

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**Major cleared of rape charges but dismissed**

SRINAGAR, JAN. 31. A general court martial (GCM) has dismissed from service Major Rehman Hussain, who is an accused in the much publicised rape case of Handwara. The incident occurred in November last year. He was, however, acquitted of the rape charges. The findings of the GCM were made public today at Uri brigade headquarters. Found guilty of other charges, Major Rehman, according to a defence spokesman, was acquitted on the basis of a DNA report which absolved him of the crime. "He has been absolved of the rape charges but the GCM continued with its proceedings of the case, including recording of evidence on other charges levelled against the accused," the spokesman said. The Major was found guilty of other charges in varying degrees and dismissed.

The Hindu, 1 February 2005

**J&K civic polls throw up new political forces**

SRINAGAR, JAN 31. The first phase of civic elections in North Kashmir on Saturday has not only come as a major setback for separatist political camp but within the mainstream political arena some new forces have emerged sending out a new signal about the future political scenario in the State. Notwithstanding the maiden victory of the People's Democratic Party in Kupwara and the Congress in some Baramulla areas, the traditional political parties are slowly being replaced by new outfits confined to certain pockets or the Independents who after the 2002 Assembly elections have learnt to bargain with bigger parties.

The Tribune, 1 February 2005

**Security in place for Srinagar MC poll**

Srinagar, January 31: After a clear verdict against the National Conference in civic elections held in north Kashmir, all eyes are now on the Srinagar Municipal Corporation elections in which the fate of 218 candidates would be decided tomorrow by 4.42 lakh voters. The elections are being held after a gap of 27 years. The scene here is different in view of the stand taken by some separatist groups even as they had called for a boycott of elections on the plea that these held "no solution to the Kashmir problem".

The Tribune, 1 February 2005

**At the cutting edge** (Editorial)

What must be remembered is that only the first phase of the six-phase elections is over. Much will depend on polling in Srinagar, Pulwama and Anantnag districts in the coming days which are hotbeds of terrorism. Public enthusiasm can be sustained only if security arrangements continue to be effective without being obtrusive. Even otherwise, panchayat elections in far-flung areas which are to be held in the near future and state and parliamentary elections which will follow in the coming years will be the real test of the situation. The future of Kashmir was not the vital issue in the present elections; it was the local issues that mattered at the cutting edge of politics.

The Indian Express, 1 February 2005

**Joining the dots in J&K** (Kuldip Nayar)

I wish the Government of India had a policy on Kashmir. It has defended the state against all odds. But this is only a territorial assertion of sovereignty, not a policy that entails winning over alienated Kashmiris or seeking an agreement with Pakistan that considers the state or, more so the Valley, a core issue. New Delhi realises that the problem is political. Yet, when it comes to framing the policy it reduces it to rhetoric or wishful thinking. The policy, if any, reflects tactics or a reaction to what Pakistan does. There is nothing called a long-term, well-considered plan. New Delhi's problem is that it is hopelessly dependent on the intelligence agencies and the mindset bureaucrats. They have their own agenda and preposterous propositions. Entangled in the web woven around it, the government goes over the same exercise again and again.

The Indian Express, 1 February 2005

**Bite the ballot** (Editorial)

The high turnout also underscores another challenge. These municipal elections come at a time when a variety of factors have secured a relative peace in the state. The outgoing army chief has noted that ceasefire on the Line of Control, sustained vigilance and border fencing have brought down levels of infiltration and incidents of violence. To secure meaningful participation in grassroots bodies, normalcy is key. It would also maximise popular engagement in the proposed renewal of the debate on Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2005

**57 ultras lay down arms**

RANGIYA (ASSAM), Jan 31: Fiftyseven ultras including 34 ULFA militants today laid down arms at the headquarters of the 21 Mountain Division of the Army here today. The ULFA ultras led by Sachinandatara deposited 46 assorted ammunition to General Officer four corps Lt Gen A S Jamwal at a function. After their surrender, the militants voiced their desire to make Assam developed and ensure security of the people. Jamwal in his speech emphasised that Army and the security forces have a commitment towards the NE region for which it was always engaged in the overall development of the State and the region.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2005

**HUJI commander killed in Rajouri**

RAJOURI, Jan 31: Security forces today gunned down a 'district commander' of Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami (HUJI) outfit in an encounter at Nad Mohra in Thanna Mandi area. The militant was killed after an hour long encounter, official sources said identifying him as Abdul Hassan alias Code-4, a 'district commander' of HUJI. One AK-47 rifle and one AK-56 magazine were recovered from the slain militant. In two separate search operations in general area of Poonch and Koli Mohalla, Surankote, security forces recovered one anti tank mine marked with P2 MK2, one led box, two kg explosive, one Chinese pistol with two magazines and 11 rounds, one pistol brass, two detonators, 47 AK rounds, one Pika belt and 75 Pika rounds.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2005

#### **Militants attack Cong candidate**

SRINAGAR, Jan 31: A Congress candidate for the civic elections in Kashmir escaped unhurt while an activist of National Conference was injured when militants attacked them in separate incidents, an official spokesman said today. Militants opened fire on the house of Congress candidate Ghulam Ahmed Bhat at Khudhamam Dooru in Anantnag district last night, but no one was injured in the shootout, the spokesman said. A NC activist Irshad Ahmed Sheikh was injured when militants fired on a vehicle of the party during campaigning at Karfali Mohalla in downtown Srinagar last night, he said adding that the activist has been hospitalised.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2005

#### **Army arranges tour of Poonch district elders**

JAMMU, Jan 31: Lt Gen Sudhir Sharma, General Officer Commanding of elite Nagrota Corps, chartered a fresh path in winning over the hearts and minds of people of Poonch district, when he flagged off the first ever tour for elders to Jaipur, Ajmer and Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti.

The flagging off was done in the presence of large gathering of Army and civil dignitaries. The 10 day tour under the aegis of Dah Division comprises 34 elders of all religions aged between 50 and 70 years. The tour is brain child of Gen Sudhir Sharma, who, during his mass contact spree with local population of remote areas felt the need to do something for the village elders which resulted in conceptualizing a tour for "Buzurgs" to enable them to see the rich inheritance of the country.

The Tribune, 2 February 2005

#### **Srinagar wears true colours of democracy**

Srinagar, February 1; It's rare to see Srinagar's urban voters fighting for a chance to cast their ballot. But this day brought several unusual instances in its fold with the electorate shaking off its inertia and annoyance to vote for polls to 68 wards of Srinagar Municipal Corporation. Of these, 23 were reserved for women, with 50 candidates in the fray. Elections were peaceful, barring stray incidents like that of stone pelting at a booth in Maisuma, the city heart. Last night a polling officer was injured when militants hurled a grenade at Batmaloo High School booth.

The Tribune, 2 February 2005

#### **Byelection in JK on February 24**

New Delhi, February 1: Byelection to fill a vacancy in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Council, caused due to the death of Leader of the opposition in the Upper House Abdul Qayoom, will be held on February 24. Mr Qayoom, the National Conference member and former minister, passed away on January 1. As per the schedule, the notification will be issued on February 7. Last date for filing the nomination will be on February 14 and the scrutiny, the following day. Last date for withdrawal of nominations is on February 17.

The Tribune, 2 February 2005

#### **Two top Pak militants shot**

Jammu, February 1: Two top Pakistani militants, including a self-styled divisional commander of Harkat-ul-Jehadi Islami, have been shot dead by the Army in Rajauri district of Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said here today. Army troops launched an operation at Ghai Nar in Manjakote, Thanamandi area, in the district yesterday and shot dead the militants after a fierce encounter, they said. Two AK-56 rifles, two magazines, 10 grenades, a wireless set and Rs 5,000 were seized.

The Tribune, 2 February 2005

#### **Providing succour under 'Operation Sadbhavana'**

Jammu, February 1: As part of Operation Sadbhavana, the Army has stepped up various programmes for providing succour to civilians and to enable them to have a peep into the rich traditions in other areas of the country. Under this programme 34 persons, in the age group of 50-70, were taken from the border area of Poonch for a tour of Jaipur and Ajmer. Lt Gen Sudhir Sharma, GOC 16 Corps, flagged off the first-ever tour for elders belonging to the remote area. A Defence Ministry spokesman said here that these village elders would visit the Dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti and the famous Brahma temple in Pushkar and palaces in Jaipur.

The Indian Express, 2 February 2005

#### **In Srinagar, 20 pc votes still 'historic'**

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 1: Shaking off a perceived apathy to elections and prompted by bad civic infrastructure, Srinagar today broke with its 15-year tradition of notching up single-digit voting figures to log a record 20 per cent turnout in the civic polls. While large areas of the city heeded the Hurriyat boycott call, long queues were spotted in the neighbourhoods to elect 68 representatives to the Srinagar Municipality Corporation for the first time in 27 years. As the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed-led coalition government flaunted the numbers, hailing the day as "historic", its supporters clashed with Opposition National

Conference workers at many places, accusing each other of bogus voting.

The News, 2 February 2005

#### **UN official calls for Kashmir resolution through talks**

ISLAMABAD: International political conflicts, including Kashmir, must be resolved through dialogue for peace and progress, a top UN official said on Tuesday. Executive Secretary United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UNESCAP) Kim Hak Su made the call at a news conference here. The UN can play an important role towards settlement of disputes, he said. He said through our commission sessions member countries make resolutions and these resolutions make and create internal governmental bodies, which created regional centres in China, Indonesia, Japan and India. These resolutions can create new agreements among the member countries, he said. "Most recent wholehearted supported resolutions and agreement is Asian highway agreement," he remarked.

The Tribune, 3 February 2005

#### **MC poll: NC sweeps Srinagar, BJP gets 26 seats in Jammu**

Srinagar, February 2: After biting dust in Baramula and Kuprawa civic polls, the National Conference (NC) resurfaced today by making a clean sweep of elections to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation. Held after a gap of nearly three decades, the elections to Srinagar MC were being closely watched by political observers who were not much surprised by the election results declared late evening today. In a house of 68, the NC bagged a comfortable majority by bagging 41 seats, thus retaining its hold in the area. The PDP could barely manage 17 seats while the Congress took just six.

The Tribune, 3 February 2005

#### **Army sponsors valley students' tour to South India**

Srinagar, February 2: Enthused by the maiden experience to move out of the Kashmir valley and moved by the plight of the tsunami-affected people, 20 students from distant areas of north Kashmir returned here yesterday after over three weeks of an Army-sponsored education tour to South India. The group comprising 10 boys and 10 girls accompanied by five teachers from different schools in Baramula district of north Kashmir, was received by Lt-Gen Nirbhay Sharma, GOC of Srinagar-based 15 Corps of the Army here. The parents of most of the children were also present on the occasion. The children narrated their experiences during the tour and presented a colourful cultural programme.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2005

#### **Getting it right (Editorial)**

Fortunately some lessons seem to have been learnt. By quickly court-martialing Rashtriya Rifles officer, Major Rehman Hussian, for his involvement in the rape of a woman and her young daughter near Handwara last November - which has just led to his dismissal - the army has signalled that it is serious about self-correction. This intervention should go some way in shoring up the image of the army in J&K as a disciplined force that does not believe in intimidating the local populace through a show of brute force - an outcome that the new chief of army staff, General J.J. Singh, says he is very keen to achieve.

