

Kashmir Times, 1 August 2007

Key to SAFTA lies in cross LOC trade: Mufti

Baramulla, July 31: Peoples Democratic Party PDP Patron, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has stressed the need for immediate restoration of trade, travel and tourism across the Line of Control LoC in Jammu & Kashmir. A J&K centric cross LoC economic dimension to the ongoing peace process would facilitate the much needed political stability in the region, he said. Addressing a function organized in connection with the partys Foundation Day celebrations here today, Mufti made it clear that the key to the South Asian Free Trade Agreement SAFTA lies in cross LoC trade. SAFTA would become a reality, the day trucks start rolling on Srinagar Muzaffarabad Road, he said and added that the tardy follow up of the May 2006 announcement by the two Governments New Delhi and Islamabad to start trade through Srinagar Muzaffarabad Road is brewing cynicism and disinterest among the people of the State, who led the peace process from the front.

Daily Excelsior, 1 August 2007

Separate Directorate for Tribal Affairs approved

Srinagar, July 31: The State Government has approved the creation of a separate directorate for tribal affairs and announced the upgrading of 100 primary schools in areas inhabited by the Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes. The decision was taken at a meeting of the State Advisory Board for development of Gujjar and Bakerwals, chaired by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad here last evening, following persistent demands by board members for establishing a separate tribal directorate in the State. The new Directorate has been created with the objective of monitoring works taken up under tribal sub-plan, special Central and Guaranteed Constitutional Assistance received by the State, an official spokesman said. The department shall be headed by a Director who would function in Jammu and Srinagar six months every year, besides two Deputy Directors, one each for Kashmir and Jammu province.

Daily Excelsior, 1 August 2007

Editorial: Tragic, indeed

It is a momentous tragedy that four tourists are among six persons killed in a blast in their bus outside the famous Shalimar Garden in the Summer Capital last Sunday. At least 20 others have been injured. What is unfortunate is that the militants have managed to trigger this deafening explosion at the fag end of the current tourist season. The gruesome incident is bound to further soil our reputation as a safe haven for visitors. As it is those engaged in the hospitality trade have been in despair because of poor arrivals this time. The phenomenon has been described as a fall out from targeted grenade attacks on guests last year. What will happen in the days to come? This thought is quite worrisome from the viewpoint of both us and our guests.

Greater Kashmir, 1 August 2007

Editorial: Connecting Kashmiris

The news about the Supreme Court of India having allowed the restarting of the construction of Mughal Road has sent a wave of jubilation among the Kashmiri speaking people inhabiting the districts of Poonch and Rajouri. Crackers were burst every where

and people greeted each other with sweets. This clearly shows how disconnected Kashmiris have been rendered during the last few decades for various political reasons and misconceived notions of security. Had the earlier Governments made earnest efforts, this and the other roads would have been fully operational by now. Credit must be given to the present Government for relentlessly pursuing the case and getting a favourable decision even though after 11 months or so. It is very heartening if the authorities in Delhi have realised that connecting Kashmiris is going to help solve this intractable problem rather than disconnecting them! Now that the work has been restarted, the Government has to make good the time lost in litigation.

Kashmir Times, 1 August 2007

Editorial: Shameful and cowardly

The blast outside the famed Shalimar Garden in the winter capital on Sunday that left five dead and nearly two dozen people, mostly tourists injured, is not only shocking, it is highly shameful. Equally shocking was the mysterious bus blast the next day at Awantipora that left two more tourists dead and several injured. Though the case is still being investigated and the accident angle is not ruled out, the two incidents in a quick succession reveal the ugly face of violence. No sane person can condone acts of violence against innocent persons, whosoever is the perpetrator. All those who have faith in humanity and basic principles of justice need to strongly condemn the brutality with which the hapless innocent tourists have been targeted.

Daily Excelsior, 2 August 2007

Report punctures police claim of attack on tourists

Srinagar, Aug 1: The State Forensic Laboratory has punctured claims by the Jammu and Kashmir Police that grenades were used by militants in mysterious blasts that left nine people, including seven tourists, dead on two consecutive days this week. While police claimed that militants had hurled grenades at a bus and a jeep carrying tourists on Sunday and Monday, the laboratory's report went against this claim. It also passed on material from the scene of the blasts to a Central Forensic Team that had come here to help in ascertaining the nature of explosives used in the incidents. Seven people, including five tourists from Gujarat, were killed on Sunday by a mysterious blast inside a bus while two children died on Monday when a tourist jeep carrying them turned turtle after an explosion took place in the vehicle.

Kashmir Times, 2 August 2007

Despite withdrawal of call, migrant workers continue to leave in panic

Srinagar, Aug 1: Despite the withdrawal of calls to quit Kashmir by Syed Ali Shah Geelani and militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, the non state subject labourers continue to leave Valley. Even today, large number of migrant labourers left Valley for their respective places in buses, tempo travellers and Sumos. Who will guarantee our safety? questions Mohammad Saim, a labourer from Bhagalpur, Bihar, waiting for a Jammu bound bus at General Bus Stand Batamaloo. Saim was working in Milk Food Ice Cream Factory at Kandbagh, Baramulla.

Greater Kashmir, 2 August 2007

SHRC directs magistrate to conduct inquiry into HR violation by Army

Srinagar, Aug 1: Directing a magistrate to conduct an inquiry into Human Rights violations by the Army in Kishtwar district, Jammu and Kashmir State Human Rights Commission SHRC has asked Jammu range police chief to collect factual report about the allegation and submit IT before this commission. A petition was filed before SHRC member Habibullah Bhat by the residents of Wadwan in Kishtwar district of Jammu region, alleging troops of 7 Rashtriya Rifles RR were torturing innocent villagers, ransacking their houses and detaining them without any reason.

Greater Kashmir, 2 August 2007

Editorial: Shalimar Blast

The blast in the Tourist Bus at Shalimar carrying Gujarati tourists must have made Narinder Modi jubilant that the pogrom which he had to halt is being carried out in Kashmir. The tourists who died in the blast were all Muslims from Gujarat. The tragedy occurred immediately as soon as the occupants of the bus had reached Shalimar garden after offering prayers at the historical mosque of Hazratbal. The targeting of Muslim tourists from Gujarat has an eerie feeling about it. After the last years systematic targeting of tourist vehicles, the situation had started showing improvements this year. People had started believing that the last years attacks were an aberration and not a deliberate and planned affair. They have been proved wrong. The targeting of tourists has been very well planned and an ominous move. Last year the tourists from the main generating markets within the country ie Gujarat, Maharashtra, and West Bengal were targeted.

The Tribune, 2 August 2007

Opinion: Army should create a climate of trust (Firdous Syed)

In a bizarre incident on June 26, two army men of the 57 Rashtriya Rifles RR were caught by outraged people when they had barged into a villagers home and attempted to rape his 17 year old girl in Gujjarpati Kunan, Bandipore, some 55 kms from Srinagar. After being beaten to pulp by the local people and paraded naked in the town, police somehow managed to secure the rogue army personnel from the people after violent clashes with the public that left more than 30 people injured. On June 27, the Sub-Divisional Police Officer SDPO Bandipore said the two army men have been arrested and a case of attempted rape registered against them. He added that they will be produced in a court of law.

Indian Express, 2 August 2007

Opinion: No alibi for UPA (C Raja Mohan)

It is a pity that the UPA government has allowed the question of troop cuts in Jammu and Kashmir to become a political football in that sensitive state. The steady reduction of violence in the state, ever since the peace process with Pakistan was launched in January 2004, had made reduction of troops as well the nature of their deployment in J&K, a sensible decision from the national perspective. A redistribution of the armed forces in J&K has the potential to expand the space for a political reconciliation within the state as well as generate the positive conditions for the peace process with Pakistan. Yet the conservatism of the Congress leadership and the resistance from the security

establishment has prevented Prime Minister Manmohan Singh from taking an early decision on troop cuts.

Daily Excelsior, 3 August 2007

Infiltration to increase: Army

Uri, Aug 2: Infiltration from across the border is likely to increase as over 2,000 militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba are waiting for an opportunity to sneak into Kashmir valley, a senior Army officer said today. We expect infiltration to increase this month in view of Independence Day, Major General Ramesh Halgali, General Officer Commanding of 19 Infantry Division, said. The militants, especially from Lashker e Toiba and other foreign outfits, are waiting to cross over here to increase militancy in the Valley, he said. Nearly 2,000 militants of LeT alone have been brought to the borders to sneak into Kashmir, Halgali said. The jawans and officers guarding the Line of Control are maintaining tight vigil to scuttle the infiltration bids from across the border.

Daily Excelsior, 3 August 2007

Pak ready to allow trade across LoC

New Delhi, Aug 2: Pakistan today expressed its willingness to allow trade through Line of Control LoC in Jammu and Kashmir for a limited number of goods, a development that could be a key peace initiative between the neighbours. This was stated by visiting Pakistan Commerce Secretary Syed Asif Shah in his meeting with Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh here, a day after the two countries set a target of reaching 10 billion dollars trade. In my discussions, I raised this issue whether trade can be done through LoC, to which Commerce Secretary Shahs response was that Pakistan is in favour of dutyfree movement of goods through this route for a limited number of items, Ramesh told reporters after the meeting.

Indian Express, 3 August 2007

Consequences disastrous if J&K solution avoided

Srinagar, August 3: Asking the Centre to shed its traditional policy of maintaining status quo in Kashmir, Hurriyat Conference leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq on Friday demanded that the peace process be accelerated to resolve the vexed issue. If there is no change in the policy of Indian leadership towards Kashmir issue and it tries to avoid a solution, the consequences would not only be negative but disastrous...the situation would go out of hand, the Mirwaiz told a Friday congregation at Jamia Masjid Beerwah in Budgam district of central Kashmir. He said the Indian government should come out of the traditional policy of maintaining status quo... adopting the fruitless exercises of holding elections.

Daily Excelsior, 3 August 2007

Opinion: Police reforms in J&K (RS Jamwal)

Change of guard has taken place for the top post of police in J&K with a new Director General and a new post of security advisor. Mr. Gopal Sharma is the new Security Advisor while Mr. Kuldeep Khuda is the new Director General of Police. Though no tectonic shift is expected so far as policies are concerned, there can be change in style and working as happens with each change at the top. The civil society has much expectations

from these changes, as the functioning of police organization has so much effect in the day to day life of major chunk of population of this troubled state. The police organization in India and especially in J&K state requires urgent changes. This state has been facing terrorism of the worst kind for the last about seventeen years. Police organization is in the forefront in fighting this terrorism..

Daily Excelsior, 4 August 2007

Hurriyat fights Hurriyat in Srinagar, people fight police in Sopore

Srinagar, Aug 3: While capital city observed yet another shutdown, two factions of the separatist Hurriyat Conference clashed with each other in downtown Srinagar and people clashed with Police over an incident of alleged molestation by troops in Haigam area of Baramulla district today. With umpteenth shutdown in the capital city this time on J&K Realistic Forum leader Hilal Ahmed Wars call followers of Syed Ali Shah Geelani faction of the Hurriyat came under an attack by those said to be followers of the rival faction led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Nullah Mar near Bohrikadal. Eyewitnesses said that some people resorted to stone pelting on Geelani's modest rally after Friday prayers. As Geelani supporters began yelling jis hurriyat mein Geelani nahi, woh Hurriyat manzoor nahi Hurriyat sans Geelani is not acceptable and Bharat ko jo yaar hai, gadaar hai gadaar hai, Mirwaiz followers began pelting stones and brickbats on the rally.

