of the killer earthquake, a leading British daily today said he not only failed to grab the opportunity to mend fences but also displayed a "depressing lack of imagination." The earthquake literally shook the foundations of the boundary between India and Pakistan in Kashmir. Yet it took a while to jolt Gen. Pervez Musharraf out of his customary ways of thinking on one of the great political faultlines of our day, the *Daily Telegraph* said. — AP

Details on page 2

Scuffle for relief, Pak toll climbs

MUZAFFARABAD (PoK), Oct. 11. — Desperate earthquake survivors scuffled over relief supplies as the first food convoys reached this devastated city on Tuesday, but the help was far from enough and heavy rains held up some helicopter flights to badly hit areas. Pakistan today put its official death toll at 23,000 and 51,000 injured. About 432 soldier died, mostly in PoK and 709 soldiers were injured, Prime Minister Mr Shaukat Aziz said, adding the amount of foreign aid had crossed \$ 300 million and more aid was flowing. He said 20,000 troops had been deployed in addition to 30,000 already helping in relief operations. A team of French experts rescued 40 trapped children from the debris of a school in Balakoti in PoK, three days after disaster struck.

Police looked on helplessly as more than 200 people raided a stock of food arranged by relief workers at a football field near Muzaffarabad's center — one of six designated aid distribution points. "I can't wait for the food to be distributed properly," said Ali Khan, a construction worker who has barely eaten for days. "I need it desperately and I'll take it." The quake damaged sanitation systems in the region, destroyed hospitals and left many victims with no access to clean drinking water, making them more vulnerable to disease. "Measles could potentially become a serious problem," said WHO spokeswoman Ms Fadela Chaib. Measles, potentially deadly for children, are already endemic in the region and only 60 per cent of the children are protected. — Agencies

THE STATESMAN

Sonia visits Uri, Tangdhar; offers all assistance to remote J&K villages

Death toll 588; Rs. 42-cr. additional aid from Calamities Relief Fund; Army, IAF to continue relief operations

Luv Puri

SRINAGAR: United Progressive Alliance (UPA) chairperson Sonia Gandhi on Sunday promised that the Central and State governments would reach out to the remote villages and provide necessary relief.

The number of injured has gone up to 1,250 with fresh contact being established with the remote villages of Kupwara belt on Sunday.

Ms. Gandhi flew to Uri and Tangdhar to visit the affected families and see the extent of damage, besides reviewing rescue and relief measures. She was accompanied by Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Urban Development and Parliamentary Affairs Minister

Ghulam Nabi Azad, Gen. J.J. Singh and People's Democratic Party president Mehbooba Mufti.

Ms. Gandhi said in Uri: "We have come here to share your grief. I have myself seen the tragedy, which has brought a lot of destruction and also met the injured. I know you are very unhappy, but we are with you."

Later in the day, Ms. Gandhi visited the Army hospital at Bagamibagh Cantonment at the headquarters of 15 Corps.

Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee put the death toll at 588, which included 50 Army and Border Security Force personnel.

Talking to reporters, he said: "The Army and the Indian Air Force will continue to provide all help in rescue and relief

operations."

The Minister also announced that an additional Rs. 42 crores from the Calamities Relief Fund would be provided. This was in addition to the assistance of Rs. 100 crores announced by the Centre on Saturday night.

Fifty to sixty men of the Border Roads Organisation were feared killed in a landslide near the Lal Pull (Red Bridge) near Kaman Post close to the Line of Control in Uri sector, officials said. The Aman Setu bridge on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Road, which links Kaman post on the Indian side of Line of Control with Chakoti tehsil of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, has also collapsed. The bridge on the Pakistan side had been partially damaged, a spokesman of 15 Corps said.

Ms. Gandhi said in Uri: "We have come here to share your grief. I have myself seen the tragedy, which has brought a lot of destruction and also met the injured. I know you are very unhappy, but we are with you."



WORDS OF SOLACE: Congress president Sonia Gandhi visiting quake-hit Uri, north of Srinagar, on Sunday.

J-K ■ As per pact between Cong & PDP, CM is expected to leave post in November

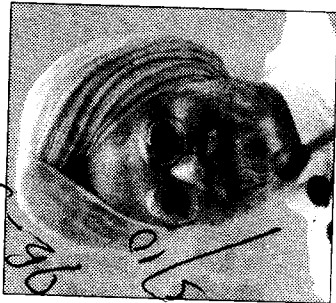
Mufti meets PM on development

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 4

A HEAD of a possible power transfer in Jammu and Kashmir next month, Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed today called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and apprised him about the development taking place in the state.

"I briefed him about the development work and the Prime Minister was appreciative of the pace with which it was going on," Sayeed told reporters after meeting him at his office for 30 minutes.

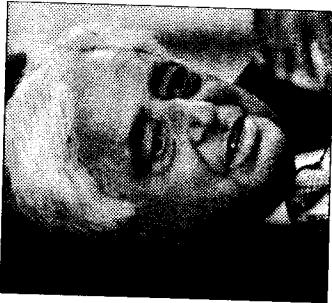
The Chief Minister, who is expected to leave the post in the first week of November as per the agreement between the Congress and the PDP, was evasive on whether he was demitting his office next



month.