The Hindu, 4 February 2005

#### **A glorious beginning, says Omar Abdullah**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 3. The Opposition National Conference, which has retained control of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation in Monday's civic elections, today celebrated its victory with its president, Omar Abdullah, declaring the centenary celebrations of the party's founder, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, open. Mr. Abdullah termed the party's "splendid performance" as a glorious beginning for the future of Kashmir. At the NC headquarters here, where the party organised an impressive show, he said there could be no other day to begin the centenary celebrations of "Baba-e-Quoom" (father of the nation), as Sheikh Abdullah is referred to by the NC. "I declare the celebrations open with this splendid victory," he said amid applause.

The Hindu, 4 February 2005

#### **Yaseen Malik injured in police scuffle**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 3. The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman, Yaseen Malik, was injured in a clash with the police in south Kashmir's Anantnag district today, while the Democratic Freedom Party chief, Shabir Shah, was arrested along with others. Reports said that both Mr. Malik and Mr. Shah were leading an anti-election procession at Khanabal in Anantnag when the police stopped them. They resisted leading to a virtual scuffle between the two sides, in which Mr. Malik was injured. "He has been admitted to hospital in a serious condition," a JKLF spokesman claimed, while condemning the police action.

The Tribune, 4 February 2005

#### **NC, PDP elated over MC poll results**

Srinagar, February 3: Both the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and opposition National Conference, which emerged victorious in the Srinagar Municipal Corporation elections, have hailed the outcome of the elections here. While the PDP and the Congress got sweeping majority in Baramula and Kupwara districts of north Kashmir, the NC got a comfortable majority emerging winner in 41 wards in the 68-member corporation. Ms Mehbooba Mufti, PDP President, said here today that people here came out to vote for the civic amenities. "They (Kashmiris) still vote for the resolution of the Kashmir issue through a dialogue process" between India and Pakistan, opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road and other measures pursued by the coalition government, Ms Mufti said.

The Tribune, 4 February 2005

### **Setback for Congress in Jammu MC poll**

Jammu, February 3: The ruling Congress received severe setback in the first-ever election to the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) as it failed to reach the magic strength of 36 to hold the civic body without the support of others. Despite being the single largest party, winning 27 seats in the 71-member corporation, the Congress is being seen as a loser as its performance was poor, particularly in the city where it had won all three Assembly seats and also the Lok Sabha seat a few months ago. The Congress leaders are worried at the sudden fall in the popularity graph of the party, that was the main partner in the PDP-led coalition government.

The Tribune, 4 February 2005

### **1,500 hydroelectric projects to be set up in valley**

Jammu, February 3: The Governor, Lieut-Gen S.K. Sinha (retd) yesterday announced that 1,500 upgraded Micro hydroelectric projects would be set up in the state. Over 300 mini-projects have been upgraded and work on the remaining projects would start this year, the Governor said after inspecting an upgraded mini-project near Tikri in Udhampur district. He was accompanied by the Army Commander, Lieut-Gen Hari Prasad. He said the mini-projects would electrify all border villages in a phased manner, empower rural community in economically deprived areas and help in bringing about normalcy in the state.

The Tribune, 4 February 2005

### **11kg IED defused in J&K**

Jammu, February 3: A major tragedy was averted when troops defused 11-kg of an improvised explosive device (IED) planted by militants in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir today, official sources said here. A road operating party of the Army recovered the explosive during sanitisation of the Akhala-Pathmihala road in Kishtwar tehsil of Doda district, they said. The explosive was planted by the ultras to target security forces vehicles passing through the road.

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2005

### **Mines planted in orchards, raveyard of Kupwara village**

Gushi (Handwara), Feb 3: Even as PDP-led coalition claims that it is clearing roadblocks on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad Road, the residents of this village fear to venture in their orchards lest some anti-personal mine-planted by troops-blows them apart. Some mines have been fitted in a graveyard too, which the villagers consider disrespectful to the dead. No human casualties have occurred because ever since villagers spotted the mines two years ago, they haven't ventured into the mined land and always caution people from other areas not to. However, many cattle heads have been lost to the mine explosions, the villagers said.

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2005

### **2 militants killed in Sopur**

Srinagar, Feb 3: Two militants, whose identity was being ascertained by police, were gunned down in an encounter with troops of 22 Rashtriya Rifles in Warpora, Sopur Thursday evening. Sources said that troops after receiving a tip-off cordoned Warpora village and in the gunfight that ensued, two militants were shot dead while a woman, Hajira Begum, was wounded in the cross-fire. The wounded woman has been admitted to hospital at Srinagar. Two Lashkar-e-Toiba militants, including the outfit's battalion commander were arrested by police in village Nikas, Rajpora of Pulwama district yesterday, police officials said today.

The Tribune, 5 February 2005

### **Talks only solution to issue, says Musharraf**

Islamabad, February 4; Sounding positive about the progress of composite dialogue process with India, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf today said a lasting peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue can only be found through "dialogue and engagement." "Pakistan believes that a just and lasting solution to the Kashmir dispute can only be found through a process of dialogue and engagement. It is with this resolve and purpose in mind that we embarked on the composite dialogue process with India last year," General Musharraf said.

The Tribune, 5 February 2005

### **Army Chief visits J&K**

Jammu, February 4: The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen J.J. Singh today visited the headquarters of the Northern Command at Udhampur during his two-day tour of Jammu and Kashmir. It is significant to note that the Army Chief has chosen to start the schedule of his visits from the all important and operationally vibrated Northern Command, which is successfully fighting the battle of insurgency for over 15 years. He was accompanied by his wife, Ms Anupama Singh, who is also president of the Army Wives Welfare Association (AWWA). The COAS and his wife were received by the GOC-in-C Northern Command, Lt-Gen Hari Prasad and Ms Lakshmi Hari Prasad, president AWWA, Northern Command.

The Tribune, 5 February 2005

### **Two ultras killed in Sopore**

Baramula, February 4: Two militants were killed and a jawan was injured in a fierce encounter at Sopore in this district last night. Official sources said today that an encounter took place between militants hiding in a house and security forces during a search operation at village Warpora Sopore. They said two militants were killed and a security jawan and a women were injured. Two AK rifles and other arms and ammunition were recovered from the slain militants.

The Hindu, 5 February 2005

**Army Chief not against changes to Special Powers Act**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 4. The Army needed all the help it could get while fighting militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), Gen. J.J. Singh, told a press conference today. But he was not opposed to amendments in the Armed Forces Special Powers Act which, he said, safeguarded the troops in the "messy situation." Gen. Singh is here on a two-day visit, his first after taking over as COAS. "Our troops are working under high pressure and a lot of tension and the stakes are very high from all sides. So we do not want to operate with our hands tied behind," he said.

The Hindu, 5 February 2005

**Rival parties eyeing on independents in Jammu (Luv Puri)**

JAMMU, FEB. 4. With the results for the second phase of the civic elections in Jammu and Kashmir announced, a tight race has started between the ruling Congress-People's Democratic Party (PDP) coalition and the Bharatiya Janata Party to woo the independents to capture the post of Mayor for the Jammu Municipal Corporation. Both camps are making desperate efforts to reach the magic figure of 36 required to elect the Mayor.

The Hindu, 6 February 2005

**High alert in J&K ahead of third phase of civic polls**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 5. With Anantnag and Pulwama in South Kashmir going to the third phase of the civic polls tomorrow, security forces are on maximum alert in view of the threat from militant groups to disrupt voting. The highest number of candidates has been elected unopposed for many municipal committees. According to the State Election Office, only 69 of the 147 wards are witnessing a contest.

The Hindu, 6 February 2005

**No slackening of guard in J&K: Army Chief**

JAMMU, FEB. 5. The Chief of the Army Staff, Gen. J.J. Singh, said today that there was no question of any "soft approach" towards militancy in Jammu and Kashmir. All steps would be taken on the military front to bring back peace to the troubled State. Talking to presspersons at the end of his two-day visit to the State, Gen. Singh said: "We have a task cut out in the State of Jammu and Kashmir which is to bring peace and normality back. It is a fact that complete peace has not returned to the State yet. For this to happen operations are continuing to eliminate the destructive elements and the Army needs to be complimented as it is working in the most difficult conditions."

The Hindu, 6 February 2005

**'Participation of Kashmiris in talks imperative'**

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 5. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has asserted that participation of Kashmiris in the dialogue process is imperative for establishment of durable peace in South Asia. In his message, read out to the joint session of the Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) Legislative Assembly and Council in Muzaffarabad, capital of PoK, on the occasion of 'Kashmir Solidarity Day', Gen. Musharraf said Kashmiris had an "inalienable" right to decide about their future and their inclusion in the dialogue process was also imperative for taking forward the confidence building measures between Pakistan and India.

Dawn, 6 February 2005

**Rally staged to express solidarity with Kashmiris**

RAWALPINDI, Feb 5: Hundreds of people rallied here on Saturday to express solidarity with the Kashmiris, demanding that UN resolutions be implemented to solve the longstanding dispute. The rallies were organized in connection with the Kashmir Solidarity Day being observed throughout the country and Azad Kashmir. The day had been declared a public holiday. A rally organized by the district administration was taken out from Shamsabad. District Nazim Raja Tariq Kiani led the protesters. Tehsil Nazim Raja Hamid Nawaz, Tehsil Municipal Officer Khawaja Javed Latif and other officers of the district and tehsil took part in the march.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2005

**Top Harkat militant captured in Jammu City**

JAMMU, Feb 5: Army and police have arrested a 'district commander' of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen outfit from Resham Ghar locality in the City where he was recuperating after being operated upon for a gall bladder surgery in New Delhi. He has been identified as Bashir Ahmed Haji alias Mustakeen, a 'district commander' of HuM for Anantnag and Pulwama district. Official sources said the militant was arrested in a surgical operation on the basis of joint intelligence provided by Army and civil agencies.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2005

**Kashmir on gun trigger again (Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Daulat Singh)**

Defence experts who know how Pakistan Army operates to promote terrorism in J&K have finalised the concept of a separate special forces command, and that the government is likely to give the go ahead and provide the funds soon, speaks well for India's long-term strategic military planning. Members of special forces operate in small teams and carry out highly dangerous and specialised missions behind enemy lines, providing information that facilitates precision air or artillery strikes against critical enemy targets, destroying communication links and facilities that impair the enemy's ability to wage war, or demoralising the enemy or forcing it to change its deployment pattern by staging surprise attacks in its rear.

The Indian Express, 7 February 2005

### **Shopian surprise**

SHOPIAN, FEBRUARY 6: Walking through this small township inside south Kashmir can be a trip wire. Ask the men in uniform and they would agree. But Sunday saw a blissful change, the Army looked cagey but the scare among the voters in Shopian was surprisingly missing. Better known for poll boycotts, Shopian notched up an unexpected 50 per cent turnout in today's civic polls. Outside the polling booths, where terror even kept the political parties away, one could see long queues of voters waiting for their turn.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

### **PDP retains south Kashmir in civic polls**

ANANTNAG/PULWAMA, FEB. 6. The ruling People's Democratic Party secured a majority in almost all the councils and committees in the third phase of the civic polls in the south Kashmir districts of Pulwama and Anantnag today. Braving militants' threats as well as the inclement weather, over 44 per cent of the voters made it to the booths. Only 69 of the 147 wards in 12 municipal bodies witnessed a contest. There was no contest in 29 wards while a single candidate was elected unopposed in 49 wards. Elections were countermanded in a ward of Pampore where militants killed a candidate.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

### **Centre willing to give more time to Hurriyat: Patil**

DEHRA DUN, FEB. 6. The Centre today indicated that it was willing to give more time to the Hurriyat Conference to respond to its offer for dialogue. Replying to questions on Kashmir, the Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, told reporters here that the Centre was in the process of dialogue with every section of society such as intellectuals, traders, industrialists and lawyers. Asked whether the Centre would hold a fresh dialogue with the Hurriyat, he said "anybody who is willing to talk to us is welcome. If they feel they need more time, we will not object to it."