Kashmir Times, 4 August 2007

Talwara migrants begin march to Jammu

Reasi, Aug 2: Peeved over step motherly treatment at the hands and refusal of the state government to treat them at par with displaced Kashmiri Pandits, Talwara migrants embarked on a march to winter capital this morning. Demanding same relief in cash and kind being provided to Kashmiri Pandits, Talwara migrants this morning left for Jammu from Baradari here at around 10 AM. It may be mentioned here that Deputy Commissioner Sanjeev Verma late last evening hard to convince Talwara migrants to initially accept relief in the form of ration and kerosene oil, which was stopped in March 2004. However, the displaced families outrightly rejected the offer on the grounds that they should also get the same relief being provided to the Kashmiri migrants.

Greater Kashmir, 4 August 2007

Opinion: The Mughal Road That May Never Be! (Tanvir Sadiq)

.. From time to time, many fictitious stories have been woven around the Mughal Road. First it was the Defense Reasons. It was followed by arguments like that it was not viable, it would not be an all weather Highway, it will give a fillip to militancy, it will destroy the only compact forest cover, it will be like giving an open license to the forest smugglers etc. I haven't heard anyone talking about the misery, isolation and economic depravity that this Hill Region has suffered or the suppression people were subjected to because they were the ones who rose against the Dogra tyrannical rule and sacrificed a thousand lives. Exploitation of any kind is against human spirit and the worst crimes against humanity yet the Jammu banyas have been exploiting their resource shamelessly..

Indian Express, 4 August 2007

Opinion: Strike at the roots of fragging (Rahul K Bhonsle)

Compensations to soldiers for the vagaries of service life have always been a complex issue. The Union cabinet seems to have concluded that more leave travel concessions to soldiers would compensate for the hazards of serving in distant places in life-threatening conditions...The core issue is to limit the exposure of the uniformed force, particularly the army, to violence unless required by the exceptional circumstances of war. This will help retain a sense of humaneness by avoiding a continuous exposure to blood and gore.. Demilitarisation may thus be as much an answer as providing two free tickets home each year. Furthermore, militancy in Kashmir has now reached the classical final 20 per cent zone, wherein the input-output ratio is skewed..Beyond this point, the deployment of Armed Forces will have only marginal results: the solution is political and involves dialogue with militant groups particularly the Hizbul Mujahideen, the largest indigenous group with grassroots support in the Valley.

The Tribune, 4 August 2007

Opinion: Weak right to information (Balraj Puri)

Autonomy that Jammu and Kashmir enjoys and demand for its enlargement would be justified only if it is used in the interest of the people and not merely to strengthen repressive and arbitrary powers of the rulers. Exclusion of jurisdiction of the National Human Rights Commission, 73rd and 74th amendment to the constitution of India to empower local self governments and the Right to Information Act to the state are just a few examples of how Article 370 of the constitution guaranteeing special status to the state has been used to deny the people their democratic rights. Without compromising its power under the Article, the state could use to enact better laws than the national laws after studying the working of the latter. As the RTI Act is the latest and glaring example of the misuse of Article 370, it is discussed here in the hope that some remedial measures might still be considered.

Daily Excelsior, 5 August 2007

Political leadership must now take charge of situation: Mufti

Jammu, Aug 4: Peoples Democratic Party PDP patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today said that States political leadership must now take full charge of the present situation by expanding and consolidating the role of peoples institutions to create a potent coalition for peace and amicable resolution of the problems. Addressing a function organised in connection with the partys Foundation Day celebrations here, Sayeed emphasized that State's political decision making apparatus must capture and represent the views and concerns of the people instead of indulging in politics of exclusion suited to extraneous considerations.

Greater Kashmir, 5 August 2007

Militants wont strike at crowded places

Srinagar: Hizbul-Mujahideen on Saturday asserted that all militant outfits have taken a collective decision not to carry any activity at crowded places. The Hizbs Muzaffarabad based spokesman Ehsan Elahi in a faxed statement said, Mujahideen will not carry out any strike at crowded places and they will only target troops. Elahi said that the decision has been taken collectively by all the militant outfits. Accusing agencies of carrying out grenade blasts in markets Elahi said, Throwing grenades at civilians is a handiwork of

agencies and their hands are drenched with the blood of innocents. Elahi rejected the police claim of people handing over two militants to police in north Kashmir.

Daily Times, 5 August 2007

Opinion: Latin foxtrot for Kashmir (Khalid Hasan)

Senor Reyes of Uruguay now rests in the lap of God. And so perhaps does Kashmir. One is only therefore left to wonder where the next Kashmir conference will take place. The North Pole perhaps before it melts. In 1989, as the movement against Indian rule in Kashmir erupted, at about the same time, there came to birth an information and public relations operation, first in the United States and then in several other countries. Much water has since gone down the Jhelum and today's Pakistani position on Kashmir is not what it used to be. While Pakistan has shown flexibility and expressed its willingness to consider solutions other than the failed ones it has traditionally pursued, India has remained tethered to its old stand on the issue, namely that the State is an integral part of India and while normalisation is welcome such as resumption of travel and trade between the two parts of the disputed State any transfer of populations or territory is not on the table. The most that India may be willing to concede today is to let the Line of Control become the permanent border.

Daily Excelsior, 5 August 2007

Opinion: Why is Indian Army losing its cool? (Dr J Singh)

One of the surest ways to ruin an army is to assign it civilian operations and expect the results which it was never trained for. One of the surest ways to spoil an army soldier is to ask him to share assignment with a state policeman and then expect him to remain unaffected by the menace of expecting bribes, playing truant and all other ills that plague a civil cop. Over 16 years of deployment in anti militancy operations in Kashmir has been a great learning experience for the Indian Army but what both the Army personnel as well as their political bosses overlook is that in the process the Army soldier has inadvertently unlearned much of what was once a part of the rich Army tradition subtly passed down from one generation of Army personnel to the next. Reoccurring incidents of suicide among army persons including women officers or a cop going berserk and turning his rifle on the CO before killing himself bear testimony to a deep malaise eating into our security forces..

Indian Express, 5 August 2007

Army ready to relocate from J&K hinterland if State govt wants

New Delhi : The Army is ready to consider relocation of troops from the hinterland of Jammu and Kashmir if the State Government is confident that local police can maintain law and order in rural areas. Rolling out this offer during an exclusive interview with The Sunday Express, with just a month to go before he demits office, Army Chief General J J Singh said, Troops involved in law and order duties can be adjusted depending on the level of violence. If the situation improves then they can be reduced. We are in the hinterland in support of the State Government. Over 75,000 army personnel, mostly from 63 battalions of Rashtriya Rifles, are currently involved in hinterland operations in Jammu & Kashmir.

Daily Excelsior, 6 August 2007

LoC fence powerless as militants sneak across

Srinagar, Aug 5: Militants sneaking across the Line of Control LoC in the State are timing their infiltration attempts to coincide with the time when generators powering the electrified fence are switched off in violation of regulations. This has caused concern in the security establishment, especially as the generators are not supposed to be switched off during the night, official sources said. The barbed wire along the LoC can be cut only if generators deployed by the Army are turned off. A terrorist caught near Baramulla in north Kashmir told interrogators that militants monitored the trend of switching off of the generators by the Army and planned their infiltration bids accordingly, the sources said. Infiltration across the LoC has been high this year when compared to last year..

Kashmir Times, 6 August 2007

Mufti hopeful of positive Standing Committee report

Jammu, Aug 5: Asserting that Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has shown seriousness towards party's demand of troops cut in the state, Peoples Democratic Party PDP patron and former Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has said that the report of Standing Committee, constituted by the Government of India to assess the improving situation in the state, will bring positive results in this regard. Interacting with media persons here today, Mufti said there has been considerable improvement in the situation at ground level in the state and after the recent visits of Union Home Minister, Home and Defence Secretaries, the central government has admitted that there has been sea change in situation at ground level..

Greater Kashmir, 6 August 2007

Was US planning to deploy peacekeeping troops in Kashmir?

Srinagar, Aug 5: Was US planning to propose deployment of international peacekeeping force in Kashmir at the height of the turmoil? The proposal never took off. But an exercise was conducted by the influential US think-tank, the United States Institute of Peace USIP, in the early days of Kashmir militancy to work out the pros and cons of deploying a peacekeeping force in the troubled valley. A report titled Simulation on Peacekeeping in Kashmir An American Choice, prepared by USIP in 2002 and released recently, details the exercise conducted by the Institute on how the US Government must consider a peace proposal negotiated between India, Pakistan and China and calling for the deployment of US troops in Kashmir as part of the peacekeeping force.

Daily Excelsior, 6 August 2007

Editorial: Wages of sin

How else can it be described but as wages of sin? According to a Srinagar datelined report, the continuing exodus of non State labourers threatens the construction and development boom in the Kashmir region. This workforce, consisting mainly of people from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Jharkhand, has been moving out in large numbers following threats by extremist and terrorist organisations. The majority of them had come to lend a helping hand in the building of new structures in the Valley in the face of heavy odds. The going was good for them till the radical elements gave vent to their anger following the rape of a teenager in Handwara in Kupwara district. Two non

State subjects were involved in the heinous crime. They had two local accomplices as well.

Kashmir Times, 6 August 2007

Editorial: Opening the border wider

...Islamabad has ultimately yielded to domestic pressure as well as to the demands of a desired Kashmir settlement and has agreed to open the Srinagar Muzaffarabad route to trade in certain items, including the famed fruits of the Kashmir valley. The news that apples might soon be allowed to be sold in Pakistan has sent a wave of expectation and enthusiasm across the valley. In view of the high rates charged by truckers for carrying apples and other fruits to Delhi and more distant places the fruit growers of Kashmir have been, for long, on the look out for profitable markets nearer home. The PAK and Pakistan beyond are likely to prove such markets much nearer home. Besides, if mere travel between two parts of Kashmir strengthened the emotional bond between two separated groups of the same people, trade between them will strengthen their ties with economic ties.

Greater Kashmir, 7 August 2007

INDIA OUR LEGITIMATE TARGET: AL QAEEDA

Dubai, Aug 6: Al Qaeda has warned in a new video that India and US diplomatic missions were the militant groups legitimate targets. In the footage compiled by Al Qaedas production arm As Sahab, it said that the targeting of Tel Aviv, Moscow and Delhi is also our legitimate right and accused India of killing more than 100,000 Muslims in Kashmir with US blessing. It also singled out US missions in oil rich Gulf Arab states as potential targets. We shall continue to target you at home and abroad just as you target us at home and abroad, Adam Gadahn, a wanted American member of Al Qaeda, said in the video released on Sunday. The video was posted on LauraMansfield.com, an American website which monitors militant groups.

Daily Excelsior, 7 August 2007

Azad announces political reservation for STs

Jammu, Aug 6: In a significant decision, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today announced political reservations for Scheduled Tribes including Gujjars, Bakerwals and Gaddis and indicated that if NC and PDP agreed he was ready to bring a legislation to this effect during Monsoon session of Legislature resuming from August 20. The major announcement was made by Mr Azad while addressing a gathering of Gujjars at Gurjar Desh Charitable Trust in the presence of Trust chairman Masud Choudhary here this afternoon amidst a huge applause from the crowd, which welcomed the Chief Ministers decision with thumping of desks and clapping. My Government is ready to give political reservations to STs including Gujjars, Bakerwals and Gaddis in both provinces of Kashmir and Jammu as per their population, he declared pointing out that this decision was part of Congress manifesto as well as Common Minimum Programme CMP, which governs the coalition Government.