However, asked whether his demitting of office was in any way going to affect the peace process between India and Pakistan, Sayeed said, "Whatever peace has been achieved in the state, it is because of the common minimum programme of coalition partners."

Sayeed's daughter and MP Mehbooba Sayeed had met Congress president Sonia Gandhi last week and was un-



derstood to have requested for continuation of Sayeed as the Chief Minister.

According to the post-poll agreement, the PDP was to have the first stint of three years as Chief Minister while the Congress candidate would take over for the rest three years.

Asked about what were the other issues discussed with the Prime Minister, Sayeed said, "We discussed the peace process between India and Pakistan and the ongoing talks

between the Centre and separatists in the state."

The implementation of Prime Minister's package in the state was also discussed during the meeting, he said.

"Recently, the Prime Minister's Principle Secretary T K A Nair had come to the state to review the implementation of the package. He has conveyed his satisfaction over the process," Sayeed said.

Referring to the next round of talks between the Centre and Hurriyat Conference, he said, "It may be held soon. There is a good response and more and more people will come forward for the peace process."

In reply to another question about the alleged human rights violation by the Army, Sayeed said only police and paramilitary forces will work for maintaining law and order and the Army will defend the

border. But for that "we have to have a conducive atmosphere. We want normalcy to prevail so that Army will not be involved in counter insurgency," he said.

On a question about the work done by his government in last three years, he said, "Whatever has been possible, it is because of the contribution of all parties which are in coalition. Above all there has been a support of people of the country. Many NGOs adopted orphans from our state and came forward to help us in healing the miseries of the people and above all the support of the Centre helped us in changing the ground realities."

"The whole nation understood the sufferings of the people and that is why we are able to change the mindset of the people of the state."

Mittal inks historic deal with Jharkhand

HT correspondent
Ranchi, October 8

THE WORLD'S largest steel manufacturer, Mittal Steel Company, on Saturday signed an MoU with the Jharkhand government for setting up a 12 million tonne integrated greenfield steel plant and mining operations, at a cost of Rs 40,000 crore. This will be the maiden venture of the steel giant in India.

The agreement was signed between Jharkhand chief secretary P.P. Sharma and Lakshmi Niwas Mittal, in the presence of chief minister Arjun Munda at a function organised at the CM's official residence.

The function was attended by the state's finance minister Raghubar Das, home minister Sudesh Mahto, speaker Inder Singh Namdhari and several legislators, apart from officials of the Mittal group.

The proposed plant would be developed in two phases of six million metric tonnes each. The first phase would be completed within 48 months after agreement on the detailed project report (DPR), and the second phase within a further 54 months after the completion of the first phase.

The company would now undertake a detailed study to identify location for the plant, iron ore, coalmines and water sources. The company would also study the possibility of setting up a mega power plant of 2,500 MW and would set up townships for its employees, as part of the integrated project.

"Once the DPR is completed and found acceptable to both the parties, definite agreements will be entered into," a company official told HT.

Mittal Steel also signed two additional MoUs with the state government, con-



L.N. Mittal (right) and Jharkhand chief secretary P.P. Sharma (left) at the signing ceremony in Ranchi on Saturday, while chief minister Arjun Munda looks on.

firming its social commitment for development of the region and promising to develop technical skills and human resources in order to sustain the pace of industrialisation in the state. The company agreed to work closely with the government to achieve an improvement in both these areas.

As part of this commitment, Mittal Group would adopt the existing state government-run polytechnics and provide state-of-the-art facilities therein. A joint committee comprising officials of both the parties would be formed. The committee would strive to achieve excel-

lence in technical education so that an expertise could be developed for making the local youths employable in the ensuing industries.

"We're delighted to have signed this MoU with Jharkhand. The local government, under the dynamic leadership of Arjun Munda, has done an excellent job in attracting additional investment to boost the region's economy, and we hope that our interest and potential investment would add further benefits through job creation and community support", said L.N. Mittal while commenting upon the MoU.

INTERVIEW

L.N. Mittal

The state's location is ideal for the project

World's third richest man

Lakshmi N. Mittal is undeterred by the challenges he might face in Jharkhand. For him, the state's mineral resources, locational advantage are factors that matter. Excerpts from HT's interaction with the Mittal Steel chairman:

clause?

Initially, we were not sure if we'd be able to use the entire amount of iron ore that we get from the state. So we thought of exporting the surplus. But now we feel that we'll be able to use it all up, hence, we've withdrawn that clause.

Mittal Steel is known for preferring investments in brownfield projects. Why are you opting for a greenfield project in Jharkhand?

I started my career with a greenfield project. Jharkhand's natural resources, its nearness to the market, and its mineral reserves make it an ideal location for a greenfield project.

By when would the company prepare its feasibility report? Would it engage companies for mining in Jharkhand?

The completion of the feasibility report would depend solely on the state government's cooperation, and how fast our consultants can deliver the goods. As for engaging companies for mining, we haven't decided anything on that subject yet.

Why did you withdraw the 30 per cent iron ore export