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

### **They fight militants hand in hand**

MAHORE, FEB. 6. People in this militancy-infested zone on the Pir Panjal hills of Jammu and Kashmir have come up with a novel way of fighting the 'jehadis'. They have enlisted members of all communities in the village defence committee (VDC). The VDC has as members both Hindus and Muslims and they fight hand in hand to wipe out militancy in their areas. In the past, militants of the local Hizb-ul Mujahideen unit tried to communalise the situation by asking Hindus to migrate to the south of the Chenab. They also carried out targeted killings to reinforce their message. Seven family members of Chain Singh, a resident, were killed three years ago. This triggered a wave of migration in some hamlets.

The Hindu, 7 February 2005

### **Autonomy still party's plank: Farooq**

JAMMU, FEB. 6. The former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, has said that restoring the State's autonomy will remain the main political slogan for the National Conference. At a party function here today, Dr. Abdullah said: "We maintain a consistent stand that the restoration of autonomy to the State remains an important step towards meeting the genuine urges and aspirations of the State's people." Turning to the ongoing civic polls, Dr. Abdullah alleged that the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) had taken the help of militants to ensure the victory of its candidates. "The PDP adopted various tactics in the first two phases of the civic elections to ensure victory of its candidates, including indirect support of militants."

The Tribune, 7 February 2005

### **Omar talks of greater autonomy**

Jammu, February 6: The President of the National Conference, Mr Omar Abdullah, told mediapersons here today that his party was committed to get back that constitutional position which existed in the state prior to 1953. He said the Left front at the Centre has already expressed its support for the restoration of greater autonomy and since the Congress-led UPA Government cannot survive without the support of the Leftists "we are hopeful that our demand for greater autonomy will be conceded."

The Tribune, 7 February 2005

### **3 CRPF jawans among four injured**

Srinagar, February 6: Four persons, including three Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) jawans, were injured while security forces seized explosives in the Kashmir valley overnight, an official spokesman said today. He said militants hurled a hand grenade towards a CRPF bunker at Gadkocha Zaina kadal in the city last night causing injuries to three jawans. They were admitted to a hospital. The bunker was damaged.

The Hindu, 8 February 2005

### **Infiltration has come down, says Pranab**

KOLAR GOLD FIELDS, FEB. 7. The Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, said today that the number of infiltrators from across the Line of Control had declined by 60 per cent compared to the figures of the previous year. "The number of infiltrators has reduced. The Union Home Ministry has made some calculations and it (infiltration) has reduced by almost 60 per cent from the previous year's position," he told presspersons after inaugurating the Railway Fabrication Shop and Heavy Fabrication Shop of Bharat Earth Movers Limited (BEML) here.

The Hindu, 8 February 2005

**J&K civic polls record 81 p.c. turnout**

JAMMU, FEB. 7. The fourth phase of civic polls in Jammu and Kashmir recorded a voter turnout of 81 per cent, despite the inclement weather. A record number of 969 candidates, including 306 women, are in the fray for constituting 11 municipal bodies in Jammu district and six in Kathua district. Polling was held in 197 wards, which have an electorate of 1.99 lakhs. As per the results declared till this evening, the Congress party was ahead, followed by the Bharatiya Janata Party.

The Tribune, 8 February 2005

**Two Lashkar men killed**

Srinagar, February 7: Two militants of the Pakistan-based Lashker-e- Toiba (LeT) were among three persons killed, while the forces recovered arms and ammunition in Jammu and Kashmir overnight, an official spokesman said today. He said the security forces shot dead two LeT militants in an encounter at Mohalla Qureshian in Surankote last night. One house was also damaged in the exchange of fire. Two AK rifles and arms and ammunition were recovered from the slain militants.

The Tribune, 8 February 2005

**PDP, Cong make inroads into NC bastions**

Srinagar, February 7: The results of civic poll in south Kashmir districts declared yesterday have once again manifested the capacity of the ruling PDP-Congress to make inroads into the bastions of opposition National Conference. The victory of the ruling PDP-Congress alliance, though both the parties contested against each other in the civic poll, is significant as both the parties have their stronghold in the twin districts of Anantnag and Pulwama. The twin districts comprise the Lok Sabha constituency of PDP President, Ms Mehbooba Mufti, while Anantnag is home district to the Chief Minister, Mufti Sayeed and Pradesh Congress committee chief and Rural Development Minister, Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed.

The Indian Express, 8 February 2005

**Shot, J-K's tsunami blood donor bleeds to death**

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 7: Just last month, this 27-year-old car mechanic was stretched out on a bed, medics hovering nearby, donating his blood for tsunami victims. Today, Zahoor Ahmed Bhat was stretched out once again, in a local hospital. He had bled to death last night, gunned down by BSF personnel as he was coming home from a break in Gulmarg with two friends. BSF officials say they fired at the black Maruti car that Bhat was driving after he failed to stop the vehicle on their command. A gun was also fired from the car, they add.

The Hindu, 9 February 2005

**PDP councillor shot dead**

SRINAGAR, FEB 8. Militants today shot dead a senior leader of the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP), who was recently elected a member of the Beerwah Municipal Committee. He was tipped to be chairman of the council in the central district of Budgam, where the last phase of polling would be held on Thursday. Ghulam Mohiuddin Mir, who had opted for voluntary retirement from the Accountant-General's office here, was gunned down after militants abducted him while he was travelling by car to Srinagar from his hometown Beerwah. The District Superintendent of Police, Budgam Ramesh Jalla, told The Hindu that the PDP leader might have got a telephone call from a top militant leader operating in the area. "His family said he received the call at 8.30 a.m. and he immediately left for the place alone in his car," said Mr. Jalla. As the PDP leader reached Mirpur-Chewdara, unknown gunmen shot him.

The Hindu, 9 February 2005

**Handwara family rejects Army's offer**

BADRE PAYEEN (HANDWARA), FEB. 8. Abdur Rasheed Dar (45) is in no mood to accept the Army's offer to adopt his family. Instead he wants stern action against the dismissed Major Rehman Hussain, who was exonerated of the charges of raping his wife and 11-year-old daughter but punished for indiscipline by a General Court Martial (GCM). After the GCM, the Army offered to adopt Mr. Dar's two children to educate them outside the State. General Officer Commanding of counter-insurgent Kilo Force, Major General, M.S. Balhara, also said that "besides suitably rehabilitating the family, the children would be provided with free boarding, lodging and education in any Army school and a vocation thereafter." But the offer was rejected.

Daily Excelsior, 9 February 2005

**Army organizes medical camp at Ramgarh**

JAMMU, Feb 8: To provide civic, medical, educational and other amenities and facilities to the people in far flung and rural areas under the Operation Sadbhavana, the Army organised a two days free medical camp at Ramgarh near Vijaypur. The camp was inaugurated by the Ramgarh Garrison Commander today. It was attended by a large number of villagers from the area including persons from the BSF, Police, civil administration and reserve officials of the area.

Daily Excelsior, 9 February 2005

**PK, Political Migrants Front for joint strategy against secessionism**

JAMMU, Feb 8: A delegation of J&K Political Migrants Front led by its general secretary Sheikh Mohiuddin (Shabnam) called on Panun Kashmir leaders here on Monday and apprised them of the contemporary situation in Kashmir Valley. The three member delegation also discussed the plight of political migrants with PK chairman, Dr Ajay Chhangoo. Mr Shabnam said that these political migrants have provided most committed and sustained resistance to separatists and communal forces in the

Kashmir Valley.

The Tribune, 10 February 2005

**Youth's death: protesters teargassed**

Srinagar, February 9: The police here today lobbed tear gas shells and resorted to lathicharge to quell demonstrators protesting against the killing of a youth allegedly by security forces on Sunday. A complete bandh was also observed in the Central Lal Chowk area here in protest against the killing of the youth while he was returning from Gulmarg on Sunday last. Angry demonstrators took to streets in Maisuma in the morning as all shops and business establishments in Maisuma, Budshah Chowk and Lal Chowk areas were closed on the occasion of a religious ceremony for the dead today. Pitched battles between the police and angry demonstrators continued throughout the day, affecting normal life in the Maisuma area, the nerve centre of this capital city.

The Tribune, 10 February 2005

**Militants kidnap PDP leader**

Srinagar, February 9: Close on the heels of killing of a ruling PDP municipal councillor, militants today kidnapped another councillor, Abdul Rashid Shah, from Harwan. Official sources said Mr Shah was kidnapped by the gunmen when he was on the way to home at Shalimar, on the banks of the Dal Lake. A massive hunt has been launched to trace him.

Daily Excelsior, 10 February 2005

**Mufti asks expatriate Kashmiris to help in reconstructing J&K**

London, Feb 9: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has said the turnaround in the situation has made Jammu and Kashmir investment friendly and expatriate Kashmiris should come forward and play their role in the reconstruction of the State. Mufti Sayeed who arrived here on a three day visit, met a cross section of Kashmiris settled in England and discussed investment in Jammu and Kashmir. He also met with top executives of some multinationals. The Chief Minister, accompanied by Ms Mehbooba Mufti, MP, is here to interact with expatriate Kashmiris and persuade them to invest in the State for its rapid economic development.

Daily Excelsior, 10 February 2005

**Autonomy - Kashmir's Pandora's Box** (Sarla Handoo)

The people of Jammu want stronger integration of the state with the Indian Union to carry it forward on the road to progress. They have been demanding a separate state for Jammu. The people of Ladakh have been struggling a great deal for decades to make their land a Union Territory. In fact, the emergence of the Ladakh Hill Development Council was a result of this movement. They apprehend that if the J&K gets autonomy it will take Ladakh further away from the central control leading to more discrimination against by the State Government. The controversy over reviving the autonomy plank has to be viewed against this backdrop.

The Tribune, 11 February 2005

**11,000 troops airlifted**

Jammu, February 10: While the Indian Air Force carried out major operations for airlifting Army-men stranded on the 300-km long Jammu-Srinagar National Highway during the past five days, six persons, including four children, were killed in three separate places owing to avalanches and land slides. According to the police, four children were killed when the house in which they were living in village Darhalta in the Billawar area of Kathua district collapsed today. Parents of the killed children were away when the house collapsed owing to heavy rain.

The Tribune, 11 February 2005

**NC councillor shot dead**

Srinagar, February 10: Unidentified gunmen shot dead a newly elected councillor of the local Municipal Corporation here last evening, only a day after the killing of a newly elected member of the Beerwah Municipal Committee in Budgam district. Suspected militants in the valley have also attacked the houses of two other elected members since yesterday. The police said militants opened fire on Mohammad Maqbool Khaksar, a newly elected member of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation when he was coming out of a local mosque in Ikhrajpora, Jawahar Nagar area at 6.30 pm yesterday.