Kashmir Times, 7 August 2007

Opinion: Xenophobia, Kashmiri style! (AH Talib)

It is a Catch 22 kind of situation hardly ever seen in Kashmirs chequered history. Even as both militant groups as well as Syed Ali Shah Geelani have toned down their call to migrant laborers to leave Kashmir, hundreds of laborers and small business holders, most of whom are from north and north eastern India, are packing up their bags for home. To the outside world, Kashmir today represents an addition to the long list of nations and ethnic groups that have engulfed themselves in the fires of xenophobia. However, for a place like Kashmir, anything close to xenophobia, if not xenophobia per se, is a tragic irony in itself. For a tiny and powerless nation witnessing the worst kind of oppression and repression since ages now, the transformation of its image from the subjugated to the tyrant is cruelly unjust.

Greater Kashmir, 7 August 2007

Opinion: A Way Forward (Prof NA Shawl)

The time has come for us to think pragmatically and realistically for bringing to an end all cycles of violence and strengthening the hands of those who are creating a space for dialogue, peace and reconciliation. The people of Jammu and Kashmir like other nationalities and nations have a right to realise their best potential and this can happen only in an atmosphere of peace. Peace is vital for Kashmirs progress, development and economic emancipation. We are here today trying to exchange our wisdom and understanding to promote a forward movement. And the most essential elements in any dialogue or process are determination and the capacity to reciprocate to positive proposals.

Daily Times, 7 August 2007

JKLF rejects Musharrafs proposals for Kashmir solution

Rawalpindi: The Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front JKLF has declared that the proposals of President General Pervez Musharraf to solve Kashmir issue would deprive the people of Jammu Kashmir of their inherent, internationally recognised and pledged right to self-determination and would also cause the areas permanent disintegration. In a press statement issued on Monday, JKLF also declared that it would not accept any solution of the Kashmir issue, including Musharraf's proposals, that was not based on the freely expressed will of the people of the entire Jammu Kashmir State including Kashmir Valley, Jammu, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan and Ladakh or would result in any kind of permanent division of the state, nor would it let any such solution to be implemented. JKLF also rejected Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singhs concept of the United States of Kashmir under Indian suzerainty, saying it would perpetuate Indian occupation..

Indian Express, 8 August 2007

Separatists in hot spot as al Qaeda refers to Kashmir

Srinagar : With the al Qaeda mentioning Kashmir in its latest video, which puts US embassies on top of its hitlist, separatists in the Valley are struggling to formulate a response to the association of their campaign with a pan Islamic jihadi outfit. Though none of the major separatist conglomerates has rushed to deny an al Qaeda role in the state, they view the development as very serious. On Sunday, an al Qaeda spokesman, Adam Gaddahn aka Azzam al Amriki, in a video message, identified Indo US diplomatic missions as legitimate targets for the terror outfit. He also accused India of killing one

lakh Kashmiris, suddenly bringing the state on the compass of the outfits jihadi discourse. We are still going through the statement. They have incidentally mentioned Kashmir. It does not mean they are operating from the state, Ayaz Akber, the spokesman of the hardline Hurriyat led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, told The Indian Express.

Kashmir Times, 8 August 2007

A fateful historical disconnect (MS Malik)

A chronic historical lacuna looms ominously over the prospect of any material progress towards the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, if and when that remote possibility emerges. Right from 1947, when the treacherous issue was born, till today, when it has become a festering sore, there has been a fateful disconnect between the feasible option and the contemporary person/group most likely to deliver it. In purely academic terms, Kashmir's accession with India in 1947 was against the run of events on the subcontinent. Its demographic composition coupled with its geographical location, two key elements of the agreed basis of the partition, should have seen it becoming a part of Pakistan. But the eventual course of events was dictated by the logic of countervailing political equations on the ground. That disconnect turned out to be the fountainhead of an unending subcontinental tragedy.

Daily Excelsior, 8 August 2007

Opinion: Beyond the cross LoC trade (D Suba Chandran)

Last week, both India and Pakistan have agreed to start trade across the Line of Control. Ever since the LoC has been opened and the first bus rolled between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar in 2005, there have been increasing demands from the entire community in Jammu and Kashmir. Especially the Chambers of Commerce and Industries, both in Jammu and Srinagar, have been pressurizing the governments in J&K and New Delhi to open the LoC for trade and allow the goods to move across. Despite repeated efforts by the JCCI and KCCI, the governments in New Delhi and Islamabad have been slow in responding to the demands not only from these business communities, but also from political parties and groups from all the regions Jammu, Valley, PoK and Ladakh.

Kashmir Times, 8 August 2007

Editorial: To do or not to do

Both the contrasting stands taken up by the Indian army and the state government over the issue of surrenders of militants who had crossed over to Pakistan Administered Kashmir PAK but wish to return do not bode too well for peace. While the army is keen on establishing contact with the known disgruntled elements among the militants across the Line of Control LoC to inspire them to come to the Indian side and to surrender, the state authorities want to call a halt to the surrenders. While the army is proud to claim that around two hundred militants have surrendered since the start of the Srinagar Muzaffarabad bus service, the state government is now busy lobbying with the centre to accept its stand on stopping the surrenders at the LoC and also begin the process of repatriating the Pakistani women the already returned surrendered militants might have married during their stay across the LoC.

Indian Express, 8 August 2007

Opinion: The road not taken: Jammu to Sialkot (D Suba Chandran)

During the recent meeting in New Delhi between Pakistans commerce secretary, Syed Asif Ali Shah, and India's minister of state for commerce, Jairam Ramesh, Pakistan has agreed in principle to allow trade across the Line of Control. This is an important breakthrough, but it should encompass the entire LoC and not be limited to just the cross Kashmir stretch. The idea is not a new one: India and Pakistan have discussed it at length at the highest levels. Manmohan Singh, too, recently proposed making the LoC a line of peace, allowing the free flow of ideas, goods, and people. It is in that context that the Jammu-Sialkot road assumes importance. The road had existed before 1947 and there was even a railway line from Lahore to Jammu. Unfortunately, most discussions relating to making borders irrelevant have focused on cross Kashmiri interactions.

Daily Excelsior, 9 August 2007

Hurriyat plea on missing persons

Srinagar, Aug 8: Moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference today asked the United Nations to help trace the whereabouts of persons, who have allegedly disappeared in the State since militancy broke out in 1990. We appeal to United Nations General Secretary and international community to intervene and help in tracing out the whereabouts of over 8,500 disappeared persons in the State, Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq said addressing relatives of missing people at a sit in at Sher e Kashmir Municipal Park here. Hurriyat Conference had organised a silent protest to express solidarity with families of such people and also press the demand for tracing them..

Kashmir Times, 9 August 2007

Opinion: Right To Information Act: Counter productive in Jammu and Kashmir? (Balraj Puri)

The Right to Information Act is the latest and glaring example of the misuse of Article 370, guaranteeing special status to the State of Jammu and Kashmir. The autonomy that J&K enjoys and the demand for its enlargement can be justified only if it is used for its peoples interest and not for strengthening repressive and arbitrary powers of the rulers. Exclusion of jurisdiction of the National Human Rights Commission, 73rd and 74th amendment to the Constitution of India to empower local self governments are some other cases of how Article 370 has been applied to deny democratic rights to the people of the State..

Greater Kashmir, 9 August 2007

Autonomy focus of Indo Pak talks: NC

Srinagar, Aug 8: National Conference president Omar Abdullah on Wednesday claimed that the NC stand restoration of internal autonomy was now the focus of ongoing Indo Pak talks on Kashmir issue. During my meeting with Pakistan president Pervez Musharraf, I discussed with him in detail the quantum of internal autonomy enjoyed by state in the past. I also discussed with him the matters such as defence, foreign affairs and communication. He described internal autonomy as one of the important road maps for resolving Kashmir, said Omar while addressing a meeting of delegates from Uri and party office-bearers at NC headquarters here..

The Tribune, 9 August 2007

Opinion: Pugwash initiative on Kashmir (G Parthasarthy)

Colonel V Vasant and his radio operator Lance Naik Ganapat Shashikant were gunned down while thwarting terrorists attempting to infiltrate across the Line of Control in the Uri sector of North Kashmir on July 31. The deaths of Colonel Vasant and Lance Naik Shashikant are mourned by all those who are moved by the sacrifices of our men in uniform. India's ruling political class, however, appears to be too busy empathising with the families of suspected terrorists, to take note of such sacrifices. On the same day when the infiltration bid occurred, a Pakistan national, Abdul Wahab, was arrested at Kathmandu airport while disembarking from a flight from Karachi. Wahab was carrying counterfeit Indian currency notes amounting to Rs 1 crore in five hundred and one thousand rupee notes.

Daily Excelsior, 10 August 2007

Politician militant nexus established

Jammu, Aug 9: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today acknowledged that there was a nexus between some politicians and militants in the State and said his Government would act firmly to tackle the problem. It is true that in Jammu and Kashmir some politicians and Over Ground Workers have had a liaison with militants for several years and they take their help. We are maintaining a full watch on them, Azad said in an interview here. Asked whether these persons had been identified, he said: it is not a question of revealing their names or identifying them but of taking action against them.

Kashmir Times, 10 August 2007

India to announce Kashmir centric CBMs

New Delhi, Aug 9: India is set to announce new set of Kashmir centric Confidence Building Measures CBMs to ease up travel restrictions for passengers boarding cross Loc Srinagar Muzaffarabad and Poonch Rawalakot bus services and also to rehabilitate militancy victims in Jammu and Kashmir. Senior officials who met here last Tuesday to discuss the implementation of the recommendations of two working groups set up by the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh last year decided to connect nodal officers who issue permits in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad through internet. The meeting also decided to exempt children below 10 years and senior citizens above 60 years from the tedious verification process.

Greater Kashmir, 10 August 2007

STAGE BEING SET FOR CROSS LOC TRADE

New Delhi, Aug 9: Pakistan Commerce Secretary Syed Asif Shahs August 3 announcement in New Delhi that his Government was ready to allow duty free cross LoC trade in Jammu and Kashmir has set off hectic activities in New Delhi and Islamabad to work out the modalities for trans shipment of goods on Srinagar Muzaffarabad road. According to highly placed sources, the External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee has convened a high level meeting at his office here Friday to finalize the modalities and discuss the list of items to be cleared for cross LoC trade in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting is being attended by the Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath, Union Minister of State for Commerce Jairam Ramesh, Foreign Secretary Shivskankar Menon and

Commerce Secretary G K Pillai.

Kashmir Times, 10 August 2007

Editorial: Bullets alone for peace?

Virtually a day after the army announced that there was in our state a visible fall in militancy related activities the J&K police asked the state government to sanction the appointment of three SPOs each for the 850 Village Defence Committees VDC that are not functioning as per the official norms. At present there are around 3,500 VDCs in our state, mostly in the districts of Doda, Poonch and Rajouri and normally three SPOs are attached with each VDC. It is also learnt through reliable sources that the state police have sought permission to recruit people for setting up 1300 more VDCs. However, right now, many VDCs do not have the recommended number of SPOs attached to them.

Greater Kashmir, 11 August 2007

Hizb deplores arrest spree in Kashmir

Muzaffarabad, Aug 10: The Hizbul Mujahideen has denounced what it calls extensive campaign of arresting people across the Kashmir Valley. According to Ehsan Elahi, the outfit spokesman, the Hizb supreme commander, Syed Salahuddin while expressing strong resentment over the troops action said that in the run up to August 15, Kashmiri youths are being arrested frequently and subjected to severe mental and physical torture. Terming the arrests of Kashmiris as the frustration of Indian forces, Salahuddin said, The kith and kin of martyrs, their heirs and even women are being targeted by the Indian military and paramilitary troops.

Greater Kashmir, 11 August 2007

Opinion: Journey to Freedom (MR Dar)

A year later, after the success of, at a stretch more than 18 month long signature campaign in 2006, Yasin Malik Chairman Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front JKLF along with his senior party leaders and workers has been leading another mass contact campaign, namely, Safr e Azadi Journey to Freedom, since 20th May 2007. During Signature Campaign Yasin Malik along with his associates visited more than 5000 villages in Jammu Kashmir and collected more than 1.5 million signatures of Kashmiries irrespective of gender and age. Signature Campaign, purely a peaceful, political and non violent campaign, in and outside India, was highly appreciated in the intelligential and political circles.

Daily Excelsior, 12 August 2007

Armys ordnance depot in flames, 2 killed

Srinagar, Aug 11: The Armys biggest ordnance depot in Anantnag district today went up in flames in an accidental fire that killed two fire fighters and injured 41 people, including 23 Army personnel. Defence spokesman Lt Col A K Mathur said two fire fighters were killed in the massive fire and subsequent explosions in the 21 Field Ordnance Depot. The first explosion was reported at around 8.55 am, he said. Mathur said the fire was purely accidental and ruled out any sabotage saying the claims of militant outfits in this regard were baseless. He said 16 Army personnel were airlifted in two sorties to the base hospital at Badami Bagh cantonment, the headquarter of the

Armys 15 Corps.

Greater Kashmir, 12 August 2007

13 years after ceasefire, JKLF R says solution distant

Srinagar, Aug 11: Thirteen years after Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front JKLF announced unilateral ceasefire, the JKLF leaders find that final solution to Kashmir dispute is still a distant dream, but firmly believe it is not impossible. Roadmaps and interim solutions have weakened the movement, but resolve of Kashmiris continues to be same and their determination will lead to the final settlement of Kashmir issue, said Muhammad Salim Nanaji, Secretary General of JKLF Headquarters Rajbagh.

Greater Kashmir, 12 August 2007

Opinion: Dependence Day (M Ashraf)

On the days when the entire Indian sub continent is celebrating its Independence from the British, Kashmiris are mourning their dependence on both India as well as Pakistan even for their very basic survival! For them August 15 is the Dependence Day, a reminder that even after sixty years they still remain totally dependent and helpless. This day amply demonstrates how Kashmiris have been reduced to poor wretches at the mercy of soldiers and security personnel.

Kashmir Times, 12 August 2007

Delhi police, SOG launch joint operation

Jammu Aug 11: Special Operation Group of Jammu police in coordination with a team of Delhi police claimed to have foiled a major terror plot to launch strikes across the country on the eve of Independence Day by gunning down a divisional commander of Jaish e Mohammad outfit in an encounter at Ramzanpura area under the jurisdiction of Police Station Janipur in the wee hours today. A Sub Inspector of Delhi Police was also injured in the gun battle, which lasted for at least 15 minutes, while police claimed to have arrested another militant, who was trying to escape from the area in injured condition..

Kashmir Times, 12 August 2007

Editorial: Of mindless arrests and designed indifference

It may be no big news if youth, claimed by people as innocent, are arrested by security forces and angry protests erupt over it in the Valley, which has become infamous for arresting, detaining or torturing anyone on the slightest of suspicion, or rather no suspicion at all. It really is not out of the ordinary event. Though arrests of men are common, those of women, though much less, are not very rare. So, even the arrest of a 20 years old girl in Maloora, in the outskirts of the summer capital, and the protests that the incident sparked on Thursday was not altogether an isolated case. Less than two months ago, a girl working in a computer institute was arrested while on way to her office on charges that the institute she worked in had links with militant organization..

Daily Excelsior, 13 August 2007

JeM was plotting mobile phone, car blasts in city

Jammu, Aug 12: Recovery of 12 SIM cards and almost an equal number of handsets from a room where slain Jaish e Mohammed JeM divisional commande Saifullah Qari and his

injured associate Zaffar Iqbal were putting up at Ramzanpura, Janipura has led Intelligence agencies and police believe that the militants might have been plotting serial blasts using mobile telephones in the City. Mobile bombs are latest in the armoury of militants, which they have successfully used in Kashmir valley though no such explosion has been reported from any part of Jammu region so far. As police and Intelligence agencies started picking up leads from the rented house where the two dreaded militants including Ayodhya fidayeen attack mastermind Saifullah Qari were putting up for last 25 days, investigators could collect data from three mobile telephones only today while the process to collect data from all 12 phone numbers was expected to take two to three days.

Greater Kashmir, 13 August 2007

Army orders inquiry

Srinagar: Defence authorities have ordered a court of inquiry into the devastating fire at the 21 Field Ordnance Depot at Khandru in south Kashmir, destroying ammunition worth millions of rupees. A defence ministry spokesman said the inquiry has been ordered into the incident to ascertain the cause of the fire. However, the investigation will be taken up only after the fire is extinguished and situation becomes normal, he said. Meanwhile, defence authorities have warned the residents of the area, affected by the incident, not to enter their villages or touch any unexploded shells or suspicious object..The civilian population of these affected village are also requested not to enter their villages without obtaining clearance from the Army authorities, in view of the unexploded ammunitions strewn around in the area.

Kashmir Times, 13 August 2007

WG on Centre State relations to meet in Sep

Jammu, Aug 12: Working Group on centre-state relations which has not met for last more than four months is meeting for the fourth time in the first week of September at New Delhi to deliberate upon various issues of regional importance including the vital issue of refugees. The Group had last met in New Delhi on March 29, which was its third meeting, the first two having been held in New Delhi and Jammu. Highly placed sources have said that chairman of the group Justice Syed Sagheer Ahmed has indicated to the Resident Commissioner for Jammu and Kashmir at New Delhi that he would like to convene the meeting in the first week of September. They maintain that Justice Sageer wants to convene three more meetings of this crucial working group before submitting the final report to Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.

Daily Excelsior, 13 August 2007

Editorial: Safety first

One will tend to believe the official version that the fire in the Army's biggest ordnance depot in Anantnag district on Saturday was accidental. It has caused extensive damage. According to a report in this newspaper two fire-fighters have been killed and more than 40 persons including 23 men in uniform have been injured, at least 12 of them seriously. The loss in terms of arms and ammunition is not known but it can be anybody's guess. Deafening explosions have been heard as far as 12 kilometres from the site of the mishap. That they continued for hours together should not surprise anyone. Such sounds can't be music to human ears either. Thousands of inhabitants of adjoining villages have been

evacuated to safer places.

Kashmir Times, 13 August 2007

Opinion: United States of Kashmir (Muhsen Naseim)

Pakistani and Indian leadership, in spite of making any positive move to give Kashmiri people their basic right to self determination, have time and again floated different ideas for the cut short resolution for the divided Himalayan state. At this juncture, Kashmir was ruined due to proxy war of intelligence agencies and armies of both the nuclear powers. Only solution acceptable to Kashmiris would prove durable and the United States of Kashmir is the best solution to resolve it and to adjust every joint and individual thought and ideology in the divided state. Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh recently indicated that efforts could be made for the establishment of the United States of Kashmir but the Indian premier has not given details about this idea whether he mean it to be a separate or independent state with joint Indo-Pakistan control or within the Indian constitutional frame work.

Greater Kashmir, 13 August 2007

Majority of Kashmiris want Independence: Indo Pak poll

New Delhi, Aug 12: The results of the first ever, joint Indo Pak opinion polls on major issues concerning both countries are out. CNN IBN in India and Dawn News in Pakistan commissioned the poll jointly. The survey was designed by CSDS. CSDS in India and AC Nielsen in Pakistan carried out the survey. Over 1,000 respondents from the top ten cities of Pakistan and 2,000 people from Indias top 20 cities were surveyed. The conclusions about JK are based on a special booster sample of over 500 from Srinagar and Jammu towns.. The survey raised several important issues; one major issue being what people in both countries think is a solution for the Kashmir problem. A majority of those polled in Srinagar, 87 percent to be precise, preferred independence for Kashmir, rather than being a part of either India or Pakistan. However, outside The Valley there was very little support for this solution.

Daily Excelsior, 14 August 2007

15 bodies found, 10 still missing in Army depot fire

Srinagar, Aug 13: The toll in Saturday's inferno in the ammunition depot in Anantnag district mounted to 17 with bodies of 13 Army firefighters, a major and a recruit recovered from the site while a search was on for 10 people still missing. Two civilians, including a woman, were killed by sharpnel hurtling out from field ordnance depot at Khundroo yesterday and their bodies were handed over to their relatives, official sources said. They said "15 bodies have been retrieved from the depot today. These include 13 Army fire service personnel, an officer of the rank of Major and a jawan".

Daily Excelsior, 14 August 2007

SC seeks status report in Kargil scam

New Delhi, Aug 13: The Supreme Court today took serious note of the tardy progress in the probe into the Defence deals relating to the Kargil conflict, which allegedly cost the exchequer Rs 2,000 crore and wanted to know from the Defence Ministry the action taken against its erring officers. "The net result is that nothing has been done," a bench

headed by Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan said referring to the progress made by the Centre and CBI since January this year in the matter. It directed the Defence Ministry to file a status report about the 18 cases referred to it and the action taken against the erring officers.

The Kashmir Times, 14 August 2007

Situation not ripe for demilitarisation: Sinha

New Delhi, Aug 13: Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retired) S.K. Sinha, here on Monday said the situation was not ripe for any demilitarisation move as the situation in Jammu and Kashmir was yet not under control. "People, who are demanding demilitarisation do not know what it means. It means vacating the entire region of the army," he said on the sidelines of a book releasing ceremony. "Return of troops can take place when insurgency is under control, then the police can take over. Unfortunately we have not reached that stage yet," he added. He also rubbished the argument that there was no need of five lakh troops to confront just 1,000 militants. "Let me tell you that there are thousand of sleeper cells and thousands of militants are waiting to take over, so let us not get misled by such superficial analysis," he added.

Greater Kashmir, 14 August 2007

Editorial: New Employment Policy

It augurs well that the Government is contemplating to introduce a new employment policy for tackling the problem of educated unemployed in the State. For drafting the new employment policy it is constituting a High Powered Employment Mission (HPEM) to be head by Chief Minister. The main objective of the Mission shall be generation of adequate employment opportunities through a policy framework, initiate bold steps for infrastructure development, to act as a catalyst in opening of marketing opportunities for commodities and goods produced in the state, to mount special drive for creation of employment opportunities in agriculture, horticulture, small scale industries, handicrafts and IT sectors, to facilitate entrepreneurial training and formulate area and trade specific strategies for maximizing employment opportunities.