The Tribune, 11 February 2005

**PDP wins Ganderbal, NC loses Char-e-Sharief**

Srinagar, February 10: The ruling PDP maintained its lead in the municipal committee elections in Ganderbal, winning nine of the 13 wards, while the Opposition National Conference was defeated in Char-e-Sharief, with the ruling PDP-Congress parties getting 10 out of 12 wards. The polling for civic bodies to Ganderbal in Srinagar district and four committees in Budgam district were held under tight security arrangements today. The ruling PDP-Congress and Independents have maintained their lead in these elections today after defeating the National Conference in the North and South Kashmir districts of Baramulla, Kupwara, Anantnag and Pulwama held in the first and third phases.

The Tribune, 11 February 2005

**JKLF calls for strike today**

Srinagar, February 10: The JKLF led by Mohammad Yaseen Malik has given a call for general strike tomorrow on the 21st

death anniversary of its founder leader, Mohammad Maqbool Bhat. The day will be observed as "Women's Day" with the announcement of awards to be given to the 10-year old Shabnam Rashid of Handwara and the 60-year-old Hakim Jaan of Pahalgam, both alleged victims of security forces.

The Hindu, 11 February 2005

### **Big voter turnout in Kashmir**

BUDGAM, FEB. 10. A day after militants shot dead a top contender for the post of Srinagar Mayor and a senior National Conference (NC) activist, a large number of people turned up to vote in central Budgam district and Ganderbal in Srinagar district which went to the polls in the fourth and last phase. There was no incidence of violence. The killing of 75-year-old Mohammad Maqbool Shah Khakhsar, NC's newly elected orporator from Ikhraakpora locality, cast a shadow over the last phase of polling today. But an official spokesman said the voter turnout was 70.50 per cent in Budgam and 70.92 per cent in Ganderbal. Mr. Khakhsar was shot near his home as he was returning from leading the "magrib" prayers in the evening.

The Hindu, 11 February 2005

### **Hurriyat factions condemn attack on Geelani (Shujaat Bukhari)**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 10. While the family of the Delhi University lecturer, S.A.R. Geelani, is shocked, various organisations have demanded an impartial probe into the attack on him. "This is an attack on the judiciary, which has exonerated him," Mr. Geelani's brother, Abdur Raheem Geelani, who lives in Baramulla, said. He said he had full faith in the judiciary and that the "law will surely bring the culprits to the book."

The Times of India, 11 February 2005

### **PM asks J-K govt to strengthen local bodies**

NEW DELHI: Complimenting the people of Jammu and Kashmir for actively participating in the recently held civic elections, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Thursday asked the state government to strengthen local bodies financially and decentralise administration. "The state can benefit immensely from revitalization of local government and decentralisation of development administration", he told J-K Deputy Chief Minister Mangat Ram Sharma and Finance Minister MH Baig when they called on him here. Singh promised all support and assistance of the Centre in strengthening local bodies in the border state, according to a PMO spokesman.

Greater Kashmir, 11 February 2005

### **Hizb supports JKLF call**

Muzaffarabad, Feb 10: Kashmir's largest militant group, Hizbul Mujahideen, has supported the strike call by Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) for Friday on the 21st death anniversary of the party founder Muhammad Maqbool Bhat. In a statement here, Hizb's supreme commander Syed Salahuddin said "the flame of freedom lit by the martyred leader in the hearts of Kashmiris would never fade until their struggle at militant and political fronts bears fruit by the blessings of Allah the Almighty."

Dawn, 12 February 2005

### **Breakthrough on Kashmir bus service likely (Qudssia Akhlaque)**

ISLAMABAD, Feb 11: Pakistan and India are likely to achieve a major breakthrough on the proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service at their foreign minister-level talks to be held here early next week, it is learnt. There are strong indications from New Delhi that Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's first visit here will augur well for the stalled Kashmir bus service. Informed sources told Dawn that optimism regarding a breakthrough at the foreign minister-level talks stemmed from the reported intervention at the highest political level on both sides. Apparently, President Gen Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh have both intervened to resolve the differences over the bus issue.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2005

### **Governor for 3-pronged strategy to fight terrorism in J&K**

DEHRADUN, Feb 11: Advocating three-pronged strategy to fight terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Governor, Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha today said that militancy is on decline with daily killings slashing down to five this year from seven last year in the trouble torn State, more than half of them terrorists. Interacting with accompanying media persons during his visit to several remote villages near the hill capital of Utranchal this morning, the Governor spelled the strategy as continuing military operations against terrorists, undertaking extensive economic development and winning over the hearts and minds of the people, who have suffered immensely during decade and a half long militancy.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2005

### **Mufti invites UK tour operators to Kashmir**

LONDON, Feb 11: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has invited tour operators and media persons from the travel trade in England to take a familiarisation visit to Kashmir saying that the Valley is ready to receive international tourists in the wake of improved situation in Jammu and Kashmir. Mufti Sayeed, who was here on a three-day visit in connection with his effort to sell Kashmir internationally before leaving for Dubai where he would attend the Kashmir Food Festival organised by the State Tourism Department and JK Tourism Development Corporation, was talking to tour operators and travel trade journalists here. The Deputy High Commissioner of India in UK, Satyabrata Pal and Ms. Mehbooba Mufti, MP were also present.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2005

#### **4 top ultras killed in Mahore, 2 in Rajouri**

JAMMU, Feb 11: In a major success, the Border Security Force (BSF) today gunned down four militants of Harkat-ul-Jehad Islami (HUJI) outfit in an encounter in extreme hostile weather conditions at village Tiranga in Mahore tehsil of Reasi police district. Eight militants were still trapped inside a deep natural cave. The BSF jawans have surrounded the cave, official sources said. Two more militants were eliminated by the Romeo Force at Dudasan Pain in Rajouri district.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2005

#### **Contempt notice to J&K on migrants**

NEW DELHI, Feb 11: Delhi High Court today issued contempt notices to the Centre and the Jammu and Kashmir Government for not implementing an earlier order to pay ex gratia payment to the victims of terrorism in the State irrespective of their religious adherence. Justice Gita Mittal, while hearing a contempt petition asked the Centre, the State Government and Jammu & Kashmir Resident Commissioner at Delhi to explain as to why the earlier order of the court was not implemented despite three months had lapsed.

The Hindu, 13 February 2005

#### **Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service pact likely during Natwar's visit**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 12. India and Pakistan are expected to agree next week on a procedure to operate the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, which has been stalled because the two countries had been unable to agree on the type of travel documents. The agreement to kickstart the bus service across the Line of Control (LoC) will, in all likelihood, be signed when the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, visits Pakistan from February 15 to 17. It will be the first "purely bilateral" visit by an Indian External Affairs Minister since 1989.

Daily Excelsior, 13 February 2005

#### **3 ultras killed in Surankote**

POONCH/DODA, Feb 12: In a swift operation, the security forces gunned down three militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit in Surankot area of district Poonch this afternoon. A police spokesman said that acting on a specific information, troops of 45 Rashtriya Rifles and Special Operation Group Poonch, launched an operation in Shaheed Mohalla area of Hari Marhote in Surankot at around 3 pm today. It was learnt that a group of four to five militants was hiding in a house after heavy snow-fall and rains in the area.

The News, 13 February 2005

#### **Kashmir peace conference in New York from 24th**

NEW YORK: The International Educational Development (accredited with the UN ECOSOC) and the Kashmiri American Council (KAC) will hold an International Kashmir Peace Conference here. The conference, entitled "Peace Initiative in South Asia: Exploring Possible Options for Kashmir" would be held at the United Nations Headquarters, here from February 24-25. This year's conference has come at a crucial point in South Asian history. The international community has become increasingly concerned at the failure to resolve the Kashmir question, an issue which if not resolved, could have disastrous consequences on the lives of millions of people across South Asia.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2005

#### **EU may take up HR violations in PoK at UN Commission**

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: The European Union (EU) has assured a Kashmiri group that it will take into account human rights violations in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and northern areas comprising Gilgit and Baltistan while finalising its agenda for next month's session of the UN commission on human rights. This was stated by Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Human Rights of European Union, MME Helene Flautre, to a delegation of International Kashmir Alliance (IKA), an amalgam of overseas Kashmiri separatist organisations headed by Syed Nazir Gilani, which visited Brussels recently.

The Indian Express, 14 February 2005

#### **Fear of death has J-K councillors refuse their jobs**

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 13: The government rejoiced a good voter turnout during the civic polls in the Valley, but the celebrations seem to be ephemeral. The grassroots democracy in Kashmir has got its first setback, with some newly elected councillors resigning, while some others - away from their neighbourhoods - have taken shelter in city's secure hotels.

The Times of India, 14 February 2005

#### **Hurriyat leaders get one-on-one talks offer**

SRINAGAR: In a fresh attempt to resume the talks process with various Kashmiri separatist groups, the UPA government has sent an open invitation to front-ranking Hurriyat and mainstream political leaders from the state for a one-on-one meeting, it is learnt. Highly placed sources told TOI that a home ministry official sent the invitation to the leaders for a meeting with Union home minister Shivraj Patil in New Delhi. The leaders, who have been invited include Mirwaiz Maulvi Umar Farooq, senior Hurriyat leader Abdul Gani Bhat, chairman Democratic Freedom Party Shabir Ahmed Shah, Sajad Gani Lone of People's Conference, and some other top separatist leaders.

The Hindu, 14 February 2005

### **Plan for 33 p.c. women's quota in Assembly: PDP chief**

DUBAI, FEB. 13. Jammu and Kashmir may soon become one of the first States to have 33 per cent reservation for women in the Assembly, the ruling People's Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti, has said. "In the just-concluded municipal elections we have had 33 per cent reservation for women. As the experiment was a big success we are planning to have 33 per cent quota for women in the Assembly too," she said. Women from all walks of life successfully contested the recently held civic polls, which had given a shot in the arm for the democratic process. "That we saw as high as 70 per cent polling attests to the fact that peace has by and large returned to the State," she said.

The Tribune, 15 February 2005

### **BJP to protest if India accepts Pak proposal**

Jammu, February 14: The state unit of the BJP will launch an agitation if the Government of India agreed to the Pakistan's proposal of facilitating travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road on the basis of documents issued by the Deputy Commissioners or Collectors on either side of the LoC. The President of the state unit of the BJP, Dr Nirmal Singh, told The Tribune here today that by agreeing not to issue travel documents on the basis of passport and visa mandatory the UPA government was "not only selling the interests of the country but also its security to Pakistan." Describing the proposed plan of allowing people to cross the LoC from Uri on the basis of documents issued by the local authorities in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad as anti-national the BJP President said "it could open floodgates for militants."

The Hindu, 15 February 2005

### **Big hike in J&K Annual Plan**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 14. The Annual Plan for Jammu & Kashmir has been fixed at Rs 4,200 crores for 2005-06, marking a 40 per cent increase, which is the highest ever hike sanctioned for any State. The Rs 4,200-crore Plan outlay, according to an official statement here, includes a normal State plan of Rs 3,000 crores along with the first instalment of Rs 1,200 crores coming from the Prime Minister's 'Reconstruction Plan'. The current year's Annual Plan had been fixed at Rs 2,700 crores. In addition, the Planning Commission has also earmarked Rs 869 crores under the Reconstruction Plan from the Central Plan as is to be executed by the Centre while the Rs 1,200 crores is to be executed by the State Government.