Greater Kashmir, 14 August 2007

Editorial: Let's refresh the memory of these waning glories

Among many glorious aspects of Kashmir, folklore has remained either ignored or studied wrongly. Without claiming exhaustive study of the texts of Kashmiri folklore, it shall be my enterprise to approach various aspects of Kashmiri folklore in context in the proposed series of articles. In Kashmir, too, the study in folklore was initiated by the European scholars for their enthusiastic quest for the universals in folklore through comparative study. It may be that by understanding Kashmiri folklore they aimed at understanding the psyche of the people and by understanding their psyche they could propagate their belief. It is interesting to note that the founder of the study was the famous missionary of the time, namely J. Hinton Knowles, the compiler of the Folktales of Kashmir.

Daily Excelsior, 16 August 2007

PM for greater investment in J&K

New Delhi, Aug 15: Laying emphasis on the development of insurgency-hit Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today said the Government was investing in better infrastructure and connectivity in these States. "We are investing in better infrastructure and connectivity in the northeastern States. In Jammu and Kashmir, our long-term development plan is bringing new investment to all the three regions of the State," Singh said in his address to the nation from the ramparts of historic Red Fort on the 61st Independence Day.

The Kashmir Times, 16 August 2007

Refugees of partition stage protest in Jammu

Jammu, Aug 15: On the occasion of 60th Independence Day several West Pak refugees of 1947 including young and old, men and women staged protest demonstration here today. Demanding citizenship rights they gathered outside Press Club here and shouted slogans against successive regimes including coalition government for playing with their sentiments. Led by their president Labba Ram protestors carried placards, banners and black flags accusing politicians of miserable plight of West Pak refugees. "Since 1947 several refugees from West Pakistan died here with a hope to see that they and their children are accepted and get citizenship rights but except mouthing platitudes these politicians have done nothing to mitigate our sufferings," said a protestor.

The Kashmir Times, 16 August 2007

Editorial: Get real-Time to accept that Kashmiris don't feel very Indian

Facts are facts, howsoever unpalatable these may be. A survey conducted jointly by the Indian Express, Dawn, News and CNN-IBN has revealed that 87 percent of Kashmiris have no attachment with the Indian state and are firm in their preference for Azadi. It is poor satisfaction for India, though it deserves careful notice, that while only 7 percent prefer to remain with India, 3 percent only opt for Pakistan. For Kashmir-watchers, however, these findings, though unpalatable, are not at all unexpected. And, it is the saddest possible commentary on sixty years of Indian rule and on our policy-makers that, after literally spending billions on security, subsidy and developmental projects and sacrificing the lives of thousands of soldiers, policemen and civilians, India has not been able to win the hearts of the Kashmiris.

Greater Kashmir, 16 August 2007

Complete shutdown in Kashmir

Srinagar, Aug 15: Life was today crippled in the Kashmir valley following a general strike called by pro-freedom organisations. Shops and other business establishments remained closed. Transport was also off the roads. The streets wore a deserted look with only security force personnel holding automatic weapons deployed on both sides of the roads. A report from Varmul said shops and other business establishments were closed with traffic off the roads. Similar reports of hartal were also received from other district headquarters and major towns of the valley.

Greater Kashmir, 16 August 2007

Kashmir: The Web of Misunderstandings: Paper read at the conference on Kashmir issue in Washington by M. YUSUF BUCH

The sombre fact that six preceding conferences have brought no tangible result may lead some to regard us as overly prone to wishful hopes. But actually it is a telling commentary on the cynical indifference to situations of politically caused human suffering that permeates the temper of our age. At the present time, we see the Kashmir issue embroiled in a web of misunderstandings, some ancient, others new and wilful. We owe it to the thousands whose blood has consecrated the cause of Kashmir's Azadi to try and disentangle it in whatever degree we can.

Daily Excelsior, 17 August 2007

96 cross sides on Karvaan-e-Aman

Srinagar, Aug 16: As many as 96 passengers on board the Karvaan-e-Aman (peace bus) crossed sides at Kaman Post, the last Indian military post in Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir today. Official sources said 22 residents of Jammu and Kashmir today left here for Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) to meet their relatives for the first time after 60 years of separation. Similarly, 31 residents of PoK, who had come here in the last bus also left for their homes after meeting their relatives. The passengers left in four Karvaan-e-Aman buses under tight security arrangements for Kaman Post where they will deboard and cross over to other side of the Line of Control (LoC), from where they would leave for Muzaffarabad, the capital of PoK.

Daily excelsior, 17 August 2007

Editorial: Heed this warning

Governor S.K. Sinha has done well to strike a note of caution against the continuing flight of non-State subjects from the Kashmir region in the face of threats from a section of secessionists and terrorists. In fact, he has painted a rather grim picture in his Independence Day-eve address. According to him, some 20000 outsiders have already left the Valley and this exodus may continue resulting in another ethnic-cleansing in the State. He has rightly pointed out that this is a grievous assault on the State's famed tradition of hospitality and its growing economy. There can also be adverse repercussions for one lakh State subjects including 20000 students living in different parts of the country. He has called upon all people to meet this challenge unitedly and restore amity and brotherhood.

The Kashmir Times, 17 August 2007

Parliamentary panel recommends immediate Army withdrawal

New Delhi, 16: A parliamentary panel has recommended an immediate withdrawal of the army from internal security duties, saying, it is eating their preparedness and making the police and central forces lethargic. The panel which amongst its 48 members included senior Congress and BJP members and significantly also former Chief Minister and National Conference patron Dr. Farooq Abdullah is set to bolster the People's Democratic Party (PDP)'s campaign for demilitarisation and withdrawal of troops in Jammu and Kashmir. Governor Lt. Gen (rtd) S. K. Sinha as well as Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad have strongly voiced their opposition to demilitarisation "People, who are demanding demilitarisation do not know what it means," said Governor recently here the sidelines of a function.

The Kashmir Times, 17 August 2007

Protest rock Pulwama over molestation bid

Srinagar, Aug 16: after a brief lull, protest rocked Pulwama town today after alleged molestation bid on two women by the troops of 182 Battalion of Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Police assures to punish the guilty. Reports said a troupe of CRPF was patrolling in the village Tahab three kilometers away from Pulwama town this afternoon. The patrol party was passing through the orchards. Two women were working in orchards and the patrolling party allegedly tried to catch hold of them. The women raised an alarm and saved themselves from the clutches of the CRPF troopers, the reports said. As the news of the alleged molestation spread, people in hundreds took to streets and held strong protest demonstrations against troopers. The people blocked Pulwama -Anantnag road. The people according to sources were raising slogans against CRPF and demanding punishment to them.

Greater Kashmir, 17 August 2007

NO IDEAL SOLUTION FOR KASHMIR: KASURI

Islamabad, Aug 16: Ruling out any ideal solution of Kashmir dispute, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri has said that flexibility, magnanimity and reciprocal concessions from all the concerned parties of the dispute are highly indispensable to hammer out a solution to the longstanding Kashmir tangle. In an interview with BBCs Hard Talk programme, Kasuri said, Ultimately a solution to Kashmir will be one that is not the best perceived either by a majority of Indians, a majority of Pakistanis or a majority of Kashmiris. He maintained that the solution might not be ideal for Pakistan, India or Kashmir, but under the prevailing circumstances there is no other way out, if it is not that there will be no solution to it.

Daily Excelsior, 18 August 2007

Time not ripe to scale down troops in Kashmir: Gen Singh

BANGALORE, Aug 17: Chief of Army Staff General J J Singh today said the time was not ripe to scaledown the level of troops in Kashmir. Speaking to newsmen after flying the mechanised version of indigenous advanced flight helicopter Dhruv at the helicopter division of the HAL here, he said Kashmir is a border State and the border issues had remained unresolved with both China and Pakistan, where the countries have different perceptions. He said there was no increase in the level of troops in Kashmir but there had been replacement of battalions.

Daily Excelsior, 18 August 2007

Time for troop cut: Mufti

Banihal, Aug 17: Emphasising that the process of withdrawing troops and revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the State must happen now, People's Democratic Party (PDP) today said the Centre must also implement the State specific Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) without waiting for political situation in Pakistan to calm down. The Jammu and Kashmir specific CBMs would consolidate the people's overwhelming desire for peace and stability, PDP patron Mufti Mohammad Sayeed said while addressing a public meeting here. "I don't see any logic behind delaying the implementation of the recommendations by the Work Groups (WGs) which are already

finalised ," he said adding that if implemented, these would have a tremendous positive impact on the State's fast changing scenario.

The Kashmir Times, 18 August 2007

Editorial: Only partially logical: Army should go but para-military forces too need to be trimmed

It seems that the majority have not yet lost sense of logic as far as the Kashmir case goes, making it all the more imperative for the Centre to stop twiddling thumbs and get down to doing something about the mess, for a change. The recommendations of a parliamentary panel comprising of 48 members from different political parties ranging from National Conference to Bhartiya Janata Party are once again a reminder that there is no need to drag feet over the issue of demilitarisation. The parliamentary panel, after several Kashmiri leaders - both from the separatist and mainstream camps as well as human rights organization have been raising the demand for withdrawal of troops to ease the situation and make conditions conducive for a dialogue, too has expressed serious concern over the flawed policy of engaging army to deal with the internal duty for a prolonged period.

The Kashmir Times, 18 August 2007

Militancy on the wane in J&K: Army chief

Bangalore, Aug 17 (Agencies): Militancy in Jammu and Kashmir are on the run and steps are being taken to bring infiltration from across the border to a "very low level", Army Chief General J J Singh said on Friday. "Terrorists are on the run. More terrorists are surrendering," Singh said after inaugurating the new campus of the Army Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology in Bangalore. Singh said infiltration attempts are still being made, particularly during the summer months when the terrorists make more attempts to sneak into Kashmir because the "weather is conducive to that". "When it snows, it is difficult," he said. "So, like earlier, we are geared up for this kind of tactics of the terrorists," he said, noting that the army recently foiled a few infiltration attempts.

Greater Kashmir, 18 August 2007

Editorial: Khundru Aftermath

The devastating fire at South Kashmir's ammunition depot that decimated scores of villages and displaced at least thirty thousand people is a telling reminder of how ugly the prolonged concentration of armed forces could turn. Instead of forging a collective thinking about the mess the warlike concentration in Kashmir has created, the incident ironically marked a visible disconnect between the state institutions. While Mahbooba Mufti who speaks for South Kashmir in India's over 540-member Parliament pitched for removal of such installations from the residential areas, J&K Governor S K Sinha, who has long been eager to experiment his counter terror??? skills to curb violence, opposed any sort of military withdrawal. What made the incident even more ironic was the Chief Ministers sermon to people that they should not take rumors about Khundru seriously.

Greater Kashmir, 18 August 2007

Editorial: The myth of threat from outside labourers

On Friday 20th July, 2007 Tabinda Gani a student of Uqaab Public School was raped and killed in Batpora hamlet of district Kupwara. Next day most of the newspapers published the news on their inner pages. Hence treated the matter as part of recurring incidents of our society. But no sooner it was revealed by police that two non-locals are also involved in the heinous crime, the nonchalance faded and the news jumped out from page 4 to page 1, and occupied headlines for days together. By now the incident has already attracted the attention of independent analysts beyond our imagination. While giving space to every opinion and viewpoint, and keeping its ethos of objectivity and comprehensiveness intact, Greater Kashmir has so far published a series of articles on the issue.

Daily Excelsior, 19 August 2007

Election of LC Chairman, Khandoor blasts to dominate Legislature

Srinagar: Fire and blasts in an ammunition depot at Khandoor forcing thousands to leave their homes, alleged human rights violations and election of Legislative Assembly Chairman are among the main issues which will dominate proceedings in the week-long session of Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly beginning tomorrow. However, the Coalition Government will table a newly-devised policy framework on employment generation "employment policy-2007" besides other bills, during the session.

Greater Kashmir, 19 August 2007

Set up future arms depots away from civilians:

New Delhi: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has suggested to the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh that future arms depots should be set-up at a reasonable distance from population. Azad had an hour-long meeting with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at the latter's residence here on Friday evening during which they discussed issues relating to development of Jammu and Kashmir, current status of the Indo-Pak peace and reconciliation process and situation arising out of the fire in Army's ammunition depot at Khundru recently. Singh informed Azad about progress on the dialogue process between India and Pakistan and measures taken by India to promote reconciliation and friendship with the neighbouring country.

Greater Kashmir, 19 August 2007

Editorial: Criminal Silence!

What happened at Khundru could not prove more exciting than a Rakhi Sawant smooch for Indian media. An otherwise news hungry hound was quite unmoved by what in the history of Indian Army in Kashmir will go down as the worst tragedy of its kind. A series of blasts that rocked the entire region went past silently and reasons are known. Like democracy, media too as an institution, runs on two strands. In India the event of this magnitude would have hogged the whole time and space, but in Kashmir it did not. Here too we enjoy a special status. It is not the first time that Indian media has chosen to be meaningfully silent on a development which they thought might demoralise their public in India. Better keep them away from what happened in Kashmir.

Greater Kashmir, 19 August 2007

Celebrating the absence of freedom

15TH August has just passed off. India celebrated it as her 60th birthday. No issues; let her. But when she extends these celebrations to a land where she herself ensures a complete absence of freedom, it shocks. This is the shock that a film maker undergoes some years back. Deserted markets, empty roads, barricades, Indian military machine occupying the streets, ensuring that the 'celebrations' pass off 'peacefully'. Where are the people for whom states celebrate such events? A Kashmiri never needs an answer to this question, for he himself is the answer. But Indians surely need be told. And before they get to know it, one has to formulate the question for them. India has told them a different story. In that narrative such a question does not find a place. So this question needs an introduction into the mind of Indian people.

Daily Excelsior, 20 August 2007

Farooq to project himself as CM candidate in next polls

Jammu, Aug 19: National Conference patron and former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah today said he would contest next year's Assembly elections in the State as his party's Chief Ministerial candidate. "I will contest the coming Assembly elections (due in September-October next year). I will be the Chief Ministerial candidate of the National Conference," Dr Abdullah told reporters after inaugurating a photo exhibition at Kala Kendra here, which was organised by photo journalists of national and local media. Efforts would be made to strengthen the party to prepare for the elections, he said.

Daily Excelsior, 20 August 2007

Editorial: Passing the buck

One is surprised by the sudden fuss over the pilferage and sale of high-altitude clothing and rations meant for soldiers in Siachen in the markets in Leh district. Anybody with some knowledge and experience of the trans-Himalayan territory is well aware that such unauthorised material has been virtually freely available. It is illegal to buy and sell it. Yet, the trade has been going on for some years (along with certain goods from China). According to some local persons they had brought the matter to the notice of the Kargil Review Committee that had looked, among other things, into "the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in the Kargil district of Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir" in 1999.

Daily Excelsior, 20 August 2007

Editorial: Stress and soldiers

The figures about suicides in the United States army, considered to be the most well-equipped and professional, make an astounding reading. As many as 99 American soldiers took their lives in 2006 compared to 88 in 2005. This is the highest number since 102 suicides recorded in 1991 when the US was involved in the Persian Gulf War. The last year's statistics may well cross a century if two more deaths are confirmed as suicides. Clearly there is a direct relation between the depressing phenomenon and deployment in civilian areas for which the men in uniform are not basically trained. This is evident from the facts that speak for themselves. More than one out of every four American soldiers ended his or her life while serving in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The Kashmir Times, 20 August 2007

Assembly session from today

Jammu, Aug 19: Irked by, what it describes as, "supercilious approach of the coalition stifling the very spirit of democracy", the opposition this time has decided to pin it down by "exposing the hollowness of its haughty claims" in the state assembly, which is meeting for brief Monsoon session in the summer capital tomorrow. Government's failure to turn its tall claims to reality vis-à-vis utilization of working season to the optimum, infusing an element of efficiency, accountability in state administration with an improved work culture, drive against corruption and zero tolerance to human rights violations would serve as the gunpowder for the joint offensive of opposition in this session. In fact there are issues galore for the opposition but it is the tight schedule, which is hindering the former to corner the government on the floor of the House.

Greater Kashmir, 20 August 2007

Political reservation will create political ripples: Baig

Srinagar, Aug 19: Stating that issue of granting of political reservation has potential to create ripples in the State, the former deputy chief minister said Sunday the decision to this effect should be taken only by consensus among the political parties of the state after the recommendation of the state government to grant similar status to Pahari speaking people by the Central government. Reacting to statement of the Chief Minister wherein he had called for political reservations of Scheduled Tribes including Gujjars, Baig said Pahari speaking people don't want to stand in the way of Gujjars and Bakerwals getting what was due to them. But, he insisted, that government after getting consensus from various political parties should push case for ST status and reservation for Pahari speaking people.

Daily Excelsior, 21 August 2007

SC notice to J&K Govt on relief to migrants

NEW DELHI, Aug 20: The Supreme Court today issued notice, returnable in four weeks, to the Jammu and Kashmir Government through the State Relief Commissioner on a contempt petition for defying the court's order to provide relief to Jammu migrants. A division bench comprising Chief Justice K G Balakrishnan and Justices Tarun Chatterjee and R V Raveendran issued the notice on a contempt petition filed on behalf of the Jammu and Kashmir National Panthers Party (JKNPP) against the State Government for defying the Supreme Court order dated July 12, 2006 to provide relief to the Jammu migrants according to the affidavit made on behalf of State Government before the Supreme Court on December 3, 2004, a State Legal Aid Committee press release said.

Daily Excelsior, 21 August 2007

Editorial: Justified concern

One may find the language used by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence rather harsh but one will have to read it in the context of increasing suicides and fratricide in the armed forces. There is no doubt that concerned sections of society want an early end to the twin evils haunting the Army in particular. The Committee has criticised the Defence Ministry for not doing enough in this direction. It has described the Ministry's

explanation about the corrective steps taken so far as "absolutely misleading" and "just on paper." Its remark explains its anguish: "Had these measures been taken in true spirit, the stress level would have definitely come down and the figures must have been otherwise."

The Kashmir Times, 21 August 2007

HC to Centre Consider ST status for Paharis

SRINAGAR/JAMMU, Aug 20: The state high court has asked the Government of India to consider the case of Pahari speaking people of the state, who demand granting of Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to them. In his order Justice Hakim Imtiyaz of the high court has also asked the central government to pass appropriate order on the recommendations by the state government as far as practicable within a period of six months in the case. The judge gave the directions on a writ petition filed by Noor Mohammad Quereshi of Karnah in 2001. In the petition Quereshi wanted that Pahari speaking people be also granted ST status. Advocate B M Misri appeared on behalf of the petitioner. He said that on August 1989 the state cabinet unanimously decided to grant ST status to Pahari, Gujjar-Bakerwals, Gaddi, Seppi, and Bazigar people.

The Kashmir Times, 21 August 2007

NC walk-out, protest in LC

Srinagar, Aug 20: Right from the word go, the National Conference legislators in Legislative Council were up on their feet and ready to corner the government. The NC legislators created noisy scenes in the house and also some of the party legislators staged a brief walk-out, besides staging a protest in the well of the council. After the obituary reference in memory of two former MLAs was passed by the council, the NC legislator, Sakina Itoo rose up from her seat and sought discussion on the army's ammunition depot blaze at Khundroo. She said that people can't go to their homes and they should be provided compensation. She was joined by PDP's Basharat Bukhari and some other legislators. They were demanding a discussion on the incident, but the Chairman LC Ghulam Nabi Lone disallowed the discussion and signaled the beginning of question hour.

Greater Kashmir, 21 August 2007

Editorial: The Importance of Being Kashmir

In Act 1 of Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," a well known pianist says that while he may not always play the piano accurately - anyone can play accurately - he always plays it with a wonderful expression. Kashmir, I feel, desperately needs to change its expression while playing, so the audience stops listening only for the wrong tones. In a world largely inspired by advertising jingles, the importance of playing the right tune the right way should never be undervalued. While living in the West, I never ceased to be amazed at how cleverly mass communicators wrapped the ordinary and even objectionable in cloaks of ecstasy.

Greater Kashmir, 21 August 2007

JKLF Safr-e-Azadi reaches Varmul

Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has set up its base camp at Bahrapora, Rafiabab, in district Varmul for taking its Safr-e-Azadi to different parts of the district.

Meanwhile, the JKLF Caravan led by its chairman Muhammad Yaseen Malik yesterday visited Dangerpora, Hab, Gundmulla, Chatloora, Rabin, Hadipora and Achabal in Rafiabad. The people including women and children, young and old, at every place greeted the JKLF Caravan and participated in the public meetings. They raised pro-JKLF and pro-freedom slogans. Yaseen Malik, other JKLF leaders and trade union leader Sampath Prakash addressed public meetings. The leaders also addressed a large public meeting at Hadipora Stadium. After evening prayers a spectacular torch procession was taken out.

Daily Excelsior, 22 August 2007

Assembly witnesses ruckus over Khundroo blaze

Srinagar, Aug 21: Arch rivals, National Conference (NC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP), today crossed swords over the recent inferno at Army's ammunition depot at Khundroo as members of both the parties did virtually turn the Assembly into a fish market while embarrassing their own respective leadership on several occasions. In the wake of heated arguments and counter-arguments, Speaker Tara Chand succumbed to the pressure from Opposition as he was forced to allow a full length discussion over the human tragedy that has left 17 dead, scores wounded and hundreds of structures and standing crops destroyed in the south Kashmir district of Anantnag last fortnight.

Daily Excelsior, 22 August 2007

Editorial: Time to change priorities in J&K

Do the Government's priorities in Jammu and Kashmir need retuning? Perhaps yes. Two factors favour such a step. One, the state's internal dynamics have undergone a change in the last five years. Two, Pakistan's internal problems and the uncertainties over the country's future politico-administrative set-up have led to the slowing down of the Kashmir-related India-Pakistan interactions and virtual deferment of the peace process. The state has witnessed a radical change in its political climate and security environment in the last five years. The Assembly elections, which had evoked large participation despite militants' threats, helped reactivate the political parties, virtually rendered irrelevant by the 13-year long militancy. This was followed by elections to other elective bodies like local bodies.

Greater Kashmir, 22 August 2007

CRPF message under razor wire: let us preserve our heritage

Srinagar, Aug 21: The Jammu and Kashmir Academy for Arts, Culture, and Languages must be doing a very bad job because the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is now making Kashmiris aware of their cultural heritage. Or has the Academy outsourced its task to the CRPF that is normally supposed to put down the two-decade old struggle for political rights and restore law and order. Near Ali Masjid at Eidagah, a CRPF trooper whistled and waved his hand. The gesture is familiar: it means I should stop. I disembarked from my motorbike, and while the trooper checked the contents of my bag, my glance went to a board erected by the CRPF near its G-Company, 18 Battalion Camp at Eidagah.