The Tribune, 15 February 2005

### **1,300 migrant families want to return to valley**

Jammu, February 14: As many as 1,300 Kashmiri migrant families have registered themselves for returning to their homes in the valley. This was stated here today by Revenue Minister Hakeem Yaseen while presiding over a meeting of the apex committee for redress of grievances of the migrants. He said that conditions were becoming more conducive for the safe return of the migrants. He urged the Kashmiri Pandit organisations to motivate them to return to the valley where incentives would be provided to them.

The Tribune, 15 February 2005

### **J&K commission flouts HC orders on married women**

Jammu, February 14: Is the public service commission in Jammu and Kashmir over and above the state High Court whose orders regarding the status of married women it was disobeying with impunity? Although the High Court had some time ago scrapped the practice of the government debarring the women marrying outsiders from getting recruited in the state services, but the public service commission has ignored these orders recently while issuing an advance notification for the combined competitive services examination. This is being described as a deliberate attempt of the commission to defy the orders of the court just to please the political bosses.

The Times of India, 15 February 2005

### **Statistics show Kashmiris ready to join global trend**

JAMMU/SRINAGAR: In Jammu and Kashmir, where separatist politics and militancy define day-to-day life, people have used a civic election to show they are ready to defy terrorism to choose who shapes local policy. Statistics from the civic polls held in the state after 27 years reveal how not only in the predominantly Hindu area of Jammu but throughout the Valley, people have defied militant threats and boycott calls given by separatists. Kupwara witnessed the highest voter turnout, with 87% sending a message of ballot over the bullet. It left Jammu behind by three per cent, a trend that could be seen only before militancy erupted in the valley in 1989.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2005

### **Teenager helps Army in killing 3 ultras**

JAMMU, Feb 14: A teenager helped the troops of Romeo Force in killing three foreign mercenaries of Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment (HMPPR) on Saturday in Surankote tehsil in Poonch district. His name has been recommended for President's medal for bravery by the Army authorities. Official sources today said the 13 year old Nazir Ahmed son of late Ghulam Nazir was sleeping in a room when three militants entered in their house at Qureshi Mohalla in Surankote in wee hours of Saturday. The militants entered in the adjacent room and started teasing Nazir's 40 year old mother Zainat Noor. Nazir's younger brother was also sleeping with his mother.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2005

### **Centre to talk to JK groups from today**

NEW DELHI, Feb 14: Centre is likely to begin political dialogue with different groups in Jammu and Kashmir from tomorrow,

with an organisation from Leh being the first to hold talks with Home Minister Shivraj Patil, official sources said tonight. The series of meetings, starting tomorrow, are part of an effort by the UPA Government to elicit the opinion of different sections of people in the troubled State, the sources said. Representatives of the Hurriyat Conference could also join the dialogue process if they wanted to, they said.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2005

**Two AKs, IEDs seized in Kanachak**

JAMMU, Feb 14: Security forces today recovered a consignment of arms and ammunition from the premises of Government Middle School, Sogni under the jurisdiction of Kanachak police station while a militant and a jawan were killed in Mendhar and two suspects were arrested by security forces in Udhampur district. Reports said some labourers noticed the consignment during digging of a trench in the school premises. They informed the security forces, who seized the weaponry.

The News, 16 February 2005

**NGOs sign MoU to boost AJK poor households**

MIRPUR: The Muslim Aid, an international donor agency based in the United Kingdom, and the Sukhi Development Foundation, an indigenous non-profit, have resolved to share resources for building capacity and facilitating viable enterprises for the poorest household, preferably through women in rural areas of the AJK. An MoU in this respect was signed between the two NGOs. This was stated by Tariq Javid Executive Director of Sukhi Development Foundation. He said this income-generation programme amounting to more than Rs 2.7 million seeks to build on the collaborative Enterprise Support Facility of these development partners already in operation in mountain villages of the AJK which supports training and loaning on micro-enterprise building and facilitates market linkages.

Daily Excelsior, 16 February 2005

**Romeo Force kills 27 militants in 2 months**

RAJOURI, Feb 15: Of two militants killed at Dudasan Pain on February 11, one of them was today identified as Umar Mukhtiar alias Baroodi, a most dreaded militant operating in the district for last several years. His killing was a big setback to Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment (HMPPR), official sources said. Meanwhile, a total of 27 militants including 10 top commander of different outfits have been eliminated by the troops in Pir Panjal range and surrounding areas in Rajouri and Poonch districts by the Romeo Force during last about two months.

Daily Excelsior, 16 February 2005

**Talks must be Kashmir-centric, says Hurriyat**

SRINAGAR, Feb 15 : Ahead of External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh's talks with Pakistani leaders in Islamabad, the hardline faction of Hurriyat Conference today said the dialogue process between the two neighbours should be Kashmir-centric aimed at resolving the long-pending issue. "Kashmir problem is the basic cause for hostilities between India and Pakistan. Therefore, talks between the two countries should be Kashmir-centric," a spokesman of the Hurriyat led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani said. No headway was possible in the dialogue process till serious efforts were made to resolve the problem after accepting Kashmir as a core issue, he said.

The Tribune, 16 February 2005

**4 injured in grenade attack in J&K**

Srinagar, February 15: Four persons, including a Border Security Force personnel, were injured in a grenade attack by militants in Baramula district of Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said today.

Unidentified militants lobbed a grenade towards a BSF post in Umer market in Sopore, 55 km from here, in Baramula district, last night, the sources said. The grenade exploded near the picket wounding a security personnel and three pedestrians, they said, adding the injured have been hospitalised.

The Tribune, 16 February 2005

**Army jawan, Hizbul militant killed in encounter**

Jammu, February 15: A foreign militant of Hizbul Mujahideen and an Army jawan were killed in an encounter at Gursai in Poonch today, while a top militant killed in a gunbattle in Rajouri district last week was learnt to be "Divisional Commander" of Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment (HMPPR). Official sources said militants fired at an Army patrol at Gursai late at night. In retaliatory fire, the troops shot dead a militant.

The Hindu, 16 February 2005

**All Kashmir women to get Permanent Resident status (Luv Puri)**

JAMMU, FEB. 15. After a decades-long battle at various fronts, women in Jammu and Kashmir have finally got justice; the State Government has to comply with the State High Court order that restored the right of Permanent Resident of the State to women married to persons from outside the State. Besides Indian citizenship, a Permanent Resident Status (PRS) or State subject status is given to people whose ancestors lived in the State for at least 10 years before May 14, 1954. Only those with a PRS can buy property, get employment and are entitled to other privileges.

The Hindu, 16 February 2005

**Kashmir: Centre ready for talks**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 15. The Centre today reiterated its offer of talks to all political groups - including the separatist All Parties

Hurriyat Conference - to find a solution to the Kashmir problem. "We are ready to talk to anybody. We are not excluding anybody. All are included in the dialogue process," the Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, told reporters after a meeting with the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, and the senior State Congress leader, Abdul Gani Vakil, separately.

The Hindu, 17 February 2005

#### **India, Pakistan seal deal on Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus link**

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 16. In a major breakthrough, India and Pakistan today agreed to allow travel across the Line of Control (LoC) by bus between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. The service, under consideration since October 2003, is expected to start from April 7. "Travel will be by an entry permit system, once identities are verified. Application forms for travel will be available with [the] designated authorities in Srinagar and Muzaffarabad," said a joint statement issued after the talks between the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, and the Pakistani leadership.

The Hindu, 17 February 2005

#### **Kashmir parties, public greet decision on bus service**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 16. The decision to start the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service from April 7 has been greeted with euphoria in Jammu and Kashmir. Baramulla town glittered with lights and crackers were burst in the city. Barring feeble voices of dissent by the hard-line separatist leader, Syed Ali Geelani, and the Dukhtaran-e-Millat chief, Asiya Andrabi, the decision has been welcomed by all. Both the mainstream and separatist parties described it as an important development and urged India and Pakistan to continue with the peace initiatives. The general public has termed it a major breakthrough and hopes it will be translated into reality on April 7.

The Indian Express, 17 February 2005

#### **Passportless Indo-Pak bus service risky: BJP**

New Delhi, Feb 16: Although the BJP was not against the proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarnagar bus service, the party would certainly oppose any move by the UPA government to allow "travel without passport", said BJP spokesman Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi. Addressing mediapersons on Wednesday, he said that the BJP was for improved Indo-Pak ties and would welcome any move that would bolster people-people contact. However, a permit for travel across the border without a passport would prove detrimental to the nation's security, he added.

The Tribune, 18 February 2005

#### **Jammu waits for Sialkot road to open**

Jammu, February 17: Though the decision to reopen the road between Srinagar and the Pakistan-occupied-Muzaffarabad has been widely welcomed, yet the decision has led to heartburning in the Jammu region where the demand for opening of the Jammu-Sialkot road is yet to be met. However, eyebrows are being raised by a section of people over the reopening of the road links with Pakistan, as they fear that the exercise would open floodgates for the return of those who had opted to migrate to Pakistan and the occupied areas of Kashmir during partition of the country in 1947. The political parties have started interpreting the development in their own ways. Interestingly, both ruling coalition partners are trying to take credit for the reopening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road link.

The Tribune, 18 February 2005

#### **Now potholed road to Muzaffarabad**

Srinagar, February 17: The diplomatic roadblocks have been removed, but the path between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is far from smooth with potholes, un-metalled roads and unfinished bridges too. With the 171-km bus service between the two halves of Kashmir finally a reality, the authorities are rushing to start preparations for D-day on April 7. However, many officials argue that the time is "too short to meet the deadline". "The last bridge on the road that leads to the other side of the border is still to be laid. We have laid the Red bridge (Lal Pul) which lies ahead of Uri, but the last bridge on the road from our side is still to be laid," said a senior Army official at Uri.

The Tribune, 18 February 2005

#### **3 militants among five killed**

Srinagar, February 17: Three militants, including a self-styled "Battalion Commander" of the Al-Bader militant outfit were among five persons killed in the Kashmir valley since last night, an official spokesman said today. Militants kidnapped and later hanged to death Azad Ahmad Sheikh at Dreeri Nullah village in Pulwama district today. A Defence Ministry spokesman said the security forces killed two militants of Al-Bader, including a "Battalion Commander" at Dalroo Handwara village in Kupwara district late last night.

The Tribune, 18 February 2005

#### **3 councillors resign in J & K**

Srinagar, February 17: Apparently due to threats held out by militant organisations to kill those who took part in the civic elections in Jammu and Kashmir, three newly elected municipal councillors resigned today, taking the number of councillors who resigned to six.

Nissar Ahmad Dahal and Shabir Ahmad Khanday, who were elected to the Shopian Municipal Committee in Pulwama district on the Congress ticket, announced their resignation, official reports received here said. Aisha, wife of Abdul Khaliq Ganai, who

was elected unopposed to the Beerwah Municipal Committee, also announced her resignation through a newspaper advertisement today.