Greater Kashmir, 22 August 2007

Editorial: Need a change

As controversy surfaces on various issues and old means prove futile, it is the right time for young leadership to take the command. One apprehension of a triangular type of political game is emerging as you can see the entire valley is observing high sounds of political rallies. Ghulam Nabi Azad will go to the people with Congress and Centre support for seeking fresh mandate. But if his performance is seen he failed to handle the main coalition partner in running the affairs of the administration smoothly. His government could not contain the terror unleashed in the state by men in uniform. Mehbooba will go to the people with the demilitarization slogan which is an empty slogan because she herself knows that when General Musharaff cannot do it how can she do it. Another option is NC where a new generation leader who apparently seems to be a genuine leader and has a support of big political organized party which has ruled the state for a pretty long time.

Greater Kashmir, 22 August 2007

Editorial: The disaster of triumph

Its the story of depriving a people of the right they are born with. The relationship between New Delhi and Kashmir has been that of an oppressor and the oppressed, comments Hassan Zainagiri. Its been a story of deceit and perfidy. With lords in New Delhi doing the trick, Kashmir has always been the receiver. What has happened Delhi scripted it all. It can aptly be called the disaster of triumph. It drew all moral strength out of the people who called the shots. It was all a camouflage. They played hide and seek. They blew hot and cold in the same breath thereby redefining statecraft and giving politics a meaning it deserved.

The Kashmir Times, 23 August 2007

J&K's RTI Bill coming with a rider

JAMMU, Aug 22: Amended Right to Information (RTI) Bill which is set to be introduced in the state assembly during the current session has proposed that there shall be no obligation to give any individual information, disclosure of which would prejudicially affect the security, strategic, scientific or economic interests of the State or lead to incitement of an offence. Sources in the law department have said that information which has been expressly forbidden to be published by any court of law or tribunal or the disclosure of which may constitute contempt of court would also not be given to anyone seeking it. They maintain that the concerned department also reserves the right to conceal the information which would impede the process of investigation or apprehension or prosecution of offenders.

Greater Kashmir, 23 August 2007

New Delhi failed to seize golden opportunity: Omar

Srinagar, Aug 22: The National Conference president Omar Abdullah on Wednesday lashed out at New Delhi for failing to seize a golden opportunity to settle Kashmir issue. I had warned the Indian leadership that there was little time left with them to act decisively on resolution process as Pervez Musharraf was the appropriate man to deal with Kashmir, but New Delhi failed to seize the opportunity. Omar told a gathering at Kulgam in south Kashmir. He said, Dr Manmohan Singh has been caught between devil and the deep sea.

Daily Excelsior, 24 August 2007

Azad working on massive rehabilitation package for Khundroo victims

SRINAGAR, Aug 23: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today dispelled the impression that his Government had done little for victims of the August 11th Khundroo tragedy and asserted that a massive relief and rehabilitation programme was in the making for residents of 13 villages situated around Army's ammunition depot in Anantnag district. Seeking contribution of one month's salary from members of both Houses of J&K Legislature and one day's salary from all the 500,000 Government employees, Chief Minister revealed that the Ministry of Defence would provide substantial amount of money for reconstruction of nearly 1,500 houses and repairs to equal number of structures besides total compensation to standing crops and orchards damaged by two-day-long chain of explosions.

The Kashmir Times, 24 August 2007

Sordid tale of a middle school 3 classes, 2 rooms and a single contracted teacher

ASHMUJI (KULGAM): Notwithstanding the tall claims being made by the government regarding the development of infrastructure and staff strength in educational institutions in the state; the condition of thousands of schools on the ground level is dismal, posing a big question on the credibility of government's resolve to set the education sector on the path of development. Sample this: Boys Middle School Ashmuji, comprising three classes (6th, 7th and 8th) with a roll of more than 60 students, is running in a two room rented building. The "interesting, but ironic", fact about the school is that it is being managed by one teacher, who too is working on contractual basis in education department.

The Kashmir Times, 24 August 2007

Kashmir issue is major focus: Yasin

SRINAGAR, Aug 23: JKLF chairman, Mohammad Yasin Malik today urged the people to remember the sacrifices of the martyrs and continue to support the freedom struggle with unflinching courage. He said the mission of martyrs would not be left unfinished whatever the cost. Malik was addressing a gathering at Behrampora-Sopore. Addressing a huge gathering of elderly people and youths in this part of north Kashmir, the Front chairman remarked that the Kashmir issue has become the major focus of attention these days. He added that though talks are being held about its resolution, but the Kashmiris are yet to be included in these talks.

Greater Kashmir, 24 August 2007

Police Disperses Employees Protests In Srinagar

Srinagar, Aug 23: Police used force to disperse thousands of government employees here on Thursday after the Employees Joint action Committee (EJAC) had threatened to gherao the Legislative Assembly complex where the summer session of the Assembly is on, to press for their demands. Dozens of employees sustained injuries in the action while many hundred have been taken into custody. Meanwhile, the EJAC has given a two-day strike call from Friday against the police action and ❖??indifferent attitude❖?? of the government. Thousands of government and public sector employees from different

districts of the state had reached here to protest for their pending demands.

Daily Excelsior, 25 August 2007

Uproar in Assembly over denial of relief to farmers

SRINAGAR, Aug 24: The issue of non-payment of relief to the people affected by natural calamities last year in the State today rocked the Assembly. Cutting across the party lines, several members were on their toes when Minister in Charge of Revenue, in reply to a question by Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, Dr Ghulam Nabi Bhat, Abdul Gani Malik and Usman Majeed said details about the natural calamities which struck various parts of the State last year are being collected. How long the Government will take to provide relief to the affected families who have lost their everything due to calamities, the members asked.

The Kashmir Times, 25 August 2007

Editorial: Sialkot, city with a difference

Sialkot, my friend and classmate Rafiq Shah wrote some years ago, is a small town of about 160,000 odd, very odd, souls, and its length and breadth would give someone trying to swing a cat the biggest cramp in the neck. Sialkot's oddities are many, for whose collation I am indebted to my friend and his acerbic wit. The city is only about 120 km from Lahore, yet there is no direct rail link between the two. The two circuitous routes, one through that paradise of wrestlers and cholesterol capital, Gujranwala, take more time than can be considered reasonable. Sialkot, one of the world's foremost manufacturers of sports equipment, has no airport, a result of every federal government's quixotic thinking that, being so close to the border of Indian-held Kashmir, in the event of war, if taken over, it could prove a "security risk."

Daily Excelsior, 25 August 2007

Two facets of Firdous: Men, Matters & Memories

This is the story of the two faces of "firdous", Kashmir valley to you and me. First, the face that is at once beautiful, featuring men and women who apparently are enjoying life, never mind the odd blast or the killing of a busload of Gujarati tourists, all of them Muslims, drawn there to have their first look at firdous. The later will, of course, figure in the later half of this story; it betokens the ugliness of the scene. By and large the capital city, Srinagar and the sub-urban townships, are living it up. Yes, most thinking Kashmiris are upset by the near-destruction of the Lake but with an authority that has over the past three decades looked the other way even as the Lake disappears they are helpless to undo the damage.

Greater Kashmir, 25 August 2007

Minor's murder sparks violent demos in Srinagar

Srinagar, Aug 24: A 10-year-old girl was found dead in the civil lines area of the city on Friday after she went missing on Thursday, triggering violent demonstrations by hundreds of people. Sabrina d/o Fayaz Ahmad Sheikh of Radio Colony, Ikhrājpora went missing after she left her house to buy some goods from a nearby shop. When she didn't return home till evening her parents lodged a missing report in the Police Station Rajbagh and searched for her, the locals told Greater Kashmir. Sabrina's bruised body was found

in an abandoned house in the area by the residents this afternoon. Her clothes were torn, and her mouth was gagged. Police reached the spot and sent the body for postmortem.

Greater Kashmir, 25 August 2007

No readymade solution would be acceptable: Geelani

Srinagar, Aug 24: Chairman of Hurriyat conference (G) Syed Ali Shah Geelani on Friday reiterated that no readymade solution would be acceptable to the people of Kashmir. Hurriyat rejects Musharaff's four point formula and would never accept any such solution which is not in accordance to the wishes and aspirations of Kashmiris, Geelani said while addressing a gathering at Soura in city outskirts here. The Hurriyat chairman said that anti-Islamic forces are carrying out a vicious campaign to divide the Muslims. Muslims need to be aware about the nefarious designs of enemies and should give a befitting reply to conspirators.

Greater Kashmir, 25 August 2007

Suicides in Kashmir

A grave concern which can lead us to hell if not checked in time. Lets realize the value of God's greatest gift called life, writes Shams-un-Nisa. Those who believe and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah: for without doubt in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find satisfaction.(Al-Qur'an 13:28) 'Suicides in Kashmir' is the topic of my research. Watching the tumult which has been set in motion by unceasing cycle of suicides, I regard it my responsibility to speak up and share my knowledge with the general masses. May be my utterances will make some difference. The process of research in this direction must continue and the knowledge so gained should guide the policy makers to design an effective policy for containing the occurrence of suicide.

The Kashmir Times, 27 August 2007

Geelani advocates 'autonomous' Kashmir within Pakistan

Srinagar, Aug 26: The chairman of Geelani faction of Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Shah Geelani today said that Kashmir can join Pakistan, but Pakistan should keep only defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication with it. Local news agency, KNS quoted Geelani as saying. KNS said that Geelani, while quoting excerpts from one of his books, said that Kashmir can't entirely merge into Pakistani state. The news agency said that Geelani was addressing a public gathering at College ground in Sopore. About the recent controversy over the eviction of non-state subjects, Geelani has said that three lakh non-state subjects are present in the state among whom, a lot of people have criminal background.

The Kashmir Times, 27 August 2007

Editorial: When to withdraw? Declining violence level should inspire Centre

When to start the demilitarisation process? That, indeed, is now the most-debated question. Last year, when the PDP raised the demand for demilitarisation, and made an issue of it, the present ruling coalition appeared to be falling apart. The timely intervention of Sonia Gandhi and the immutable logic of power stopped the split, but tension within the coalition is there to see just under the surface. While the PDP, the

separatist groups, and the people activists continue to harp on the urgency of initiating the process, the chief minister and governor, more militant than the military, are shouting from the roop-top that the army's presence should continue to be as strong and visible as in the past. In the meantime, the committee headed by Sekhar Dutt, the erstwhile defence secretary, and constituted to resolve this crisis, has submitted its report, recommending the gradual withdrawal of security forces from the public buildings, parks etc. they presently occupy.

Greater Kashmir, 27 August 2007

Needed: Rs 300 cr to save Wular

Srinagar, Aug 26: Glory of the Asia's largest freshwater lake, Wular can be restored if proper conservational measures are implemented with support of government and people. In this regard, the Wetland International-South Asia, a global organization for conservation of wetlands, which has conducted a comprehensive study of the Wular, has sent its recommendations to the state government for approval. The organization whose services were hired by the state government, has devised a multi-crore Comprehensive Management Action Plan (CMAP) for Wular to facilitate its restoration. In its recent report, the international body stated that Wular has shrunk to half its size due to massive encroachment, inflow of sewage, siltation and ill-planned policies by the government. This has led to increased floods and droughts in the Valley besides affecting fish and bird species and hydropower projects fed by it.

Greater Kashmir, 27 August 2007

Safar-e-Azadi completes 100 days

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front has completed 100 days of its Safar-e-Azadi (Journey for freedom). All the senior members of the Front including its chairman Muhammad Yasin Malik have been continuously marching across the Valley, a JKLF spokesman said in a statement here. He said the Safar-e-Azadi has reached Sonawari in north Kashmir after marching through Bandipora. Hundreds of people bid adieu to the front chairman Yasin Malik after they left for Sonawari, the spokesman said, adding the base camp has been set up in Hajin.

Daily Excelsior, 29 August 2007

Centre afraid of stable regimes in JK: Omar

SRINAGAR, Aug 28: The Opposition National Conference today said the Centre was scared of stable regimes in Jammu and Kashmir and was, therefore, creating leaders in every nook and corner of the State to destabilise it. "New Delhi is scared of stable regimes in the State and is putting its weight behind street leaders to fulfill its agenda," NC President Omar Abdullah told a public meeting in Budgam. New Delhi was creating leaders in every nook and corner of the State through its agencies to destabilise the Kashmir polity, he said. In 2000, the NC with its two-thirds majority in the Assembly adopted a resolution demanding more autonomy for the State, he said.

The Kashmir Times, 29 August 2007

Shabir urges Hurriyat to spread network

SRINAGAR, Aug 28 : Democratic Freedom Party (DFP) president Shabir Ahmad Shah

today viewed that Hurriyat Conference can emerge as a strong resistance movement only after strikes at the grass roots level. Addressing his senior party leaders at his residence here, he said the Hurriyat would cease to be a strong resistance movement if not taken to the grass root level. He appealed to the separatist leaders within and outside Hurriyat to unite and share responsibility to take the ongoing movement to its logical conclusion. The DFP president observed that all eyes are on the separatist leadership and they must come upto the expectations of the people.

The Kashmir Times, 29 August 2007

Editorial: Forgotten refugees of J&K

India and Pakistan celebrated their 60th independence anniversaries recently. For the last six decades the refugees of Jammu and Kashmir are facing worst type of human rights violations. The non resolution of J&K imbroglio has pushed over 2 million J&K refugees living in Indian administered J&K into oblivion under the burden of vote bank politics of world's largest democracy. Different categories of refugees all belonging to religious minorities (Hindu and Sikhs) living in only Muslim majority state of Hindu majority India are fighting the loosing battle of survival. Ever since the erstwhile princely state was coerced to merge with India and its people started living in constant fear of gun culture and soon after independence in 1947, both India and Pakistan signed agreement to solve the refugee problems including territorial settlement. But, this agreement has not been extended to state of J&K as 1/3rd area is under administration of Pakistan 30,000 sq. kms under China and rest with India.

Greater Kashmir, 29 August 2007

Editorial: Remove Deadwood

The Congress-PDP coalition government is about to complete five years in office. But for the State Assembly having the rare distinction of having six years term instead of five in other states, it has completed its term in office. Notwithstanding the fact the Congress party some time back had mooted the idea of bringing an amendment in the state constitution aimed at curtailing the span of state legislature from existing six to five years, thus bringing parity with other State Assemblies in the country it seems that elections will be held in October 2008 only. The Chief Minister has put all speculation about elections being advanced to rest by asserting that there would be no earlier elections. It seems that neither the ruling party nor the opposition is in a mood to hold elections in advance and even political organization so far desisting electoral politics now upbeat to contest the coming elections do not seem in a hurry.

Greater Kashmir, 29 August 2007

Why blame engineers?

It is not a great time to be an engineer, particularly a Public Works Department (PWD) engineer in our valley these days. There is a growing loss of public faith both in competence and social responsiveness of engineers. That faith has been further fanned by some recent revelations that have progressively tarnished the image of the engineering faculty. The image of the engineers is largely of a faculty besmirched by inefficiency, corruption and lack of devotion. Much of this antagonism towards engineers today stems from two main reasons. Firstly, the belief that policies and programmes developed by

development agencies (like PWD) don't sufficiently respond to the real needs and concerns as the people perceive them and they find no direct means of influencing or shaping their policies. In other words, people are dismayed at a narrow and elitist consultation of issues that can impact the lives of thousands of people.

Daily Excelsior, 30 August 2007

More relief for depot fire victims

NEW DELHI/SRINAGAR, Aug 29: Centre today released Rs 10 crore as interim assistance to Jammu and Kashmir Government for compensating people affected by the recent ammunition depot fire in Khundroo. Sixteen people were killed and about 1,000 houses damaged in the fire incident. Under the package, Rs 2.5 lakh is being given to next of kin of those killed. Of this, the State Government is paying Rs 1.5 lakh and Army another Rs 1 lakh. Announcing a series of measures, a Defence Ministry spokesman said people whose pucca houses suffered complete damage will get a compensation of Rs 1,50,000 per house, while the compensation for a kutcha house would be to the tune of Rs 50,000.

Daily Excelsior, 30 August 2007

Editorial: Refugee's misfortune in J&K

India and Pakistan celebrated their 60th independence anniversaries recently. For the last six decades the refugees of Jammu and Kashmir are facing worst type of human rights violations. Over two million refugees are living in this State in complete oblivion. Different categories of refugees all belonging to religious minorities (Hindu and Sikhs) living in only Muslim majority State of the country are fighting the losing battle of survival. Ever since the erstwhile princely State merged with India and its people started living in constant fear of gun culture and soon after independence in 1947, both India and Pakistan signed agreement to solve the refugee problems including territorial settlement. But, this agreement has not been extended to State of Jammu and Kashmir as 1/3rd area is under administration of Pakistan 30,000 sq. kms under China and rest with India.

The Kashmir Times, 30 August 2007

89 Army men punished for rights violations in J&K

JAMMU, Aug 29 (Agencies): The Army has punished 89 of its personnel, including 34 officers, for human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir [Images] since the eruption of militancy in the trouble-torn state. In the 33 cases of human rights violations established by the Army's courts of inquiry, 89 personnel have been punished since 1990, defence sources said on Wednesday. Anyone found guilty of rights abuses has been punished, the sources said, adding there is no truth in the allegations that the Army is deliberately going slow in handling such cases. According to statistics, 34 officers, five junior commissioned officers and 50 personnel of other ranks have been punished for various human rights violation-related offences. The sources said that though 1,460 complaints of human rights violations were registered against the armed forces, only 33 were found to be true.

Greater Kashmir, 30 August 2007

Editorial: Has Democracy grown in Kashmir?

Nyla Ali Khan's article Today was the day (GK 09-08-2007) throws some questions we must answer. The removal of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah in 1953, in an undemocratic manner, was really the darkest period of Kashmir history. The congress leaders in centre could not have succeeded in their plan, but without the support of some of the state leaders who happened to be the members of his council of ministers at that time. In remembering the day of 9th August we should not forget to mention, some of the few achievements of Sheikh Muhammad Abdullah. He was a great economic reformer. It was he, who introduced the land reforms and tillers became the masters of the land. Such economic reforms have never taken place in any state of our country and therefore was a revolutionary step in its nature.

Greater Kashmir, 30 August 2007

Editorial: The Agony Again

The painful memories of the Langate rape episode are still fresh in our minds. As we were trying to put the episode behind us, the news of another similar incident came up. This time it is Ikhrajpora where the atrocious crime has been committed and heartrendingly the victim is again a minor. In Langate too it was a minor who was brutalized by four lewd men, two of whom shockingly turned out to be Kashmiris. It was a dastardly act indeed claiming not only the life and chastity of an innocent school-going girl but also denting the pride of a respectable Langate-family and leaving them shell-shocked. The reaction against the incident was understandably huge. The police did manage to get hold of the malefactors but after that it was going to be the same old story.

Daily Excelsior, 31 August 2007

Restore pre-act reservation status in J&K: Speaker

SRINAGAR, Aug 30: Legislative Assembly Speaker Tara Chand today directed the Government to provide reservation to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe and other Backward Classes on the basis they were getting in the past. The direction came after members of different Backward Classes raised the issue in the House during Zero-Hour. Suman Lata Bhagat, raising the issue, said people belonging to sc, st and other Backward Classes were being ignored in appointments and promotions. She was joined by other members from the Backward Classes, including Nazir Gurezi who alleged that Government has failed to implement the Act passed in the House on the reservation issue.

The Nation, 31 August 2007

Amnesty concerned over torture in Held Kashmir

SRINAGAR (Agencies) - Amnesty International accused Indian security forces in a report released Thursday of using **brutal** torture in Held Kashmir and north-astern states. The accusations, promptly denied by Indian officials, were made in a report to mark the International Day of the Disappeared. **In** areas of armed conflict, torture by security forces is routine and is often particularly brutal, **said** the document on India. **Many** women have also been raped by security forces, sometimes in retribution for attacks on security forces by armed groups, or for a community's

perceived support for armed insurgents, ♦ ?? it said. India has hundreds of thousands of police, paramilitaries and soldiers stationed in Occupied Kashmir and rebellious north-eastern states. In Held Kashmir, the rights groups noted, abuses are especially prevalent because of anti-terrorism laws that make it difficult to prosecute soldiers in the state.

The Kashmir Times, 31 August 2007

Baglihar dam; rising water has people in a jam

BHADERWAH, Aug 30: Around 60,000 people living in various villages and hamlets near the banks of Chenab in Doda district have started to bear the brunt of 450 MW Baglihar hydroelectric project. Though the project, which first had been facing rough weather in the wake of Pak objections, has yet to be completed but the storage of water has increased water level at certain places posing threats to the inhabitants living close to the river banks. The people of Rajgarh and Kastigarh areas alleged that the villages and small hamlets situated at the banks of the river have got submerged and those living on hill tops have been cut off from the rest of the world as bridges have been washed away by the strong currents. They further said that their school going children have not been able to attend schools because of non-availability of the bridges.

The Kashmir Times, 31 August 2007

Editorial: Blunder of surrender

It was during the rule of Gen. KV Krishna Rao, over a decade ago, that the policy of accepting--actually encouraging--the surrender of militants, who were repentant and keen on returning to normal life was initiated with considerable fanfare. First, it was applied to local militants who had surrendered before the security forces along with their weapons. Later, this opportunity to surrender and to start new chapters in their lives was extended even to those who had crossed the Line of Control (LoC) for Pakistan Administered Kashmir or Pakistan and were willing to return. Apparently, it was a very humane approach to a deep-rooted socio-political problem. After all, to err is human. But, why should not one be allowed to repent for his mistakes and to reform oneself? After all, prisons are meant to reform criminals.

The Kashmir Times, 31 August 2007

Identity for Kashmiris

No matter what my neighbours think of this but my identity and culture are important to me, even if they think it is against their 'national interest' to recognise my identity and respect my culture. As a human being we all need identity, recognition and sense of belonging is very important. Society is made of different social, cultural and ethnic groups. All groups have some distinct identities and cultural and historical traditions, and these differences should be recognised and respected. Depending on how one deal with these differences, this could be a source of strength and richness to society. In every society there are problems, and in a multi cultural society problems could be of different nature. But one thing is sure that problems do not go away by ignoring them. We need to formulate appropriate policies to deal with these differences.