The Tribune, 18 February 2005

**PoK people denied basic Rights: Pak Rights panel**

New Delhi, February 17: From being continuously "watched and monitored" by Pakistan's ISI to denial of basic fundamental rights including access to judiciary and fair trial, people in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) have suffered gross violations of their rights, according to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has a strong presence in the region (PoK) according to information gathered by the HRPC and people here continuously feel they are being watched and monitored," said a report released by an 11-member delegation of the commission which had been on a fact finding mission in PoK.

The Indian Express, 18 February 2005

**J-K, Army get working on bus route to LoC**

NEW DELHI/URI ROAD, FEB 17: A day after India and Pakistan showed the green light to the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Jammu and Kashmir's government swung into action by returning to the plan table while the Army's 19 Dagger Division, based in Baramulla, began the difficult task of demining the 3-km stretch on the Indian side of the Line of Control in the Uri sector. With the two governments hoping to run the first cross-LoC service by April 7, the Army is racing against time. The problem is that some of these mines have shifted over the years- identifying and demining them is tricky business.

The News, 18 February 2005

**Militants threaten to disrupt Kashmir bus service**

ISLAMABAD: Passenger security will be a key issue as Pakistan and India finalised arrangements for a historic bus service between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar, officials said on Thursday. Opening of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar link has been hailed as the boldest peace move for nearly 60 years. "The starting of Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service is a 'humanitarian CBM', which would help fulfil long-standing wishes of the Kashmiri people," Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan said. The bus service would provide opportunity of interaction between the divided Kashmiri families living on both sides of the Line of Control, he told a TV channel, adding that it was a significant progress but both countries showed flexibility, which made the agreement possible.

The News, 18 February 2005

**A real breakthrough (Shafqat Mahmood)**

But this agreement is more than that, a great deal more. The most significant part of it is the fact that not just the Kashmiris but the ordinary Indians and Pakistanis have also been allowed to travel in Kashmir valley without a visa or a passport. This is not a small matter. It effectively gives the valley a special status and makes it a sort of shared entity between the peoples of India and Pakistan. We will not be able to travel thirty miles to Amritsar without a regular passport and a visa but we can travel to Srinagar. Imagine that and then think about the impact this will have.

The Tribune, 19 February 2005

**Rift within Hurriyat over road to Muzffarabad**

Jammu, February 18: Dissensions have surfaced within the Hurriyat Conference headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani over the agreement reached between India and Pakistan about the reopening of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road link. While Mr Geelani has opposed the agreement on the plea that the opening of the road will delay the settlement of the Kashmir issue, leaders of various constituents of the Hurriyat Conference have welcomed the agreement. Those who have supported the road opening programme, include Mr Azam Inquilabi, chief of the Liberation Front, head of the National Front, Mr Nayeem Khan, and Jamait-e-Islami.

The Tribune, 19 February 2005

**Militants target Councillors**

Srinagar, February 18: Much before the formal constitution of civic bodies that went to polls during the past two weeks in Kashmir, the government is faced with the problem of security of the elected councillors and corporators, who have now become militants' targets. Even as the ruling PDP had made it clear that these elections were not part of a "democratic process" they opposed, security became a problem by the time the process was completed. As a result of attacks and threats to elected councillors and corporators, more than a dozen other elected members have either sought security or shifted from their places recently. Some of the local vernacular dailies here have carried paid advertisements from such candidates apologising publicly over their decision to take part in the civic polls. Some of these have published their withdrawal and resignation from the membership and the parties they belong to. This, according to observers, was going on the lines of early militancy years when political workers sought public apologies and announced their resignation from the mainstream political parties.

The Tribune, 19 February 2005

**Jamaat-e-Islami hails bus pact**

Srinagar, February 18: Hailing the Muzaffarabad bus agreement, the Jamaat-e-Islami has sought a "judicious and everlasting solution to the Kashmir issue in accordance with the aspirations of people of both the regions of Jammu and Kashmir". A

spokesman of the Jamaat here yesterday demanded Kashmir's "real representatives" to be included in any dialogue between India and Pakistan to resolve Kashmir. "People of both the regions should be provided with a free atmosphere to negotiate and find out an acceptable solution to this human problem", the spokesman stated. "Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road can also prove to be important in this direction," he said. The spokesman held that the resolution of the Kashmir issue would lead to peace in South Asia.

The Tribune, 19 February 2005

**Ansari put under house arrest**

Srinagar, February 18: Former Hurriyat Chairman and prominent Shia leader Moulana Mohammad Abbass Ansari was put under house arrest and 65 mourners detained as the police fired teargas shells and used batons to foil repeated attempts by Shia community members to take out a procession to mark the eighth day of Muharram here today, official sources said. Over a dozen persons were also injured in the clashes between the police and slogan-shouting mourners at Lal Chowk, Regal Chowk, Badshah Chowk, Maisuma, Dalgate, Jehangir Chowk, Exchange road and Chattabal in the city, the sources said.

The Tribune, 19 February 2005

**Militant among two killed in valley**

Srinagar, February 18: A powerful improvised explosive device (IED) exploded near an under-construction rail track in North Kashmir today, while a militant and a girl were killed in the valley overnight. Official sources said militants triggered a powerful IED near an under-construction rail track at Mazhama on the Srinagar-Gulmarg road. However, no one was injured in the blast, officials said. Sources said the security forces killed a militant at Shopian in Pulwama district today.

The Indian Express, 19 February 2005

**Manmohan's J-K plan rolls**

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has backed the announcements he made during his maiden visit to Jammu and Kashmir with specific details of a Rs 24,000 crore reconstruction plan-and cash to boot. The funds have been slotted into 25 packages which were worked out after a series of meetings between the PMO, the Planning Commission and the state government. The final details of the Jammu and Kashmir reconstruction plan (see chart) have already been conveyed to the state government with the focus clearly on the power sector. The Centre's total share has been pegged at Rs 14,885 crore while the state will chip in Rs 2,718 crore. Some Rs 5,370 crore will come in the form of Externally Assisted Projects (EAP).

The Indian Express, 19 February 2005

**'Hurriyat man had fake notes'**

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 18: The Delhi Police's special cell yesterday arrested the chairman of Jammu and Kashmir People League and Hurriyat executive member Sheikh Abdul Aziz, with one lakh fake Indian currency notes and 94,000 dirham, which he had allegedly received from the Pakistani High Commission. Police claimed the money was to be used by Aziz for anti-national activities in the Valley. Aziz has been booked on charges of possessing fake currency; police are still investigating the source of the money and where it was to be spent. He had landed in the Capital on Wednesday and was put up at a south Delhi hotel.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2005

**Girl killed in Kulgam, militant in Shopian**

SRINAGAR, Feb 18: While suspected militants have shot dead an 18-year-old girl in Kulgam area of south Kashmir, security forces have killed an unidentified militant in Shopian since last evening. Informed sources said that unidentified gunmen, suspected to be militants, barged into the residence of one Mohammad Tuyyab Malla at Peth Khandaypora, Batpora, in Kulgam area late last night and dragged out his 18-year-old daughter, Shafeeqa. They shot her dead out on the premises. After passing her matriculation examination, Shafeeqa had engaged herself with the cottage trade of embroidery. It was not immediately clear as to why she was gunned down and who could be the assailants.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2005

**Army chief allays fears of security threat in bus service**

BHOPAL, Feb 18: Allaying fears of security threat in the proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Chief of Army Staff Gen J J Singh today said he was sure that all safeguards would be put in place. "I am sure that people who have planned and created the initiative have looked into this aspect and I am sure they will make sure that security aspect is certainly safeguarded," Gen Singh said replying to reporters' queries after an Army function here.

The News, 19 February 2005

**The bus to Srinagar** (Mir Jamilur Rahman)

This "breakthrough" or "turning point," or "mother of all CBMs," as Indian foreign secretary Shyam Sarna termed it, was made possible by the collective wisdom of Indian and Pakistani leaders supported by the able staff of their respective foreign offices. It is this spirit of conciliation and sincerity in accommodating other's point of view that will free the subcontinent from many historical hang-ups and pave the way for economic and political stability in South Asia. It has to be admitted that conciliation efforts with India would not have borne fruit if President Gen. Pervez Musharraf had not been at the helm of affairs. It is because his able guidance and statesmanship and his commitment to the eradication of poverty that Pakistan can look forward to a better future for its people.

The Hindu, 20 February 2005

**Islamabad asks PoK to speed up road repairs**

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 19: Close on the heels of pact between Islamabad and New Delhi to run the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service, Pakistan has asked the Pak-occupied-Kashmir (PoK) Government to speed up repair work on a road which connects them. "We have been asked by Islamabad to make the road ready for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service which begins on April 7," the PoK Minister for Communications, Works and Housing, Chaudhry Tariq Farooq, told Dawn in Muzaffarabad.

The Hindu, 20 February 2005

**Parties differ on free movement across LoC**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 19. An interaction between Kashmiri migrants and political leaders turned into a virtual debate on the proposed bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad with the latter sticking to the stand taken by their parties. While the National Conference was conspicuous by its absence at the interaction, Congress was represented by a Minister from the State. The Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson, V.K. Malhotra, said allowing the movement of people from across the Line of Control without passport would increase infiltration. The Jammu and Kashmir Minister and Congress leader, Taj Mohiuddin, was of the opinion that free movement would make people on both sides realise the realities and hence help in ending infiltration. "Infiltration is there but crossing over difficult terrain is a deterrent," Mr. Malhotra said, adding that the BJP was in favour of improving relations with Pakistan but did not favour movement without a valid passport as it would provide free access to "all kinds of people."

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2005

**Mufti calls for regular Civil-Army inter-action**

JAMMU, Feb 19: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has commended the army for its role in taking forward the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir adding that coordination between civil administration and the army in the State is excellent. Speaking at the Civil Military Liaison Conference-2005 here this morning, he stressed for vigil against the elements "who would try to derail the peace process." "Elements who do not want peace to prevail in the State will not sit quiet", Mr Sayeed said. He called for regular interaction between civil administration, army and security forces.

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2005

**KPs condemn forcible eviction of migrants from Janipur quarters**

JAMMU, Feb 19: Ten Kashmiri migrant families were allegedly evicted from the Government quarters at Janipur by the Estates Department today after throwing their goods and household belongings outside. The action has evoked a criticism from KP organisations with All State Kashmir Pandit Conference (ASKPC) and Jammu Kashmir Vichar Manch (JKVM) warning agitation against the Estates Department authorities in case they failed to restore the quarters to its occupants. According to Abdul Ahad Mir a retired CID Employee who is also one of the victims of Estates Department action, "we have been forced to come on footpath by the officials."

The Tribune, 21 February 2005

**J & K Government approaches IAF for emergency supplies**

Chandigarh, February 20: With heavy snow cutting off land routes to the Kashmir valley, the Jammu and Kashmir Government has approached the Indian Air Force to airlift emergency supplies to Srinagar. "We will be airlifting about 15 tonnes of supplies from Jammu tomorrow," Air Officer Commanding 12 Wing, Air Cmde T K Venugopal, told The Tribune here today. "Two An-32 aircraft are being dedicated for the purpose," he added.

Daily Excelsior, 21 February 2005

**Army ready for additional responsibilities**

NEW DELHI, Feb 20: With less than seven weeks left to start bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, the authorities on both sides are working overtime to put in place the mechanism for movement of people across the Line of Control (LoC). Meanwhile, the troops stationed in Kashmir are determined to meet the deadline of starting the service even if it means additional responsibilities for them. The first task for authorities in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and on the Indian side is to repair the road along the 170-km stretch and demine the area. "Security and the safety of the passengers are of paramount importance," official sources said here.

The Tribune, 21 February 2005

**Hizb area commander, two others held**

Jammu, February 20: A self-styled area commander of pro-Pakistan Hizb-ul-Mujahideen was among three persons arrested in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir last night, official sources said here today. On specific information, troops raided a hideout in Bheli area of Doda district and arrested a top Hizb militant Atta Kumar along with two of his Over Ground Workers (OWG) last night, they said. One radio set, one AK rifle, 10 grenades and one 60 mm mortar with bipod and two other mortar bombs were recovered from them, they said.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005

**Over 100 killed in Kashmir avalanches** (Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR, FEB. 21. More than 100 people, including 26 children and 18 women, are feared killed in the avalanches that swept a number of villages in the south Kashmir district of Anantnag on Sunday night. According to officials, the toll could go up as many areas are still inaccessible. So far, 85 bodies have been recovered in Kund and Dooru areas of the district. Agency reports said that about 230 people were missing. Rescue teams have been rushed on ponies.

The Hindu, 22 February 2005

**Armed forces to the rescue as avalanches hit Kashmir**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 21. Armed forces have been deployed to assist victims of an unprecedented series of avalanches in north India. An estimated 1,000 jawans are digging into avalanches at a dozen places in Jammu and Kashmir to retrieve bodies and provide assistance to those injured, while the Indian Air Force (IAF) has formed an "air bridge" in areas where surface links have been severed due to the fortnight-long uninterrupted snowfall. Army columns are being rushed to places from where avalanches are being reported, burying hamlets and police and paramilitary posts. It is also rushing rations to stranded civilians, its own jawans and personnel of the Indo-Tibetan Police Force, Jammu & Kashmir Police and Border Roads Organisation (BRO).

The Hindu, 22 February 2005

**Central grant for Kashmir power projects**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 21. The Centre has sanctioned Rs. 14,885 crores as grant for construction of three power projects in Jammu and Kashmir and for reviving the Kishanganga power project that was closed due to lack of funds. The grant is part of the Prime Minister's Rs 24,000-crore Reconstruction Plan announced for the State in November last, official sources told The Hindu. The projects will be executed by the National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC).

The Tribune, 22 February 2005

**Police clearance must for travel permit to Muzaffarabad**

Jammu, February 21: Though travelling on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, which is likely to be thrown open for bus services from April 7, will be allowed on the basis of local permits to be issued by the authorities designated by the government, the passport office, the police and the local intelligence agencies will continue to have their role in clearing applicants for permits. According to official sources, for enabling the local authorities designated by the government to issue permits to people wishing to visit occupied Kashmir via the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad route the passport offices in Jammu and Srinagar will issue the requisite application forms.

The Tribune, 22 February 2005

**2 Hizb militants killed**

Jammu, February 21: Two Hizb-ul-Mujahideen militants, including a battalion commander, were killed by the police after a night-long gunbattle in Kathua district today, while a suspected police informer was gunned down in Poonch last night, the police said. Four police officials, including Senior Superintendent of Police Raghubir Singh, were also wounded in the encounter, Deputy Inspector General of police Farooq Ahmad said. He said the encounter took place last night after a police party laid siege to a house in Talmarh in Kathua where the two militants were hiding.

The Hindu, 23 February 2005

**Bus service: Government allays BJP's fears**

NEW DELHI, FEB. 22. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, was today apprised of the apprehensions of the Bharatiya Janata Party on the Government's decision to allow Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service without passports. The apprehensions were conveyed to the Prime Minister at a meeting he had with top BJP leaders to discuss the Budget and the Government's initiatives on improving ties with Islamabad following the recent visit of the External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh, to Pakistan. Dr. Singh is scheduled to meet leaders of the ruling coalition, including the Left parties, on Thursday.

The Hindu, 23 February 2005

**J&K Governor for softening of borders**

JAMMU, FEB. 22. The Jammu and Kashmir Governor, S.K. Sinha, today called for softening of borders to restore ties with Pakistan. More and more routes along the Line of Control and the International Border should be opened to bring the people on both sides closer to each other. Addressing the joint session of the Legislature, Mr. Sinha said the landmark decision to open the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road from April 7 was like a dream come true for many generations.

The Tribune, 23 February 2005

**IAF planes provide relief material in valley**

Jammu, February 22: The sound of the IAF aircraft, engaged in rescue and relief operations, echoed here throughout last night, as more than 45 sorties were made to carry foodstuff and other essential commodities to the Kashmir valley that has been cut off from the rest of the country for the past six days. The operation was continuing and the total number of sorties was expected to reach around 80 by this evening, Station Commander of the Jammu Air Force Station, Group Captain Radha Krishnan Shankar, told TNS today. He said 40 tonnes of essential commodities, including fresh vegetables and milk, were carried to the valley yesterday.

The Tribune, 23 February 2005

**Bullet scars too deep for them to reap bus link benefits**

Suchetgarh Border Post (R.S. Pura-Jammu), February 22: They are the best placed to reap the benefits of the India-Pakistan bonhomie and the bus and train links but the bullet scars on them are so deep that they would prefer to miss a bus or train passing through this village on the R.S. Pura international border. The proposed Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus does not enthuse the residents of this village to demand a similar rail link between this village and Sialkot. This is despite the fact that the elders of this village used to board the Jammu-Sialkot train as the fare was just 25 paise before Partition. Experts say this is, perhaps, the only place in Jammu and Kashmir which could benefit the most from a rail link between Jammu and Sialkot, which is just 11 km from the village.

The Times of India, 23 February 2005

**Jammu relief work inspires ultras to surrender**

SRINAGAR: Touched by the selfless service rendered by the army personnel in avalanche hit areas of Jammu and Kashmir, five ultras surrendered to the troops in Kapran area of Anantnag district, Chief of Army Staff General J J Singh said here on Wednesday. The militants, who were trapped in the snow bound area, laid down their arms as they came across a group of army personnel who were busy providing relief to the survivors and looking for bodies of those killed in Kapran area yesterday, Singh said. "This has not happened for the first time ... army has provided life saving treatment to many a militant injured during action which led them to shun the path of violence," the Army Chief said.

The Indian Express, 23 February 2005

**Wait longer, Valley counts down stock**

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 22: Relief for Kashmir, swept under a tide of snow, can be as distant as 15 days while the Valley lives off depleting stocks of food, fuel and other essentials. Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed and his secretariat did an aerial survey of the national highway and found vast stretches of the road from Ramban to Banihal missing. The Army is not very hopeful of Kashmir's main lifeline as restoration depends entirely on weather. "Every hill is loaded with avalanches," said Maj Gen R.S. Mehta, officiating GOC, 15 Corps. The Border Roads Organisation said it would take at least a fortnight to re-connect Kashmir.

Dawn, 23 February 2005

**Significance of the bus accord** (Zubeida Mustafa)

The most important implications of the bus accord are for the Kashmir dispute itself. It would facilitate traffic across the LoC in Kashmir and enable people-to-people contact among the Kashmiris. Until now this has not been possible. Apart from the humanitarian aspect - divided families can visit each other - it has political importance. The leaderships of the two parts of Kashmir will be able to interact freely which they have not been able to do until now. Since the Kashmiris are a party to the India-Pakistan dispute on Kashmir they must evolve a common stance on the future of the state. Unfortunately, they do not have that at the moment.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**There are only graves here** (Shujaat Bukhari)

WALTENGU (SOUTH KASHMIR), FEB. 23. Until now, the few survivors in this remote belt of South Kashmir were busy counting the bodies of those killed in last weekend's avalanches. Today, huge snow cutters managed to clear the long road from Qazigund and the emerging picture is stunning. Waltengu Naar, as it is called, is a vast area dominated by the Gujjars. These hardy mountain folk were caught unawares by the heavy snowfall. "We have lost everything. We do not know who has survived and who is under the snow," cried Muhammad Hussain, a resident. He has been fighting a grim battle for the last three days using a spade and shovel. Hundreds of locals walked for many hours from nearby villages to help in the rescue work. They say they have buried 151 people so far; the fate of at least 50 people is still not known.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**We are with you, Sonia tells Kashmiris** (Luv Puri)

JAMMU, FEB. 23. The United Progressive Alliance chairperson and Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, said today that the entire country supported the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their hour of need and that the Centre would provide succour to those affected by the recent avalanches. Ms. Gandhi was talking to reporters along with the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, at the end of their survey of the affected areas. "This is a difficult time for the people in the State's remote and hilly areas. At the same time I want to assure everyone that the entire country is behind the people of Jammu and Kashmir in these tough times. I have myself taken stock of the situation. There has been devastation and [a] lot is to be done. Not only have many lives been lost but also a lot of infrastructure has been damaged. Steps are being taken to restore normality which would take some time," Ms. Gandhi said.

The Hindu, 24 February 2005

**Many villages feared buried under snow**

JAMMU, FEB. 23. After six days of massive snowfall many villages of Jammu and Kashmir are suspected to be still buried under snow. With communication links completely snapped one can barely trek to some of them. In the higher reaches of Doda district over a dozen villages have lost contact with the rest of the world. Doda town lies in a semi-temperate zone. It has never seen more than two feet of snow for the last 40 years. This time it has recorded six feet of snow. In some remote

villages there has been a record snowfall of 14 feet.

The Tribune, 24 February 2005

#### **Death toll rises to 252 in avalanche-hit J&K**

Jammu, February 23: With rescue operations entering the third day, the death toll has gone up to 252 and 50 reported still missing while 446 were rescued from the avalanche-hit Jammu and Kashmir, where the Jammu-Srinagar highway is blocked for 6th day today. Of the total dead, 196 people perished in Kashmir and 56 in Jammu division and of the 446 rescued, 373 were saved in Kashmir and 73 in Jammu till today, police officials said. "As many as 164 persons were killed and their bodies have been recovered and 370 rescued from massive avalanches-hit Nagni, Panznar and Waltingo villages, 10 km north-west of Qazigund in Anantnag district," the officials said.

The Tribune, 24 February 2005

#### **Army ready to take 'risk' by dipping into strategic oil reserves**

Srinagar, February 23: While the Army has already released a large quantity of petroleum products to provide succour to people in the Kashmir valley, who are cut-off from the world due to land routes being blocked by unprecedented snowfall, it will take a "risk" by dipping further into its strategic oil reserves. "We will be releasing more petroleum products to help the local population," Chief of the Army Staff, General J.J. Singh, said here today. "We would be taking a certain amount of security risk by doing so," he added. He was briefing the Defence Minister, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, and Congress President, Ms Sonia Gandhi, in the presence of the media and other officials about the Army's ongoing relief efforts in the state.

Greater Kashmir, 24 February 2005

#### **Avalanche-hit militants won't be harmed: Army chief**

Srinagar, Feb 23: The chief of army staff General Joginder Jaswant Singh Wednesday said the troops won't harm any injured militant voluntarily dropping ammunition before the personnel in the snow avalanche hit areas of South Kashmir's Islamabad district. "No harm will be done to the militants voluntarily surrendering before the troops in these affected areas. The surrendered injured militants will be also given medical treatment," the army chief said while briefing the defence minister Pranab Mukherjee and Congress president Sonia Gandhi today.

Greater Kashmir, 25 February 2005

#### **No truth in unity move reports: Hizb**

Muzaffarabad, Feb 23: Kashmir's largest fighter group Hizbul Mujahideen on Wednesday denied that it was accepting the fighters which it had expelled for "sowing friction and breaching discipline" into its fold. "There is no reality in reports appearing in a section of press that those who have been expelled by the Hizbul Mujahideen Command Council are being taken back into the fold," said Hizb spokesman Salim Hashmi. In a statement issued here, he asserted that "a good number of innocent renegades had already re-joined the group on their own and Hizb believed that the remaining ones would also shortly return to their parent organisation."

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

#### **Six killed as militants strike at Government office in Srinagar**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 24. Six persons, including a woman and three securitymen, were killed and four injured in an attack by two militants on the Divisional Commissioner's office here. The militants were killed in the gunbattle later. Around 250 people, including the Srinagar Deputy Commissioner and the Deputy Inspector-General of Police (DIG), Kashmir Range, who were in the building at the time of the attack, were brought out safely. Around 2.30 p.m., when a meeting on avalanche relief operations was on, the two militants, wearing Army fatigues, came at the gate of the office. When the Central Reserve Police Force jawans asked them to prove their identity, the two hurled grenades and opened fire. Two jawans and one policeman died on the spot and Afroza, a civilian, died of his injuries in hospital. The CRPF Inspector-General, Ranjit Sinha, said: "As our boys asked them to show identity cards, they lobbed grenades and resorted to indiscriminate firing and managed to barge in." The two managed to take control of the nearby Nazool building and a gun-battle followed.

The Hindu, 25 February 2005

#### **Fresh snow, VIP visits hamper rescue operations**

WALTENGU, FEB. 24. Rescue operations in this devastated South Kashmir village were hampered as fresh snow lashed the area today. The Director General of Police, Gopal Sharma, ordered a company of Armed Police to join the operations. After the road to Waltengu was cleared, officials went to the spot to expedite rescue operations but were delayed by fresh snowfall. Top officials in Srinagar said the excavations were continuing despite the difficulties the harsh terrain posed.

The Tribune, 25 February 2005

#### **Lifestyle change led to shortage of goods**

Jammu, February 24: When the Jammu-Srinagar highway got blocked by snow, avalanches and landslides on February 6 the reserves of green vegetables, milk, mutton, chicken, cooking gas, kerosene oil and other essential commodities in the Kashmir valley stood exhausted within three days. The situation should not have been as grim as it has been during the past three weeks even when the highway used to remain closed for two to three months. The problem, according to experts and elders, was the result of drastic change in their lifestyle.

The Tribune, 25 February 2005

### **Cops waded through snow to give help**

Qazigund, February 24: What made the police first to reach the Kund area to rescue villagers hit by heavy snow, about 15 km away, was a telephone call from an unknown person to the police station here late on Saturday night. It was a call from a mobile phone from a remote corner in the foothills of the Kund area, covering over 13 villages, which has no police post, but an odd Army post of 49 RR at Kanchloo. "The damage was not caused because of avalanches, but snowstorm", said police officials. "It was caused by winds that lifted the snow mounds rolling down the slopes and burying people and houses," said a doctor, who visited the area as part of a team of medical officers.

The Tribune, 25 February 2005

### **Two jawans among 20 hurt in blast**

Srinagar, February 24: Twenty persons, including two Border Security Force personnel, were injured in a grenade blast at Sopore, about 55 km from here, in Baramula district today. Official sources said militants hurled a hand grenade towards the security forces in the Shah Faisal market at Sopore at around 1 p.m. The grenade exploded on the roadside causing injuries to 20 persons, including two BSF personnel. The injured have been admitted to different hospitals.

Daily Excelsior, 25 February 2005

### **HMPPR ultra killed in Rajouri**

JAMMU, Feb 24: A Pakistani militant of Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment (HMPPR) was killed by the Army in an encounter at village Rakiba in Darhal area of Rajouri district last night while the BSF today returned four Pakistanis, arrested in Arnia sector yesterday, to the Rangers after a flag meeting at Octroi Post. Official sources said the troops gunned down a militant after an hour long encounter at Rakiba in Darhal last night. He has been identified as Owais Karni alias Saifullah son of Abdul Gani, a resident of Jalalpur, Multan in Pakistan. He was an "area commander" of HMPPR.

The Indian Express, 25 February 2005

### **Kashmir's agony** (Editorial)

The snow storms have also highlighted one great infrastructural flaw in terms of road connectivity between J&K and the rest of the country. The 300-km Jammu-Srinagar National Highway is clearly inadequate to meet the needs of the state, especially in winter when avalanches are the rule. It is not for the first time that the Jawahar Tunnel has been snowed in. It is not for the first time that all traffic along the highway has ground to a halt. It is not for the first time that large sections of the highway have completely disintegrated. Yet the state is completely and totally dependent on this one road for crucial supplies, as indeed for relief and rescue teams. There has been talk about building an alternative, all-weather Mughal Road but so far it has been a no-show. J&K urgently requires alternative road links - not just to escape the worst effects of a natural calamity but to improve general well-being in the state.

The Indian Express, 26 February 2005

### **Lawyers' strike brings Jammu to standstill**

JAMMU: Life was thrown out of gear in Jammu on Friday due to the strike call given by the Jammu Bar Association in support of their demand for the construction of chambers. The strike was near-total with traffic remaining off the road. Shops were also closed with only work at the government offices remaining unaffected. Police and lawyers, however, clashed outside the Civil Secretariat and police used mild baton charge to disperse the more than 100 lawyers who were trying to enter the building. There are no reports of casualties. SP, City, Prabhat Singh said: "The lawyers violated Section 144 but our police deployment effectively contained the situation."

Daily Excelsior, 26 February 2005

### **4 ultras killed in Mahore**

JAMMU, Feb 25: Army and police today gunned down four militants including a Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) "area commander" in two separate encounters in Mahore and Gool areas while three civilians including two children were injured in a blast in Poonch. SSP Reasi Jagdish Lal Sharma said the troops of 58 Rashtriya Rifles and Mahore police laid a cordon in snow bound Jamlan Malla village in Mahore area of Reasi police district this morning. The operation was launched on a specific input about presence of the militants in the area. Sources said a contact with the militants was established at Jamlan Malla at 8.30 am. In the encounter that continued till 5 pm, two militants including LeT "area commander" Jamaal Din son of Abdul Aziz (code name Waleed), a resident of Malla were killed.

Daily Excelsior, 26 February 2005

### **Hurriyat leaders sold military secrets**

NEW DELHI, Feb 25: Delhi Police today claimed that the two arrested leaders of a Hurriyat faction sold secret military documents to Pakistan. Mohd. Ahsan Untoo and Gulam Nabi Najar were arrested earlier on the suspicion of passing on military secrets. According to police, Untoo, who was associated with the International Forum for Justice and Human Rights Forum in Jammu and Kashmir and Najar, the general secretary of the People's League Party, confessed to their involvement in espionage activities.

Daily Excelsior, 26 February 2005

### **3 militants nabbed in Udhampur**

UDHAMPUR, Feb 25: Udhampur Police has arrested three militants of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) outfit from two different places

and recovered large quantity of arms and ammunition from their possession. According to reports, acting upon an information a police party conducted raid at Udampur and arrested one Mohammed Irfan son of Qamar Din of Loudhra, Basantgarh. 36 hand-grenades were recovered at his instance. Two militants were arrested from Basantgarh area. Both the cases were worked out under the supervision of SHO Udampur, inspector Jagdev Singh.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

**Manmohan for speeding up relief works in Kashmir**

JAMMU, FEB. 27. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said today that there was a need to accelerate the relief operations in the remote areas of Jammu and Kashmir affected by the series of avalanches last weekend. The worst is over and the Centre would extend full cooperation to the State Government in rehabilitating the affected people, he told a press conference here at the end of his visit to the affected areas. Dr. Singh said: "There has been extensive damage in the remote parts of the State and I have acquainted myself with the problems of Jammu and Kashmir. At present we have confirmed deaths of 278 persons in the State. The relief agencies are carrying out their task but they should make sure that the operations reach out to the distant parts of Jammu and Kashmir so that the poor and hapless people there benefit."

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

**Upgrade Srinagar-Jammu highway: Mufti**

SRINAGAR, FEB. 27. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, has demanded the immediate upgrading of the Srinagar-Jammu National Highway. During an interaction with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, who made an aerial survey of the worst-affected villages of south Kashmir, Mr. Sayeed briefing Dr. Singh about the impact of the avalanches on road links and power supply. Mr. Sayeed highlighted the need for a dependable road link between Jammu and Srinagar that could withstand the vagaries of the weather.

The Hindu, 28 February 2005

**PoK for friendly soccer match with Srinagar**

ISLAMABAD, FEB. 27. The Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) Government has sought permission from Pakistan to host a friendly soccer match between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar this May. Deewan Ali Khan Chughtai, PoK Minister for Sports, Youth Affairs and Culture, told reporters here: "Now, when it's all set for the start of a bus service between the two cities, the door has opened for other ventures, and I think we would not find a better time for the start of sports relations."

The Tribune, 28 February 2005

**BSF reaches inaccessible areas**

Srinagar, February 27: The Border Security Force today reached the inaccessible avalanche-hit areas of south Kashmir to supplement relief and rescue operations. Some 300 personnel established base camps at Kokernag, Kapran, Aru and Achhabal and joined the rescue and relief operations in the surrounding inaccessible areas, BSF IG J.B. Negi said. All BSF units deployed in Pahalgam, Kulgam and Kokernag have already commenced their medical aid camps at Laripora, Mamal, Pahalgam, Aru, Shurat, Kanipura, Dadipura, Daksum, Rajkainar, Kanandrug mohalla and Yichu for the affected people, he said.

The Tribune, 28 February 2005

**Two militants killed**

Srinagar, February 27: Three persons, including two militants, were killed in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, the police said today. One militant was killed in an encounter with the security forces at Salwah in the Mendhar sector of Poonch district today, a police spokesman said. He said another militant was killed in a gunbattle with the security forces at Morah Kallabat in the Surankote sector last night.

Dawn, 28 February 2005

**90pc Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus passengers will be Kashmiris** ISLAMABAD, Feb 27: At least 90 per cent of the passengers travelling on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus, likely to be launched on April 7, would be Kashmiris, knowledgeable sources told Dawn underlining that the bus service would primarily cater for the Kashmiris on both sides of the Line of Control. "We are very clear that a minimum of 90 per cent passengers on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus would be Kashmiris," said an insider, hinting that the quota to be allocated for Kashmiris could even be 95 per cent or more.

Greater Kashmir, 28 February 2005

**Al-Mansurien pays tributes to DC office Fidayeen**

Srinagar: The Al-Mansurien has paid tributes to its two militants who died in a recent Fidayeen attack on the DC office here. In a statement Sunday, the outfit Fidayeen chief for Srinagar, Abu Inqilabi, paid tributes to the two militants who, he identified as Mahmood-ur-Rehman alias Abu-Saiyaf Lashkari and Faheem alias Abu Zarar Sani.